

THE KEEPER

GREEN-MELDRIM HOUSE

May 2026

For 2025-2026 Annual Giving Report



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The Keeper is published
in May and December.



The Green-Meldrim House
is a museum property owned
by St. John's Church.

What's Next?: Excellent Projects



Next up: Document, inventory,
and plan for the care of the
GMH shutters and windows

and quarterly to the **Salon Series** put on by the **Savannah Voice Festival**. We have a stable and dedicated corps of volunteers – fifty docents and ten greeters – who daily staff the house. There are eleven teenagers, **Youth Guides**, who give tours on Saturdays and provide energy and enthusiasm. The house has hosted six interns in the past three years – all supplying new research to instruct the public. We opened **Sophie's Shop** which extends and amplifies the visit experience. The **Friends of the Green-Meldrim House** program came into fruition, which is why you are reading this! And, the Keepers' executed their first capital project.

Now that the GMH has completed the restoration for the Dome, leaders have turned their attention to several other needed preservation projects. While not as visually dramatic as the dome repairs, these projects are important for the proper stewardship of the landmark. Of top importance is HVAC efficiency. With a house as large, old and intricate as the GMH, having an efficient HVAC system with tightly sealed windows, chimneys and doors could save the house extra cost and maintenance! It is a unique challenge to modernize a structure originally designed to breathe and circulate air. Recently a **blower door test** to determine the airtightness (or rather

The Green-Meldrim House (GMH) is into its third year as a non-profit dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the National Historic Landmark, independently operated but owned by St. John's Church. In July 2023, the goal was for the house to be open to the public five days a week. That was accomplished within the first year. Later programs and partnerships were added. **Christmas in Wartime**, **Recognition of the January 12, 1865 Gathering of Twenty Preachers with General Sherman and Secretary of War William Stanton** and **Potable Gold: Savannah Madeira Tradition** have become standards as have the **St. John's Church / Green-Meldrim House Combination Tour** and the **Early Bird's Historic House and Urban Landscape Walking Tour**. The house welcomes attendees monthly to the **Savannah Chapter of the Victorian Society of America** meetings and programs,

What's Next, continued on next page.

What's Next, continued.

the leaks) in the house was executed. Once leaks were identified, an engineer examined the system looking for the source. Not unexpectedly, the chimneys were leak culprits. Some of the duct work and air-handlers need attention as well. Now the engineer is developing a plan to correct the issues which will be given to a HVAC technician to execute. Of the project, Sherry Holtzclaw, President of The Keepers, says, "We expect to add two air handlers to correct the air pressure in the house, reducing the amount of hot (or cold) humid air leaking into the house. Once the house is more airtight we will be able to finally paint those areas that have been susceptible to moisture and mildew damage. A fresh coat of paint does wonders for the overall appearance."

One of the most visible features of the house are the windows and shutters which descend into pockets in the walls. The technology was "on the cutting edge" when the house was built and it continues to be a marvel! Guests say, "I wish I had these today . . . 170 years later!" The protection of the porch roof combined with the pockets means that the shutters are some of the only original 19th century shutters in the city. Because there are many windows and shutters and they are such a rare survival, the SJ/GMH preservation team is developing a process and system to care for them. They will start slowly by identifying windows and shutters which are out of the way of visitors to evaluate first and come up with a plan and method for documenting and caring (repairing and/or restoring) for the windows and shutters.

Everyone involved with the GMH feels privileged to spend their time and energy in making the site successful, as well as shepherding its preservation. And, they are thrilled you are involved and care about its stewardship. Thank you for being a **Friend**. We hope you are in for the long-haul. There is so much good work yet to come!

GREEN-MELDRIM HOUSE: Now and Upcoming

TEA AT THE MELDRIMS—Mondays in May at 4:30 p.m.

St. John's Church/Green-Meldrim House Combination Tour—Wednesdays in May at 4 p.m.

Early Bird's Historic House and Urban Landscape Walking Tour—Saturdays in May at 8 a.m.

An Andrew Low House/Green-Meldrim House Partner Lecture for Historic Preservation Month:

CLERMONT LEE—*A Pioneering Woman of Landscape Architecture* with speaker **Ced Dolder**.

