

Today in Columbus History: On June 10, 1857, *The Corner Stone*, a lesser-known Columbus newspaper, published a contract between the City of Columbus and John Godwin to build a land bridge on both sides of the river to connect with the existing bridge spanning the Chattahoochee where the present Dillingham St. bridge now stands. Since the 1830s, Godwin had built many bridges – always assisted by Horace King. Initially, King was Godwin’s slave. Together they built the first bridge at Dillingham St. in 1832/33. After a flood in 1841, they had to rebuild the structure. In 1857, they were rebuilding the land bridges to the main part of the bridge. By then Horace King was a free man of color, having been freed by Godwin in 1846. Note that in this contract King is given the responsibility of actually building the bridge. Indeed, he became famous throughout the Valley and beyond as an expert bridge-builder. A note about *The Corner Stone*: It was started in 1853 by Gen. James N. Bethune and was one of the first Georgia newspapers to advocate states’ rights and, later, secession. Bethune was also the owner of a black man named Blind Tom Wiggins, who was a musical prodigy, but that’s a whole other story!

Compiled by Callie McGinnis, Muscogee Genealogical Society

*Our snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.*

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

<https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu>

### BRIDGE CONTRACT.

The Contract of John Godwin for repairing the Bridge was submitted to Council and approved, and ordered to be entered on the Journal, viz:

State of Georgia, Muscogee County.

This agreement made this 30th day of May, 1857, between the Mayor and Council of the City of Columbus and John Godwin, witnesseth, That the said John Godwin agrees to build the Land Bridge or Aprons on both sides of the Main City Bridge, and to furnish all necessary material; for the sum of One Thousand and Fifty Dollars, to be paid by the said Mayor and Council upon the completion and acceptance of the same.

In the construction of the said Land Bridge or Aprons, the said John Godwin agrees to use all the sound timber in the old Land Bridges or Aprons, and to allow for it the cost of an equal amount of new timber delivered on the spot. The flooring of said Aprons to be 2½ inches thick and 6 inches wide: and the said John Godwin agrees that the whole job shall be done to the satisfaction and acceptance of the said Mayor and Council.

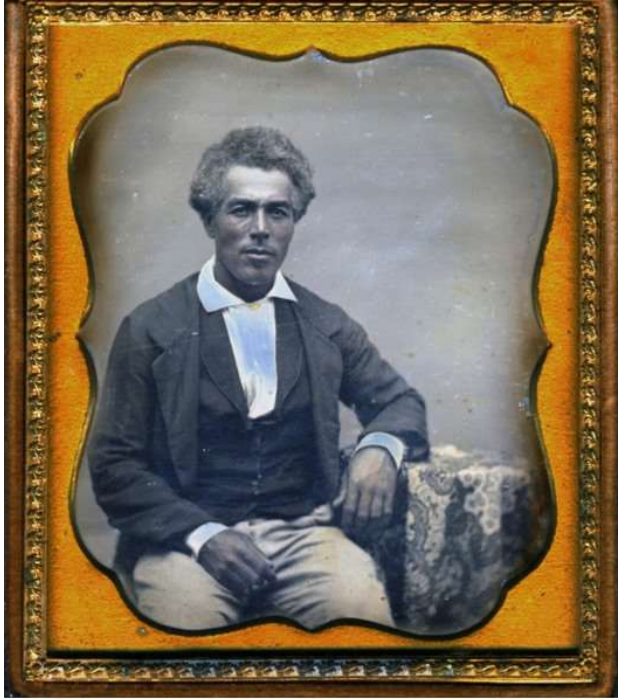
It is also understood and agreed between the parties, that the work is to be done by Horace King, and the consideration paid to him or to his direction. The Mayor and Council agree upon their part to pay the above mentioned consideration according to the terms of this agreement. It is also understood and agreed, that all the old lumber not used in the above named work, shall remain the property of the City. Also, the Brick Wall is to be run the height of the floor and the shed.

JOHN GODWIN.  
HORACE KING.

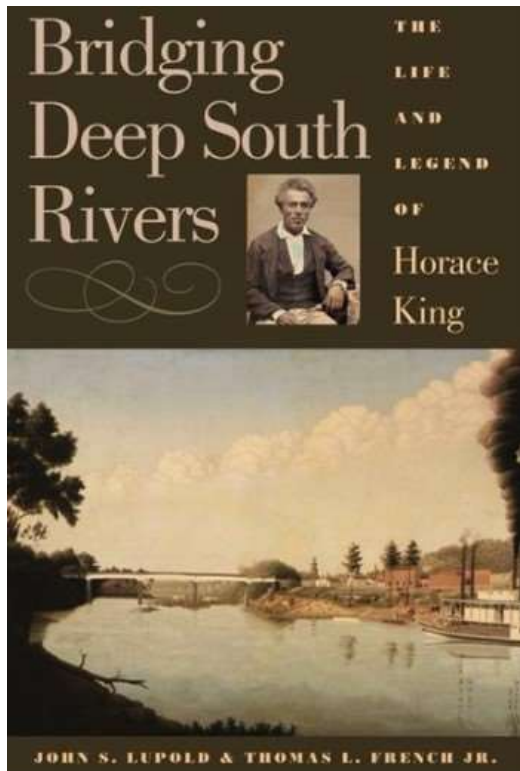


COLUMBUS, GEORGIA.—SKETCHED BY THEODORE R. DAVIS.

This 1868 drawing shows a later bridge at the same location -- built around 1866 after the previous one was burned in 1865. The section leading from the bank to the bridge proper is the "land bridge." This illustration originally in Harper's Weekly 1868.



Portrait of Horace King. From collections of the Columbus Museum.



If you want to know more about King, Godwin and bridge-building in Georgia, read this book by Dr. John Lupold and Tom French.

