

James Island History Council

Meeting Minutes: January 16, 2024

Opening:

Called to Order at 6 pm at the James Island Arts and Cultural Center by Council Paul Hedden.

Present:

Members at Large Mike Corbo, Michael Williams, and Jim Morisette. Town Liaison Wendy Shelton

Absent:

Member at Large Inez Brown-Crouch

Old Business

Item 1. Update on status of Historic Marker for June 10, 1862 skirmish. Former Town Liaison Niki Grimball was to provide update.

Discussion: Chair Hedden said he believes the marker has been manufactured and a site has been designated and approved, but the actual marker has not yet been installed.

Action: Wendy will inquire about the status of this project with Mayor Lyon.

Item 2. Re-interment of Simeon Pinckney.

Discussion: Both the surviving members of the Simeon Pinckney family and Dr. Steve Shapiro, on whose property Pinckney is currently interred, have verbally agreed to dis-inter Pinckney's remains and re-inter them in a new location with a monument. Council members concurred that there is no written, binding, or formal plan for this arrangement, but that Inez Brown Crouch, former council member, might have more details. It is also possible that the remains of other family members might be buried with or near Simeon Pinckney, but council believes that his wife is buried elsewhere. Unclear at this point how to proceed, but members present agreed that it was critical that we follow all rules and acquire all necessary legal documents to proceed.

Action: Wendy will contact Inez to get an update. Michael will contact Dr. Shapiro to confirm his approval.

Item 3. Fort Johnson update. The Committee plans to have a reenactment event at Fort Johnson on Saturday April 15 and also Sunday Nov. 3.

Discussion: The Committee would like to improve public awareness of the event to increase participation. It was noted that there were very few attendees last year. The committee would like to see a target of about 200 attendees. Wendy said she would publicize the event through all the avenues used by the JIACC. It was also suggested that we contact teachers to offer class credit for attending the reenactments over the weekend or do a reenactment for school groups during the weekday, if volunteers could be made available. There was also discussion about the DNR's new role at Fort Johnson when the property changes hands. (Paul noted that Kathy MacMillan (Mcmillank@dnr.sc.gov) has replaced Lauton Sutley as the DNR contact.) It was agreed that the Committee should establish communication with SC Battleground Trusts and that the Town should have a voice in future use and development of this site and this is probably the Town's most significant historic site. Michael said he would be that voice if needed.

Action: Wendy will ask the Mayor if there is more information about the Town's role in this process. Paul will contact Campsen from SC Battlegrounds.

Item: 4 Participation in SC250.

Discussion. The Committee agreed that they would like to be involved in the statewide Sister-centennial Commission observing the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Wendy suggested that we identify the activities or events that we can offer on James Island, such as the re-enactments and then contact SC250 to have them included on the website and/or obtain funding for said events.

Action: Committee members will report back with their suggestions and related expenses at our next meeting.

Item 5. Airport Site Julian Clark and Dill's Bluff Road.

Discussion: Paul suggested more research on the James Island airport sites to add what is already known.

Action: None taken

Item 6. Rosenwald Schools

Discussion: Inez was working on this research

Action: Wendy will follow up with Inez for an update.

New Business

Item 1. Coordination and cooperation with other organizations who share our mission.

Discussion: Committee discussed ways in which to develop a more formal cooperative relationship with other organizations (museums, plantation, Battlefield Trusts) with whom we could work in a mutually beneficial manner. Toward this effort, Paul met with directors of the Charleston Museum, the Old Exchange, and the Farmers and Fisherman's Lodge. All agreed to follow up. Paul reported that in the past, the former Mayor Bill Woolsey was concerned about establishing a formal relationship that could be considered binding. Wendy suggested writing an informal letter to let each organization that we would be interested in partnering with them and then following up on an as-needed basis for specific events/activities. It was also discussed that cultivating contacts at the Citadel could be very beneficial for reenactors and other events.

Action: Wendy will draft letters to the groups. Members will bring suggestions for activities and events that we can use to build a 2024 calendar.