Thursday, May 21—Lecture/Cranmer Hall at 5:30 p.m., Reception/GMH to follow.

Friday, May 22 at 10:30pm —Discovering Clermont Lee Walking Tour. Begins at the Andrew Low House.

Savannah Chapter/Victorian Society in America, Inc. Year-End Finale—Tuesday, May 26 at 5:30 p.m./social and 6 p.m./program

Summer Youth Guide Program begins June 1. Recruiting high school-age participants now.

Docent Training Program – Mondays August. Recruiting participants now.

Summer College Intern Program begins June 1.

GMH Friends SUNDAY CELEBRATION with music from the Savannah VOICE Festival— August 2nd from 1 to 3 p.m.

Savannah VOICE Festival Gala Event – Friday, August 14. Tickets through SVF website.

Summer Internship Student Project

Review and Volunteer Salad Luncheon – Friday, August 7 at 11 a.m.

PARLOR PRESENTATION – Savannah Chapter/Victorian Society in America, Inc. – Fall Dates to be Announced.

Savannah VOICE Festival/ GMH Living History in October

Savannah Arts Academy Youth Guide Program - Fall

GMH Holiday Party

GMH Living History in December



Green-Meldrim House Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. with the last tour beginning at 3:30 p.m. Tour begin every half hour.

Sophie's Shop, the GMH Gift Shop, is open during tour hours.

Thank you! Friends of the Green-Meldrim House: 2025-2026 Annual Giving Campaign

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He Held Such Promise: The Short Life of Ralph Meldrim

The Meldrim daughters grew up in the public eye. From a young age, the children of a man as popular as Peter Meldrim held a kind of celebrity and Sophie and her sisters were often the topic of conversation in Savannah and abroad. What the girls did in school, what parties they attended, what they wore, and where and with whom they spent their holidays were recorded in the newspapers. Ordinary events were raised in importance because they participated. She and her sisters were not alone in dominating the society pages across the South, however, there was another Meldrim making the news, their brother Ralph.

Ralph Meldrim was born in 1885, the middle child born to Peter and Frances Meldrim, and their only son. Much as the daughters were raised to be the paragon of Gilded Age women, Ralph's deportment was also expected to reflect the prominent good name of the Meldrim family.

From a young age, Ralph was raised to be a responsible and convivial citizen. At just nine years old, in

1894, he made his first appearance in the *Savannah Morning News* Society page for attending the ninth birthday party of Garard Haines. The popular event for the under-12-crowd featured dancing and games. Ralph joined along with his older sisters, Fannie and Carrie. The next year he once again showed up on the Society pages because he attended a magic lantern show at Halde- man Finnie's house. Life for young Ralph was not all magic and dancing, however. He was also expected to exhibit academic prowess. On April 7, 1898, he received honorable mention, along with his sister Fannie, for making a strong showing for the public-school student who could create the largest number of words from the letters found in the word "music". While his older sister found five more words than he did, at 107 words, he made a notable showing with 102 words discovered.

Ralph had a serious side, as well, and like many young people who come of age near the water, life out at sea appealed to him. A July 23, 1897, *Savannah Morning News* article recounts how health inspector, Dr.

LeHardy, invited members of the sanitary board and several city officials and citizens to accompany him on a three-day trip to inspect Sapelo Island Quarantine Station. Presumably Peter Meldrim was among those invited, and



young Ralph, through his father. According to the article, Ralph, who had recently recovered from unnamed injuries, joined the expedition as one of the crew. He had "... developed an inclination for the pilotage and will devote his attention to the work of the pilot house."

Ralph's view of the sea may have changed after a harrowing August 17, 1899, trip home by steamer ship. The steamer, *The City of Augusta*, left New York at 5 p.m. on Saturday, August 12 with Ralph aboard. Though it was known there was a storm off the coast of Florida, the ship's captain, Capt. Daggett, thought it would take a week to reach them and did not wish to be delayed that long. According to the article, the weather was beautiful until the early morning of Monday, August 15. Around 5:30 a.m., outside of Charleston, S.C. the ship encountered the first effects of the



