



Savannah - Chatham County Historic Site & Monument Commission

Virtual Meeting
Thursday, December 3, 2020 4pm
MINUTES

December 3, 2020 Historic Site and Monument Commission Meeting

I. Call to Order and Welcome

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

[1. Approve the November 5, 2020 HSMC Meeting Minutes](#)

[📎 11.05.20 MEETING MINUTES.pdf](#)

Motion

Approve November 5, 2020 HSMC Minutes as presented.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Sean Mannion

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Dr. Nicholas Henry - Abstain

Kristopher Monroe - Aye

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Aye

III. Regular Agenda

[2. Petition of Georgia Historical Society | 20-005335-HM | 204 West Hall Street | Marker](#)

[📎 APP 204 W Hall 20-005335-HM.pdf](#)

[📎 Submittal Packet - 204 W Hall - 20-005335.pdf](#)

[📎 Staff Recommendation - 204 W Hall St 20-005335-HM.pdf](#)

[📎 AERIAL MAP 20-005335-HM.pdf](#)

Mr. Ryan Jarles, presented the petitioner's request of approval for The applicant is requesting that the Historic Site and Monument recommend approval to the Savannah City Council for the installation of a Georgia Historical Society Historical Marker within the tree-lawn of 204 West Hall Street.

The marker is proposed to read:

"Bynes-Royall Funeral Home

During the last years of Reconstruction, Maj. William Royall established the Royall Undertaking Company to serve African Americans denied mortuary services by Savannah's White-owned funeral homes. As a formal mortuary education was not available in the South until the early 20th century, Royall's company trained many prominent Black funeral directors in the state through an apprenticeship program. In 1924, the company moved to West Broad Street, now Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, the African-American cultural and business district of Savannah. In 1955, Cpt. Frank Bynes, Sr. and Frenchye Mason Bynes bought the business and renamed it the Bynes- Royall Funeral Home. Like many Black funeral homes during the Civil Rights Movement, Bynes- Royall provided a safe space to meet and organize. Bynes-Royall relocated here in 1963 and remains the oldest Black-owned business in Savannah. Erected by the Georgia Historical Society and Save Our Youth Savannah"

The applicable standards from the Historic Site and Monument Commission Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art were met:

The proposed theme should have documented significant, clear and direct local relevance to the history and development of Chatham County. The local focus should be the predominant theme of the monument. The level of significance should be high enough to warrant a public presence. The person, place or event commemorated should not have been sufficiently commemorated elsewhere in the County. The theme should be distinct and original, and not be duplicated in other existing markers or monuments. The theme should reflect a larger connection to the community as a whole, and not only to one distinct group. There should be significant documented evidence (written or oral) of the commemorated event, person, or place. The petitioner provided the following statement regarding the theme of the historical marker:

"The Bynes-Royall Funeral Home historical marker demonstrates the themes of Industry and Commerce, Local History, Cultural and Ethnic Heritage. From the late 19th to the early 20th century, the care of the deceased shifted from being a private family function to a professional industry. Illustrating the shift of the mortuary industry, as well as a response to Savannah's Yellow Fever epidemics, Bynes-Royall Funeral Home was founded by Major William Royall in the last years of Reconstruction. Originally named the Royall Undertaking Company, its purpose was to serve the Black community who were denied service by White funeral homes. In 1924, the funeral home moved to West Broad Street, the cultural and economic center for Black Savannah. In 1955, the Bynes family purchased the business and renamed it to Bynes-Royall Funeral Home. As with other Black funeral homes throughout the South, Bynes-Royall became a safe space for activists in the Civil Rights Movement to meet and organize. In 1963, Bynes-Royall relocated from West Broad Street to its current location at 204 W. Hall Street and is the oldest Black-owned business in Savannah."

Certain factors should be taken into consideration when evaluating whether a site is the appropriate location for a marker, monument or public art [hereto referred to as "object" to indicate the inclusion of all three types]. These factors include: The installation of an object should not cause overcrowding of the site, if there are existing objects. Objects should be sited far enough away from other objects as to allow the visitor proper appreciation of each individually. The guideline is followed; The site currently does not have any "objects", and there are no visually related examples of historical markers.

No vegetation is proposed to be altered in any way, and the historical marker is proposed to be located in a large empty portion of tree-lawn. The proposed object should not require the

removal or alteration of existing above or below ground utilities. Information on the location of ground utilities was not provided; however, Staff has no concerns that this will be an issue. The proposed site should be large enough to accommodate an object, and should not encroach on other existing object sites, buildings, or designated green space. The guideline is followed. The tree-lawn to the front of the property is not utilized for special events. The site is not prone to automobile accidents. The historical marker will be visible from the accessible sidewalk located between the main property (204 West Hall Street) and the tree-lawn, as well as the street. The marker is proposed within a presently maintained City of Savannah tree-lawn. The historical marker will bring light to a previously untold story of the neighborhood and enhances the character of the surrounding neighborhood. The site does not include existing signage and will not significantly affect automobile traffic sight lines. The historical marker is to bring attention to a previously uninteresting empty portion of tree-lawn and enhances the design(less) tree-lawn.

