



C H A T H A M C O U N T Y
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
April 4, 2013 - 2:00 P.M.
Meeting Minutes

April 4, 2013 CCHPC Regular Meeting

I. Call to Order and Welcome

II. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

1. [January 16, 2013 Meeting Minutes](#)

Attachment: [January 16, 2013 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

Board Action:

Approval of the meeting minutes of January 16, 2013. - PASS

Vote Results

Motion: Jane A. Feiler

Second: George Cohen

George Cohen - Aye

Jane A. Feiler - Aye

Vaughnette Goode-Walker - Aye

Pamela Lossing - Aye

Lisa L. White - Aye

III. Posting

IV. Consent Agenda

V. Regular Agenda

2. ["LePageville Memorial Cemetery Initiative: Past, Present, and Future" by Kenneth Rouse and Daniel Fischer](#)

Ms. Lisa White stated that the Commission made an on-site visit to the LePageville Memorial Cemetery on October 3, 2012. Today a group is present to give a presentation on LePageville Memorial Cemetery Initiative: Past, Present, and Future. Ms. White recognized Commissioner James Holmes in attendance.

Mr. Kenneth Rouse came forward and thanked the Commission for inviting them to the meeting today to make a presentation. Mr. Rouse said the following persons are the 2013 Officers and Board of Directors of LePageville: **Ms. Minnie Lou Robinson, President; Mr. Kenneth Rouse, Vice President/Secretary; Mr. Ellis Cook Treasurer; Commissioner James Holmes, Advisor; Ms. Patricia Jenkins; Mr. Larry Washington; Mr. Dan Fischer; Ms. Johnnie Mae Swinton; Mr. Buddy Myer; Mr. David Blount; Ms. Marie Griffin; Ms. Ruthie Rawlerson; and Ms. Melvina W. Parker.**

Mr. Rouse recognized the following individuals and associations for their assistance in helping LePageville become what it is today: **Ms. Cyndy Blount, artist; Ms. Mell Canady, photographer; Eli Whitney Elementary School Alumni Association; Mr. Herbert Hilderbrand; Ms. Jessica Jenkins, Graphic Designer; Ms. Elaine Jolley, Author and Founding of LePageville; Gerald King; Jack Lee; Rev. Willie Outlaw, St. Thomas Missionary Baptist Church; Pine Gardens Neighborhood Association; Mr. Charles Varner; Mr. Stephen Warner, Basic Art Design and Mapping; Ms. Margie Wigley; Rev. Clarence Williams, Tabernacle Baptist Church; Mr. Jim Wilson; Chatham County Commission; Chatham County Historic Review Board; City of Savannah; Shawn Diddie; Georgia Forestry Commission; Historic Savannah Foundation; Ms. Lisa Jest; Mr. David Rosebaum; Atlanta Gas Light; BASF; Engelhard Corporation; Ms. Jodi Chapin; Mr. Sonny Dixon; Ms. Jane Fisherman; Mr. Jimmy Jenkins; Parker's; Savannah Morning News; Southern Bonz; Southern Chain Specialty Company; Southern States Fertilizer, Inc.; Ms. Polly Stern; Mr. Tim Hampton Land Clearing Company; Willie Jones Masonry; and WTOC-TV.**

Mr. Dan Fischer came forward and gave the presentation. The title is "LePageville Memorial Cemetery Initiative Past, Present and Future." Mr. Fischer said his involvement with LePageville began approximately eight (8) years ago. The company he worked for prepared a subdivision plat for the area. His supervisor, Larry Stuber, was the CEO for EMC Engineering and volunteered him to help LePageville. He said although the Commission has invited them to appear before them today, he prepared the presentation mostly as a gift to the dedicated people who are working diligently to preserve the memory of LePageville.