Item 2 Discussion of Mission and Scope of the Committee moving forward with new administration

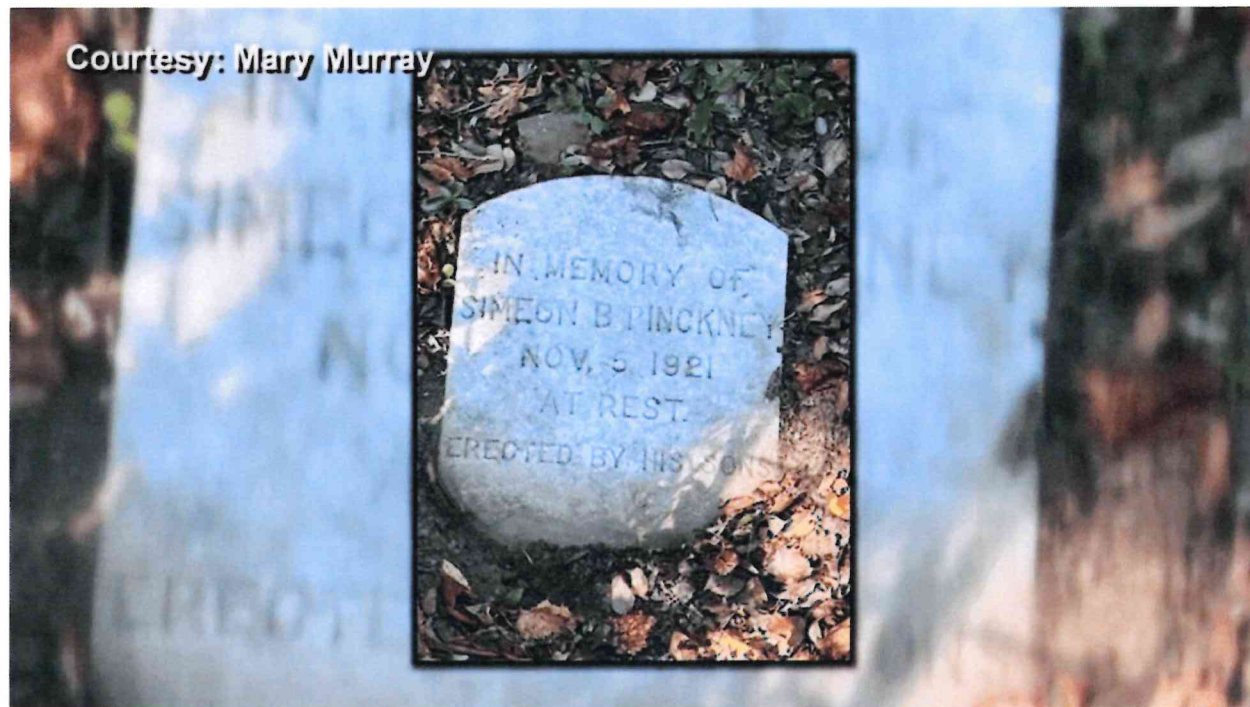
Discussion: Committee discussed new ideas for promoting our history such as a driving tour of James Island and updating the history booklet. Committee needs further discussion about the scope of its activities given the time and resources of members.

Adjournment

Next Meeting: Tuesday Feb. 13. 6 pm at the JIACC

Moving legacy: Simeon Pinckney's descendants seek to relocate his grave to historic park

by Lauren LennonFri, November 3rd 2023



CHARLESTON COUNTY, S.C. (WCIV) — Simeon Pinckney is a man who left a lasting legacy in South Carolina.

“Simeon Pinckney was an enslaved person,” Inez Brown Crouch says. “He bought 20 acres of property for \$350. His grandson sold it to the town in 2015 and we made a park.” Pinckney’s grave is currently in the backyard of a James Island resident, and the family hopes that moving it will allow his legacy to live on.

“Returning his remains to property that he actually purchased in 1875 during the reconstruction period is exciting,” said Jerome Harris, the great-grandson of Pinckney. “But it’s also exciting because it gives us the opportunity to tell the story of the land and the people who lived on the land, which is so important for us as we move forward.” The town, and homeowner, whose backyard the grave is in, are fully on board.