San Ciríaco hurricane, moderate rain and wind. The weather quickly worsened and the storm grew in intensity and by 6:30 a.m., just hours from their destination of Savannah, the captain decided the weather was too rough. The ocean was "...a wall. It looked like a trap had been laid..." and having no other choice, Capt. Daggett turned the ship out to sea. Out in open waters, the vessel was buffeted by winds over 100 miles per hour. The weather station at Hatteras, NC recorded gusts of wind well over 140 miles an hour, until the weather station blew away and no recordings of the highest speed could be documented. Capt. Daggett described it to the newspaper as," there was considerable rain, but most of the time there was a dense mist, the hurricane mist, they call it. The wind came in sharp, heavy gusts, like the shot of a gun." For two days the *City of Augusta* was battered by the storm. When it finally cleared, the vessel was adrift in the ocean. Eventually, they found their bearings and nine hours later appeared within sight of Tybee Island. Once news of the ship's sighting was posted, Peter Meldrim wasted no time heading for the dock to await sight of Ralph. The *Savannah Morning News* article from August 17, 1899, recounts, "Col. P.W. Meldrim was one of the first on the dock on account of his son Ralph. As *The Augusta* worked her way into the dock, Col. Meldrim and Ralph exchanged hails and each assured the other he was safe. Ralph announced he hadn't come any earlier because he couldn't." Suffering only slight bruises, the passengers and crew of the *City of Augusta*

had managed to endure one of the deadliest storms in the Atlantic. The San Ciríaco hurricane made landfall as a possible Category 5 storm in Hatteras, NC. The storm continues to hold the title of being the longest-lived Atlantic Hurricane on record, the same squall lasting almost a month. Nearly 4,000 people perished and villages all along the Eastern seaboard were decimated.

The courage young Ralph exhibited during his harrowing ocean ordeal may have been bolstered by Ralph's military training. From a young age, Ralph followed in his father's military footsteps and was a member of the Young Hussars. These young men, between the ages of 10 and 15 years old, participated in military drills complete with special uniforms and real sabers. No doubt his military training came in handy at his high school graduation exercises in June of 1900 where he debated the justifiability of the Boer War against May Woodberry. Ralph, an honor graduate who argued in favor of the war, won the debate. The young man would continue his paramilitary exercises into college and when old enough, joined the ranks of the regular Hussars, like his father. Also like his father, Ralph chose to attend the elder Meldrim's alma mater and joined the 1904 centennial class at the **University of Georgia** in Athens.

Ralph's college years gave him time to hone his social skills and develop business acumen. He served as an



officer of the 1901 Freshmen class's secret social club, **The Skull and Bones**. The club was responsible for holding a springtime banquet. According to the Feb. 10, 1901 edition of the university's college newspaper, *The Red and Black*, Ralph had plenty of practice for the banquet by attending dance parties at Mrs. H.C. White's house throughout the winter. Not only could Ralph lead a German waltz, but he could also lead a University Athletic Association. Ralph was elected by a large majority to head the 1903/1904 organization that required him to arrange the logistics of the university football games. He graduated in 1904 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He spent the summer after graduation attending parties, traveling to the family's summer home in Sulphur Springs, GA, and taking sailing excursions up North. In August of 1904, he once again encountered foul weather outside of Hatteras, NC. This time, southerly winds prevented south bound sailing vessels from making their way southward. Ralph at-

Ralph Meldrim, conclusion.

tempted for two weeks to return to Savannah via ship before he gave up and made his way home by rail. After a bit of relaxation, Ralph found his calling and returned to Athens to attend law school with the idea that he would work in his father's law office in Savannah. He also embarked on a new business venture. On 31 January 1906, Ralph, along with nine other Savannahians, registered their intention to start a new railroad line from Statesboro to Louisville, and which would run deep into Georgia farm country. On March 11, 1906, the *Augusta Herald's* Railroad Rumbblings section announced that the Statesboro and Midville Line was incorporated and listed Ralph among those men whose new venture would provide, "... development to one of the richest sections, naturally, in the entire state of Georgia." The same day the *Athens Banner* newspaper ran a very different article about Ralph, "Mr. Ralph Meldrim's many friends will regret to learn that he is quite ill at his home in Savannah." The next day, the *Augusta Herald* ran a more dire headline. "Ralph Meldrim very ill; believed he will die." It went on to say, "He has Typhoid Fever and it is not believed he can recover." He could not. Ralph died on March 19, 1906. He was 20 years old.

