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Historical Society Prepares Lavish 275th Birthday Celebration for State

The Georgia Historical Society will celebrate the 275th anniversary of the founding of the colony of Georgia with a black-tie gala on Feb. 16 at 7 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Savannah.

The evening will begin with cocktails at the site of Gen. James Oglethorpe's landing on the banks of the Savannah River, and dinner will follow in the Harborside Room in a seating plan evoking Savannah's historic squares. The program will feature greetings from her majesty's government and the presentation of the Georgia Historical Society's three primary awards.

The keynote speaker is Michael Beschloss, NBC's presidential historian, who will discuss great moments of leadership in American history.



Michael Beschloss

Tickets are \$175. Approximately 500 guests are expected.

That gala is the most elaborate of the celebrations but is far from the only one. Others include:

- Georgia Days Colonial Faire and Muster on Feb. 2 and 3 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Wormsloe State Historic Site, 7601 Skidaway Road. This living history program will feature the ruins of the plantation house, costumed interpreters, colonial-era musicians and demonstrations in the spirit of colonial Georgia.

- Georgia Days Lecture & Kickoff Event on Feb. 5 at 7 p.m. at the Georgia Historical Society's Hodgson Hall, 501 Whitaker St. "An Evening with James Edward Oglethorpe: A Dramatic Historical Presentation" is a free lecture open to the public. It will explore the life and legacy of Georgia's founder. The annual Georgia Days celebration honors an individual from Georgia's history, and Oglethorpe was selected this year to commemorate the 275th anniversary. A professional interpreter will portray the honoree and use journals, diaries and letters of the time period to relay the first years of the "Georgia Experiment." A display of English trade items and maps will accompany the hands-on program,

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which is suitable for all ages. A reception will follow.

- Super Museum Sunday on Feb. 10 from noon to 4 p.m. is a popular annual part of Georgia Week. During this Georgia Historical Society's Georgia Days tradition, more than 40 house museums, art museums and other cultural institutions in the area will open to the public at no charge, including Hodgson Hall Library, 501 Whitaker St.

- Black History Month Essay and Public Speaking Contest on Feb. 11 at 5 p.m. at Hodgson Hall. This contest is open to all Georgia high school students. An original, 500-word essay should explore why Oglethorpe and the Georgia Trustees banned slavery in the new colony, what the circumstances were that eventually led to the introduction of slavery in Georgia and what the long-term effects were of the British government's decision to make slavery legal in Georgia. Five finalists will present their essays publicly at the Hodgson Hall Library, and three winners will be selected. Prizes will be awarded, and a recep-

tion will follow the presentation.

- The Georgia Day Parade will be held on Feb. 12 at 10:30 a.m. Elementary school students will join dignitaries, costumed characters and local citizens marching through the squares of Bull Street in this Georgia Day tradition. The parade begins at Forsyth Park and continues north on Bull Street, ending at City Hall with greetings from the mayor and other dignitaries. Awards for a student banner competition will be presented.

Platinum sponsors of Georgia Days are BG Group, Colonial Oil, Richmond Hill Plantation, St. Joseph's/Candler, Southern Natural Gas and The Savannah Bank. Gold sponsors are AT&T, Atlanta Gas, Bank of America, First National Bank, Georgia Power, JCB and Wachovia. Silver sponsors are Crescent Towing of Savannah; Georgia Ports Authority; Gilbert, Harrell, Sumerford & Martin, PC; Gulfstream; Hunter, Maclean, Exley & Dunn, PC; International Paper; Lummus Corporation; Publix Supermarket Charities; Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Georgia and TIC - The Industrial Company.