“I think that is, that’s important. And, um, and then also it, it, I think it is a service to his, his descendants and his family members that, you know, currently it’s not really accessible and, um, this would be accessible as if he were in a, um, regular cemetery,” said Mayor of James Island, Bill Woolsey.

While there are some more steps that all parties involved must take. Pinckney’s descendants could not be more excited about the impact this will have. “To have the opportunity, again, as I said, to bring the story alive, to have people understand who Simeon Pickney was,” said Harris.

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“Again, the person who was born enslaved, volunteered for the Union Army fought, and was part of the 21st colored regiment that actually marched into Charleston. To reflect on who Simeon and Pinckney were and to be challenged, if you will, uh, to do what it is that we can do and this and at this time in this place to enhance our lives and to again, tell the story That’s untold,” Harris said.

Descendants2023

4 November, 2023

I would expect more from a news organization like WCIV to vet information before putting it in print. Jerome Harris is not a descendant of Simeon Pinckney. This has been proven and he should not be noted as one. The property he sold to the town of James Island was awarded to him due the rightful heirs waiting too long to contest it in court. NOT because he is a descendant. He has no legal right to extricate Simeon Pinckney's grave and move it. We would appreciate that you do your due diligence researching before printing inaccurate information.

Sincerely, The rightful and legal Heirs of Simeon Pinckney

New James Island park gets marker honoring Simeon Pinckney, ex-slave and Union soldier

- [By Prentiss Findlay pfindlay@postandcourier.com](mailto:Prentiss Findlay pfindlay@postandcourier.com)
- Feb 8, 2018 Updated Sep 14, 2020

Simeon Pinckney rose to freedom from his birth as a slave to become a property owner on James Island, where he raised a family and farmed.

On Saturday, the land he worked will be marked with a plaque that tells a bit about his life and provides historical context for the island's newest park.

The 7 acres the town purchased from Pinckney descendants for \$900,000 is on Fort Johnson Road near Harborview Road. Pinckney Park has 6 acres of highland, a huge live oak draped in Spanish moss, a marsh view, trails and a playground. It is located on a tributary of Parrot Creek where a plant and animal survey identified 71 plant species and 23 animal species on the property.

The \$223,000 first phase of the park opened last summer. The new plaque is part of the South Carolina Historical Marker Program of the state Department of Archives and History.

A consultant's long-range plan for the park includes an outdoor classroom/amphitheater, two picnic shelters and nearly a mile of trails. A special events stage and canoe/kayak launch were the most requested improvements to the park when the town sought public input on how to develop the property.

Pinckney in 1874 paid a pittance by today's standards for 20 acres on James Island. But his \$350 investment and hard work laid the groundwork for an inheritance passed down through generations that made the park possible.

The marker for the "Simeon Pinckney Homestead" will be unveiled during a ceremony at 11 a.m. Descendant Jerome Harris is among those scheduled to attend. He sold 7 acres for the park, but the transaction didn't happen without a family dispute that wound up in court.

At issue in the court case was whether Harris' grandfather, Ellis Pinckney, had a right to pass on the property to Harris, his mother Eloise Pinckney Harris and her sister.

Harris talked about the situation during a visit here last year to attend a groundbreaking for the park. He said the sale was in keeping with the wishes of his late mother who wanted the land to be a place where her grandchildren could play and the family name and history would be preserved.

The state Supreme Court decided in Harris' favor, which allowed him to sell the property to the town for \$900,000. Funds for the purchase came from the Charleston County Greenbelt program.

The text of the plaque says Pinckney enlisted in the 3rd South Carolina Infantry (Colored) in 1863, and also served in the 21st U.S. Colored Infantry during the Civil War. He settled on James Island with his wife Isabella, stepson Daniel and sons Alex and Samuel. "Remarkably, Pinckney was not only able to purchase land during Reconstruction, but the family was also able to retain ownership of at least a portion of the tract for nearly 150 years," the plaque says.