For only living two decades, Ralph had a large impact. His funeral at Christ Church Episcopal was widely attended. The Georgia Hussars attended as a body. The lawyers in the city attended as a body. The Georgia State Technical College, today Savannah State University suspended classes for the day out of respect for Col. Meldrim. The *Augusta Herald* on March 21, 1906 said, "It has been a long time since the death of a young man occasioned so much genuine and universal sorrow in Savannah." He was laid to rest in Bonaventure Cemetery. Jennifer McCarthy

Teatime at the Meldrims

Mondays in
May
at 4:30 p.m.



Green-Meldrim House
Madison Square

Admission:
\$22.50

SAVE THE DATE
GMH Friends and SVF Patrons
Appreciation Occasion!
CELEBRATION SUNDAY
Sunday, August 2

Drop in anytime between 1 & 3 p.m.
An Open House Event with tasty treats and
music provided by the
Savannah VOICE Festival artists.

EDWARD MOON GREEN - Life's Work and *Hogless Lard*, Etc.!



Family photo of Edward Moon Green.

As tour guides, we often repeat what we have been trained to say without enough information to make what we say meaningful. An example, “Edward Moon Green, having been unsuccessful as a businessman and losing the family home, took his Savannah family to France to work at a



Early 20th Century Advertisement for SnowDrift™

Cotton Seed Oil Plant,” screams for more! Thankfully research shared by summer intern Brady Rupard provided further explanation.

Many are not familiar with Savannah’s role in vegetable oil! In the mid-19th century, the seed of the ginned-out cotton was a waste product with little value. It was known that under pressure crushed cotton seeds could produce an oil. It took decades of research and biochemistry to produce a vegetable oil for human consumption, i.e. cooking oil. We have Dr. David Wesson, a chemist who worked for the Southern Cotton Oil Company in Savannah, to thank for that. By 1900, Wesson Oil was produced and sold by the company. Further chemistry brought about the rehydration of cotton seed oil to create a shortening, “hogless lard,” in Savannah’s case **Snowdrift**. There was a Snowdrift factory on the riverfront for years. The building was torn down in 2004. **Proctor and Gamble** produced a similar product, crystallized cottonseed oil, Crisco, whose name has become ubiquitous for shortening.

Though “over speculation” while he was young caused Edward Moon Green to relocate to France, he arrived at the right time. Sales of Wesson Oil and Snowdrift became an international business around the time the Green family arrived in La-Havre. The family later moved to Paris for the company. In the late 19th century through the end of his life in 1927, Edward Moon Green, based in France, was an agent/salesman for Southern Seed Oil

Company. Of his work, his daughter Anne Green wrote in her family memoir, *With Much Love*, “He founded agencies in all the ports from Liverpool to Beyrouth, schooled the agents, taught them to judge cottonseed oil (and spit it out), to appreciate Wesson’s Snowdrift lard.”



Vintage **Snowdrift** container

He redeemed himself as a provider for his family and a businessman. And he was a solitary salesman to the end. The last passage in Anne Green’s book poignantly reads:

“One day he came back from the office for the last time. He bore a flat package which he placed under his shirts. His work was done, the children grown, nothing kept him. He died quickly. And besides our love, nothing much remained of his passage on earth but a large brass plate reading:

E. M. Green.
Special Agent of the
Southern Cotton Oil Company.”

Jamie Credle

New Keeper! Dan Willoughby



The Keepers of Historic Green-Meldrim House have a new member, Mr. Daniel Willoughby. He is one of ten leaders of the GMH's governing body. Get to know Dan:

Hometown: I was born and raised here in Savannah. My mother's family were German and Irish immigrants that came to Savannah before the Civil War.

Education: After high school, I went to Duke University, where my father met my mother in the 1940s. I met my wife Katherine at Duke. I then went to Georgia Law School, where Glen and Connie Darbyshire were classmates. Katherine got her Ph.D. at UGA while I was getting my law degree. She is a professor at the University of Georgia in the School of Public and International Affairs.

Career: After law school, I moved to Atlanta and practiced law with King & Spalding for 31 years until I retired in 2017. Katherine is still teaching away in Athens.

