

**CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**REGULAR MEETING  
110 EAST STATE STREET**

**ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM**

**June 4, 2008**

**2:00 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

**CCHPC Members Present:**

**Daves Rossell, Chairman  
George Cohen, Vice-Chairman  
Jane A. Feiler  
Vaughnette Goode-Walker  
William Haynes  
Stephen T. Lindell  
Pamela G. Lossing  
Lisa L. White**

**CCHPC Members Not Present:**

**Christian Sottile**

**CCHPC/MPC Staff Members Present:**

**Thomas L. Thomson, P.E., AICP, Executive Director  
Beth Reiter, Historic Preservation Director  
Janine N. Person, Administrative Assistant**

**I. WELCOME**

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

**II. INTRODUCTIONS**

**Dr. Rossell** asked everyone to introduce themselves. He introduced the speaker, Mr. Charles Mobley, who was born in Charleston, South Carolina, and moved to Savannah in 1980 as the County government reporter. He has served as State, City, and news editor, a page designer, and he is the current history writer.

**III. Guest Speaker - Charles Mobley – History Reporter - Savannah Morning News – Savannah’s Forgotten World War and It’s Monument - The World War I Marker in Daffin Park**

**Mr. Charles Mobley** stated that he was reading some Washington Post articles on the last known surviving veteran of World War I. He said as a journalist they are always worried about the last stand and that Corporal Frank Buckles is indeed the last American veteran of the war and now lives in Charles Town, West Virginia. Mr. Buckles entered the Army in 1918 and served in France and Germany as a driver and warehouse clerk. Mr. Buckles World War II experiences were harsher than World War I while working for the White Starline, which is the same company who ran the Titanic. In 1942, Mr. Buckles was there when the Japanese invaded the island and was help captive for three years by the Japanese. He is now 107 and the last of America’s 4,734,991 from World War I. His notoriety brought him to Washington, D.C. to participate in the Memorial Day ceremonies, and he was taken to visit the World War I memorial. The memorial, erected in 1931, is located at the national mall in West Potomac Park and is listed on the D.C. Preservation Leagues list of most endangered properties. It receives no national attention because it is not a national monument, and there is no national World War I monument. He

said he thought it was something to speak about to the Commission about and that he would look for signs, markers, plaques, etc. in Savannah that mark World War I.

He spoke about a headstone that is at the entrance to the American Legion Bonaventure Cemetery, and said that there were several markers to World War I Veterans in the cemetery. He displayed a monument in Daffin Park that is Chatham County's major World War I memorial which is made of granite, weighs a little more than seven tons, and was unveiled on April 26, 1929. It was once at the intersection of Victory Drive and Waters Avenue and has a list of names of Chatham County's 135 war deaths. It was moved twice from the original spot in 1962 about 30 feet to make room for a left-hand turn lane. In 1999 it was placed inside Daffin Park in a landscape area making it more accessible to visitors and tourists.

He said that Victory Drive is a monument to World War I being once known as Estill Avenue, named after a Savannah Morning News publisher. It was named a military memorial boulevard in 1919, and in 1935 the Park and Tree Commission planted 317 palmettos on Victory Drive from Bull Street to Hopkins Avenue. At one time the street had more than 2,800 palms and palmettos, but many have been moved and bulldozed because of development like the Truman Parkway.

He displayed a marker at the base of a flagpole outside of the Board of Education's offices on Bull Street. It is plain but elegant and many people don't notice it as they walk up and down Bull Street. He said there is a monument inside of the old post office that honors the second division that served in France. Hunter Army Airfield, named for Mont Hunter who was a Savannah native and World War I ace, is also a World War I monument. Beyond the handful of markers there is not much in Savannah to denote what is still called the "Great War." The New York Posts points out in the story that the Great War never captured public attention and popular culture the way that Vietnam and World War II did. He said that for proof that Hollywood lacked to pay attention to the Great War because their biggest movie on World War I was Sergeant York which was released in 1941. He found it surprising because American war deaths in World War I of 53,402 were higher than the deaths in Vietnam of 47,424. The war was followed by the great depression and these two events are huge in our culture.

He said there is talk about the four dollar gas and commentators say that if we are not careful we'll have another great depression. During World War II there was the series of political debates over the meaning of appeasement and it continues to hang over us. By comparison, World War I like all but one of its old soldiers has just faded away.