The historical marker is proposed to be within 100 feet of the property for which its' content represents. The marker meets all design requirements. The Mayor and Aldermen do not fund new markers, monuments, or works of art. The applicant is fully responsible for funding the design, construction, installation, and any necessary landscaping, paving, or lighting involved with a new marker, monument, or work of art. The applicant must provide a realistic budget in Part II Final Design and Funding. The budget should be based on cost estimates provided by the manufacturer, artist, installer and/or contractor, as appropriate. The budget should include funding goals and deadlines. The applicant must be capable of raising the necessary funding. Construction of the monument or installation of the work of art will not begin until all of the funding has been secured. The applicant has stated that they have secured the necessary funds (\$5,000). The applicant has accepted and taken on the role of all future maintenance of the marker, relinquishing the requirement of supplying an escrow payment to the City of Savannah.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Historic Site and Monument Commission hereby recommend approval to the Savannah City Council for the installation of a Georgia Historical Society Historical Marker within the tree-lawn at 204 West Hall Street, as proposed, because the petition meets the guidelines set forth within the HSMC Masterplan and Guidelines.

Mr. Mannion stated he would like to know the legality of using the tree lawn for the marker.

Mr. Jarles replied that would not be reviewed as a Board, only what is in the Master Plan and guidelines; GreenScapes would likely review it. **Ms. Wilson** stated she will review the Tree Lawn Ordinance and report back to the Board.

PETITIONER COMMENTS

Ms. Elyse Butler, petitioner, stated the tree lawn has been used quite often; the last being in 2018. The structure is itself is not the purpose of the recognition, but the business.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Mr. Mannion stated he is not sure of the ordinance currently allows for it in the Tree Lawn. He thinks it is a great idea and supports the purpose and hopes the location is not an issue.

Mr. Monroe stated he appreciated the recognition of the African American history in Savannah.

Ms. Wilson stated Keith Lloyd, Assistant City Manager, stated they would have to have an encroachment permit. She recommended having a condition for the applicant to obtain the right-of-way encroachment permit. **Ms. Michalak** stated it is a policy not an ordinance, which allows for historic markers.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Motion

Staff recommends that the Historic Site and Monument Commission hereby recommend approval to the Savannah City Council for the installation of a Georgia Historical Society Historical Marker within the tree-lawn at 204 West Hall Street, as proposed, because the petition meets the guidelines set forth within the HSMC Masterplan and Guidelines, and ensure encroachment permit received.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Thomas Gensheimer

Second: Sean Mannion

Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Dr. Nicholas Henry	- Abstain
Kristopher Monroe	- Aye
Sean Mannion	- Aye
Lisa D. Watson	- Aye

[3. Petition of Georgia Historical Society | 20-005337-HM | 342 Drayton Street | Marker on Public Property](#)

- 📎 [Staff Recommendation - 342 Drayton - 20-005337-HM.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Submittal Packet - 342 Drayton Street - 20-005337-COA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [APP 342 Drayton 20-005337-HM.pdf](#)
- 📎 [AERIAL MAP 20-005337-HM.pdf](#)

Mr. Jarles presented the applicant's request of approval for the installation of a Georgia Historical Society Historical Marker within the public right-of-way of 342 Drayton Street. The historical marker is proposed to be installed within the sidewalk parallel to the Drayton Street frontage of 342 Drayton Street.

The marker is proposed to read:

"Colonial Group, Inc.

Raymond McAllister Demere founded the American Oil Company in 1921 as Savannah's first independent wholesale petroleum company. On this site in 1923, the company opened its first service station. Renamed Colonial Oil Company in 1933, the company is now known as Colonial Group, Inc., and ranks as one of the largest privately-held corporations in the United States. By its 100th anniversary, Colonial had expanded to offer a wide variety of services including wholesale marketing and distribution of petroleum, natural gas and chemical products, retail convenience stores, bulk liquid and dry terminaling services, ship bunkering, vessel compliance, and mega yacht refit and repair services. As a fourth-generation, family-owned company, Colonial Group operates across numerous states, employs a dedicated team of over 2,000 people and serves as an invaluable steward in the communities where it conducts business. Erected by the Georgia Historical Society and Colonial Group, Inc."

The site currently does not have any "objects". The adjacent 'Andrew Low House' property includes one historical marker on the northern portion of the property and is not visible from the present marker petition location. No vegetation is proposed to be altered in any way. Information on the location of ground utilities was not provided; however, Staff has no concerns that this will be an issue.

The historical marker is to be located within a portion of sidewalk that does not include any other objects besides a bus stop sign. The sidewalk surrounding the property is not utilized for special events.