Mr. Fischer said as he looks through the archway, his view of the world suddenly changes and he could only imagine what it would be like if his family members were buried there. The workers' village, known as LePageville, was built in 1885 as company housing for employees of Savannah, Florida, and Western Railway (SF&W). It was owned by Henry B. Plant and designed by Robert LePage. African Americans hired as laborers hauled lumber at the SF&W wharf on the Savannah River. These workers needed inexpensive lodging within walking distance. The wharf manager, Robert LePage, designed the village that included affordable two-room houses to rent, garden plots and a church at a location convenient to the docks. Mr. LePage had plans to build 108 homes, but only about 50 were built. The homes had no indoor plumbing, had a community well, and some of the houses did not have electricity. In 1902, LePageville was acquired by the Atlantic Coastline Railroad and later leased to Southern States Phosphate and Fertilizer Company.

Mr. Fischer said a strong sense of community flourished in LePageville. Much of the community's identity centered on the community church built in 1888 and became known

as LePageville Baptist Church in 1895. The church maintained an active schedule of worship services, Sunday School, choirs, and additionally held other special events. Family ties extended beyond the immediate circle of relatives to include sisters, brothers, parents, and grandparents buried in the cemetery behind the houses. He said perhaps as many as five hundred individuals have been buried here. Some of the graves were marked with headstones, some were marked with wooden crosses, while others were marked with pots and pans. When families moved, the memory of that cemetery nearly disappeared into the underbrush that hovered over the grave sites. Mr. Fischer showed a copy of a death certificate that was dated 1953 which indicated LePageville Cemetery was a place of burial.

Mr. Fischer explained that as the homes became progressively more dilapidated and more families moved away, LePageville was condemned and razed in 1967. A photograph taken prior to 1967 showed some of the homes along President Street and former Hanes Street. When the LePageville site was cleared to make way for a softball field in 1979, the Pine Garden Community activist, Ms. Patricia Jenkins, learned about the cemetery and promised former resident Mr. Alexander Milton that she would protect the cemetery. Over a period of years, Ms. Jenkins searched the historical records to prove the existence of the cemetery and collaborated with LePageville families to identify the individuals who were buried there. In 2003, their efforts culminated with the Engelhard Corporation transferring 3.85 acres of land to the LePageville Memorial Cemetery Corporation. They held a site cleanup period and in 2007, the LePageville Memorial Cemetery Arch was installed. The arch dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony was held on September 22, 2007. This event was attended by many prominent city officials and many volunteers who contributed their time and resources to make this event possible.

Mr. Fischer said the LePageville Cemetery site is listed in the Chatham County Historic Resource Inventory. In May, 2011, the corporation was approved for federal tax exemption status (501C3). He showed an aerial view of the current site as it looked last year. A Parker's Gas Station/Convenience Store and a Dollar General Store are now in this area. Their current initiatives are: understory clearing and clean-up; perimeter fencing; walkway with historic marker/monument; on-site parking area; new information sign; research and burial records; LePageville Preservation Advisory Committee and grant research.

Mr. Fischer entertained questions from the Commission.

Ms. White thanked Mr. Rouse and Mr. Fischer for providing the interesting and wonderful slide presentation on the LePageville Cemetery.

Ms. Walker-Goode said she knows some of the descendants who have family members who were here. She asked if all the research has been exhausted in terms of finding out who was actually buried here. Has an oral history project been conducted with the LePageville residents?

Mr. Fischer answered that to his knowledge, an oral history project has not been conducted.

Ms. Walker-Goode said if this was rental property, would there not be rental records? Would not the church have had some type of information?

Mr. Fischer said Ms. Patricia Jenkins or Ms. Minnie Lou Robinson may be able to shed some light on this question.

Ms. Robinson said the church's burial records were destroyed. The secretary of the church at the time passed and his wife had the records. She moved away and the records were scattered. As far as she knows, the burial site was free. No one paid money to be buried there. The funeral homes during this time were: Royall and Sidney A. Jones. They were only able to get some records of burials from Sidney A. Jones. However, she knows bodies were buried on this site that they don't have records for.

Ms. Walker-Goode explained that what she was asking, even with the people who are represented here today, if their family members were buried here, wouldn't this be a starting point to getting the names. This could be used as the data base and use this as a way to contact others. Oral history has to be done if they don't have the physical data. As she has said, if they have the names of their family members who lived here could be a starting point.