**Ms. Goode-Walker** stated that Mr. Mobley said there is no national monument, and asked if there is any effort for one.

**Mr. Mobley** stated that the closest thing might be the first tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington. He said it was never seen as a national monument.

**Ms. Goode-Walker** stated that Victory Drive used to be Dale Avenue.

**Mr. Mobley** stated that he thought part of it was and was confused trying to figure out what part was which.

**Ms. Feiler** stated that she thought that the palm trees were extended all the way down Highway 80 to Tybee as part of the memorial.

**Mr. Mobley** stated that there were approximately 2,000 of them. He said the further west you go the fewer palm and palmetto trees are seen. He moved to Savannah in 1980 and did not remember them going all of the way.

**Ms. Reiter** stated that they did go all the way to Tybee Island.

**Mr. Cohen** stated that the bridge was still there.

**Dr. Rossell** stated that in 1919, Victory Drive became a memorial. He asked the exact date of when the trees were put in.

**Mr. Mobley** stated that the information he received from the MPC website said 1935.

**Dr. Rossell** asked how many there were initially.

**Mr. Mobley** stated that there were over 300 and he found references to palms and palmettos. A document at the Georgia Historical Society said there were more than 2,800 palms or palmettos and each one represented a World War I soldier, but it is still far less than the number of casualties.

**Dr. Rossell** asked how many people from Savannah fought and died in the war.

**Mr. Mobley** stated that there were 135 on the marker but he did not find an exact number for Chatham County. He said that a new Georgia encyclopedia article said that more than 100,000 Georgians served.

**Dr. Rossell** stated that it was a surprisingly small number from Savannah.

#### **IV. COMMISSIONERS' ITEMS**

**Dr. Rossell** stated that he asked Ms. Reiter about the parking stickers. He said that it seemed that the City Manager is not inclined to renew the parking stickers and that he is affected by it.

**Ms. White** asked if it is because they are a County Board.

**Dr. Rossell** stated that it is because they are a County Board. He said he asked Mr. Tom Thomson and Ms. Reiter to think about it, and before she left that Ms. Harris told him that it was looking bad and they needed to find out what was happening.

**Ms. White** asked if it allowed them to park in the garage. She said that she did not use one and did not know.

**Dr. Rossell** stated that he did not know if the sticker is that specific. He said the sticker he had was general parking at any spot that's over an hour and is not getting renewed. He walked from Liberty Street but several members of the Commission are not able to walk across town and it could be an issue.

**Mr. Haynes** stated that her received one this year and it is good for another couple of years.

**Dr. Rossell** stated that Ms. Harris mentioned to him that there is positive work to be evaluated when Ms. Ellen Harris returns about Pin Point.

**Ms. Reiter** stated that Pin Point has paid their fee.

**Dr. Rossell** stated that Sandfly is coming along and there will be some action in the summer.

**Mr. Cohen** stated that he had a question that might not be applicable to the Board but is historic. He said he was on a tour at the Savannah River Landing and they were going to tear down the old turpentine warehouse that has interesting historic architectural features. He does not know how dilapidated it is and asked if Ms. Reiter had heard anything about it.

Ms. Reiter stated that she did not know.

Mr. Cohen asked Ms. Reiter if she knew about the building he was speaking about.

Ms. Reiter answered no.

Mr. Cohen stated that as you come down President Street it is the only historic structure on the left that is brick. He said that if it was in the Landmark District that there would be no question.

Ms. White stated that it was probably in no man's land.

Mr. Cohen stated that he thought it was the City's and did not think it was unincorporated.

Ms. White stated that it is probably not protected by historic preservation.

Ms. Reiter stated that she would have to look at it.

Mr. Lindell asked if that is a topic that is out of their jurisdiction.

Ms. White stated that she was sorry if Mr. Lindell disagreed but she felt uncomfortable about discussing a matter that is before a Board. She said it was really not the Commission's business.

Mr. Lindell stated that Mr. Cohen's was just an observation.

Mr. Cohen answered yes, and said it was not in any district and was shocked when he was told about it.

**V. MEETING MINUTES - May 7, 2008**

**CCHPC ACTION: Mr. Cohen made a motion that the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Goode-Walker seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Chatham County Historic Preservation Commission, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beth Reiter for Ellen Harris,  
Preservation Planner

**EH/jnp**