Other volunteer activities: We live at Isle of Hope. (John Deering was the architect for our home's renovations.) I am on the board of the Isle of Hope Historical Association. I have also been the swimming coach for the Isle of Hope Sharks, our neighborhood swim team. (I swam for Duke in college.) I am on the board of the Georgia Aquatic Hall of Fame. I am also on the board of Benedictine Military School, where I went to high school.

Background with the GMH: I am a longtime admirer of the GMH. I am an admitted history nerd. I got that from my mother. I was the kid who had their birthday parties at the Ships of the Sea Museum one year and at Fort Pulaski the next. Until now, my only role at the GMH was being the overly curious tourist who lingers too long as the tour moves on.

What I like about the GMH? Having lived in Atlanta and worked in its antiseptic skyscrapers for decades, what I like most about the GMH is that it is still here. Due to the stewardship of the church, its congregation, and the Keepers, one of Savannah's most beautiful and historic houses survived the wrecking ball, airbnb conversions, and progress. In Atlanta, GMH would be a plaque and an episode on Georgia Public Broadcasting. That is not enough.

My dreams for the house: My hope is that GMH will have the resources and leadership to protect this gem going forward. While I am a newcomer to the GMH board, I am optimistic about its future.

New Chairs in the Meldrim Room



Recently Andrew Berrien Jones donated two walnut Rococo Revival chairs to the GMH. The carved balloon back chairs with cabriole legs on casters join two other side chairs also donated by Jones in 2024. They are all exhibited in the second-floor room where docents discuss the Meldrim family.

Inspired by early 18th century French precedents, the Rococo Revival style, referred to at the time as Louis XIV, with its richly carved ornaments and curves, was popular in the mid-19th century and later. Rococo Revival chairs were often found in parlors and sitting rooms.

Jones writes, "the chairs belonged to Judge and Mrs. Meldrim, my great-grandparents. Came to me via my parents, via Cari Lou's estate (one of the Judge's daughters)." Reupholstered by his mother, they were in the GMH when his great-grandparents lived in the home.



GMH YOUTH GUIDES: Our First Group of Graduates

On a rainy evening in October 2023, four Savannah Arts Academy AP US history sophomores arrived at the GMH as the first class of GMH/SAA Youth Guide Program. They took the eight-week training class and gave tours the day after Thanksgiving. Since that time, they have worked on Saturdays, participated in programs, and become part of the routine of running the house. Now they are ripe for big change as they graduate in May. After the summer we will not see them as much, but we anticipate great things from them. We are happy the GMH could be their launch pad! Wishing you well, sweet friends.

ASHLEY CARNES

Parents: Carola and Robert Carnes

Major: Band (Flute)

What is your favorite part about the GMH? My favorite part of the GMH is being able to connect with tourists from all over the world and hear about their lives while telling them about Savannah's history.

What can you say about your time at the GMH and how has it prepared you?: Before the GMH, I was pretty shy and afraid of public speaking. After being here for three years, I can say with certainty that giving tours has made me an over-all

more confident person. I am no longer afraid to speak out and can talk to anyone. And most importantly, I now enjoy it!

Future Plans: I will attend the University of Georgia in the fall with a double major in music and business.

An interesting fact about Ashley: She participated in the 2024 Governor's Honors Program in flute.

ALICIA FERNANDEZ

Parents: Alicia G. Prieto, Javier Fernandez

Major: Film

What is your favorite part about the GMH? From meeting people from all over the nation and the world to learning things about Savannah, GA, the GMH is special.

What can you say about your time at the GMH and how has it prepared you?: GMH has given me great communication and teamwork skills – from bouncing off of each other with partner tours and bonding over shared experiences. I will always cherish the GMH.

Future Plans: I plan to study phlebotomy at Georgia Southern



Graduating Seniors:
Left to right—Samantha Lehto, Ashely Carnes, and Alicia Fernandez

University and maybe volunteer at a clinic so I can help as many people as I can.

When asked what is an interesting thing about herself, she said, "I get to work here."

SAMANTHA LEHTO

Parent: Becky Lehto

Major: Visual Arts

What is your favorite part about the GMH? Meeting all kinds of people from around the world.