Ms. Walker-Goode said when they visited the site last year in October, she met a lady who lives in East Savannah who spoke of moving across the street. Maybe there are other families who moved across the street that might remember some names.

Ms. Robinson said Ms. Jenkins has a list of some of the names of persons who are buried here. Ms. Jenkins at the request of Mr. Alexander, who has family members buried here, asked her to try to preserve the cemetery. Ms. Jenkins promised him that she would try to preserve the LePageville Cemetery. Consequently, they are trying to preserve it. Ms. Robinson said her mother and a cousin are buried here. Mr. Ponder is the overseer of the cemetery and he, too, has some family members buried here. They are trying hard to get the burial information.

Ms. Walker-Goode asked Ms. Robinson had they given any thought to putting the names that they have on a plaque.

Ms. Robinson answered that they thought about this, but due to the lack of finances, they have not done so yet.

Ms. White asked if everyone buried in the cemetery was handled by a funeral home.

Ms. Robinson answered yes. Everyone buried here was handled by a funeral home.

Mr. Cohen said he does not know how far back the coroner's records go, but maybe they can get the information from the county coroner's records. Maybe they can back track the names by the death certificate.

Ms. White said the Savannah Morning News might be a source also to acquire the deceased persons names.

Ms. Goode-Walker said that the Savannah Tribune is on micro film at Savannah State

Library as far back as 1880.

Ms. Robinson believes that some of the members have tried already to get the information from the Savannah Morning News and the funeral homes. She does not believe that anyone has tried to get the information from the coroner's office.

Ms. White asked if the representatives are working on a preservation plan.

Mr. Fischer answered this is one of their goals. He said they need some help with the preservation plan. They came up with the idea of getting an advisory committee.

Ms. Lossing asked what are some of the potential grantors.

Mr. Fischer said they do not know. They have talked about applying for a grant or find a grant writer that would help them with applying for a grant. However, at this time, they have not pursued this.

Ms. White thanked the representatives for coming today and invited them to come back at a later time and update the Commission on their accomplishments. She wished them well in their endeavor.

Commissioner Holmes said they recently received their 501C3 status. They are in the process of putting together a letter that will be sent to all the businesses in this corridor asking for support. They will seek a grant writer and begin their search to try to get some grant money. Mr. Holmes said they presently have a slide and will put all the names on each wing of the arch. However, they have not done this yet because of the lack of finances.

3. [Tour Pin Point Heritage Museum](#)

VI. Request for Extensions

VII. Staff Reviews

VIII. Other Business

IX. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements

4. [Invitation to Archaeology Site Visit](#)

Ms. Harris reported that as part of the MPC's efforts to raise awareness about the importance of archaeology, the MPC is organizing three site visits to the archaeology site at Abercorn and King George Boulevard which is being conducted by Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). All board members, elected officials, and MPC staff are invited to attend the site visit. The site visits are currently scheduled for:

Tuesday, April 23, 2013 leaving at 10:00 a.m. and returning at approximately 12:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 1, 2013 leaving at 10:00 a.m. and returning at approximately 12:30 p.m.
Thursday, May 9, 2013 leaving at 2:30 p.m. and returning at approximately 5:00 p.m..

Ms. Harris said the buses will leave from the MPC office. Space is limited. She asked the Commission to please let her know if they plan to attend so that she may reserve their seat. If space is available in the parking garage, the Commission members may park there.

Ms. Harris stated that if anyone wanted more information on the site, please visit:

<http://abercornarchaeology.org/>

X. Adjournment

5. Adjourned.

Ms. White said the next Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 3, 2013. She said that Ms. Harris checked the calendar for the availability of the Mendonsa Meeting room and has informed her that Tuesday, July 9, 2013 is available if the Commission is in favor of moving the meeting to this day. This date was agreeable with the Commission.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Ms. White adjourned the meeting approximately 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Harris
Cultural Resource and Urban Planning Manager

EH:mem

The Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting summary minutes which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.