What can you say about your time at the GMH and how has it prepared you? It was truly an amazing time and has given me all the customer service skills/experience I could ask for.

Future Plans: To study international affairs at the University of

North Georgia with European Politics Concentration.

An interesting thing about Samantha: She won *Superior* in a system-wide (SCCPPS) language (Spanish) contest.

SOFIA ALLMAN

Parents: Samanta Benante and Brad Allman

School: Savannah Arts Academy

Major: Film

What is your favorite part about the GMH? The privilege of working in such a beautiful, safe home. I also appreciate the welcoming, safe, woman-filled work environment very much.

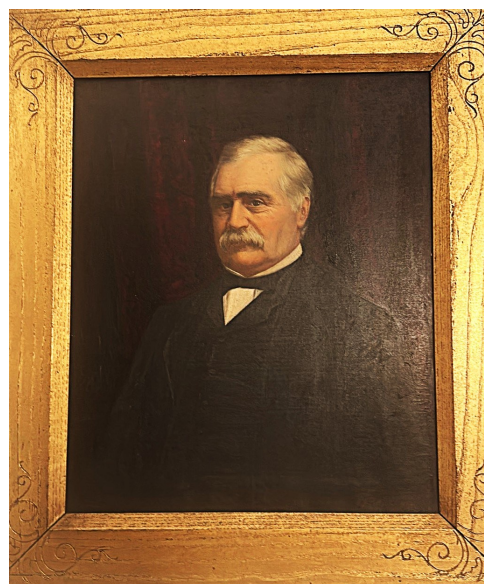
What can you say about your time at the GMH and how it has prepared you?

It was a lovely and very educational time. I learned resilience and professionalism in show-

ing up even on hard days. I learned to speak eloquently, and I learned all kinds of social skills.

Future Plans: University of North Georgia majoring in film.

An interesting thing to know about Sofia: She is the President of the SAA Film Society.



Portrait of Charles Green

Descendants of Charles Green (1807-1881) visit the GMH from time to time. We have them to sign a "Guest Stories Log" entry. In April, we had two separate groups to make entries. One was with Charles Green Turner III, who texted us the above painting, which he owns. The other was Kelsey Green Bryant, who visited with her mother, Anne Hunton Bryant Soloman. Kelsey wrote, "Charles Green, born here, is my grandfather. He was the grandson of the Charles Green (original owner). This house and church (St. John's) are copied in Laurel, MS."



Wednesdays in April and May at 4 p.m.

Excellent docents examine the mid-19th century Gothic Revival style buildings

Admission \$26.50



GreenMeldrimHouse.org

GREEN-MELDRIM HOUSE

presents a

**COMBINATION TOUR –
Green-Meldrim House/
St. John's Church
with Refreshments on the Porch**



The Andrew Low House Museum
and the
Green Meldrim House Museum
present

CLERMONT LEE.
*A Pioneering Woman in
Landscape Architecture*



Thursday, May 21 | 5:30pm

*Lecture by Ced Dolder at Cranmer Hall
with a reception to follow
at Green Meldrim House Museum at 6:30*

Friday, May 22 | 10:30am

*Walking tour starting at
Andrew Low House Courtyard Garden*



ANDREW LOW
HOUSE
MUSEUM



GREEN-MELDRIM
HOUSE
SAVANNAH
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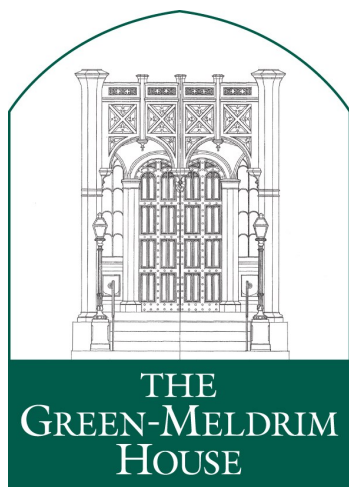
RSVP Chris Sergi at 912.233.1828 x102 by May 19



Green-Meldrim House

P.O. Box 11061

Savannah, GA 31412



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Donation Form

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Remember **Sophie's Shop** for your gift giving! On the second floor of the Green-Meldrim House you will find books related to the house and Savannah, fine soaps, gifts and children's items.

Sophie's Shop is open four hours—Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.