The applicant is proposing the historical marker be placed within the sidewalk (public right-of-way) parallel to Drayton Street, however, this street is prone to automobile accidents; recently a vehicle drove onto the sidewalk on the adjacent property and heavily damage the wall separating the parking lot from the sidewalk. Staff recommends that the marker be located within the sidewalk (public right-of-way) parallel to East Charlton Street in order to provide a safer location for pedestrians to view the historical marker, and to ensure the marker not undergo possible damage from vehicles. The historical marker will be visible from the accessible sidewalk surrounding the property. The marker is to be visible from the sidewalk as well as the street. The marker is proposed within a presently maintained City of Savannah sidewalk.

The installation of the object should enhance the space and character of the surrounding neighborhood. The historical marker will bring light to a previously untold story of the neighborhood and enhances the character of the surrounding neighborhood. The site includes existing signage, however, will not require the removal of said signage, and will not significantly affect automobile traffic sight lines. The historical marker is to bring attention to a previously uninteresting parking lot.

The historical marker is proposed to be within 100 feet of the property for which its' content represents. The marker meets all design requirements. The applicant has stated that they have secured the necessary funds (\$5,000). The applicant has accepted and taken on the role of all future maintenance of the marker, relinquishing the requirement of supplying an escrow payment to the City of Savannah.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Historic Site and Monument Commission recommend approval to the Savannah City Council for the installation of a Georgia Historical Society Historical Marker at 342 Drayton Street, with the following condition, because the petition otherwise meets the guidelines set forth within the HSMC Masterplan and Guidelines.

1. Revise the location of the Historical Marker to be located within the sidewalk (public right-of-way) parallel to Charlton Street.

BOARD COMMENTS:

The Board stated the sign reads more like an advertisement, rather than historic context.

PETITIONER COMMENTS:

Ms. Elyse Butler, of the Georgia Historical Society, stated business history will somewhat connect with sounding like an ad because it is a part of the Business History Initiative. It will inspire youths. They can add " . . . by it's 100th anniversary." **Mr. Monroe** stated he does not think this is the best use of a marker. **Mr. Mannion** stated he would like it to tie to the community. **Ms. Butler** stated the marker ties to the community in the jobs provided and the economic impact it has in the region, she feels the text rises to the occasion. **Mr.**

Geinsheimer stated there's nothing reflecting the site or what it looked like.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Annette Youmans, Colonial Group employee, stated the goal was to try to be inclusive of all divisions of the company from the past 100 years. There was great difficulty to do in 135 words. The marker is a way to honor the 100th year anniversary of the company. They are willing to modify the wording. The Board stated the text relates more to the company than to Savannah.

Ms. Marjorie Young, Colonial Group employee, stated the text was in collaboration with the Georgia Historical Society.

Motion

Continue to next HSMC meeting.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Kristopher Monroe

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Dr. Nicholas Henry	- Abstain
Kristopher Monroe	- Aye
Sean Mannion	- Aye
Lisa D. Watson	- Aye

[4. Petition of Sons of the Revolution - Georgia | 20-005729-HM | North Side of River Street at Morell Park | Historical Marker Relocation](#)

[☞ Staff Recommendation - E River St - 20-005729.pdf](#)

[☞ Submittal Packet - 20-005729.pdf](#)

[☞ AERIAL MAP - 20-005729-HM.pdf](#)

The applicant is requesting a recommendation of approval from the Historic Site and Monument Commission to The Savannah City Council for the relocation of the 'Liberty Marker' from its existing location on the south side of River Street at Morell Park, to the north side of River Street at Morell Park. The applicant is additionally seeking the installation of a pedestal for the marker to be more easily displayed for viewing as well as a granite bench. The bench is proposed to be inscribed with the following:

"To honor the Patriots who served on the 'Liberty' Commissioned by the Georgia Provincial Congress, 1777" and "Donated by the Sons of the Revolution Society of Georgia 2020".

The theme of the new Monument includes three of the categories listed by the HSMC: Military History; Maritime History; and Colonial History. The significance of the proposed Monument in all three categories is illustrated by the full text of the existing Marker. In short, after the events at Lexington and Concord, the Georgia Provincial Congress, working in concert with Patriots in South Carolina, learned of the imminent arrival of a ship from Great Britain containing armaments intended for delivery to the British Army. The Georgia Patriots quickly repurposed and commissioned a commercial vessel, outfitted her with 10 cannon and named her the "Liberty". In coordination with the South Carolinians, the Liberty seized

the British vessel Philippa, confiscated her cargo (including six and one half tons of gunpowder), over half of which was sent to Boston colonial Patriots, commanded by George Washington.

The proposed location for the relocation of the marker and addition of the granite bench poses a situation in which there may be a feeling of being overcrowding of objects. The field for which the marker is proposed to be relocated is home to The Waving Girl Monument, The 1996 Olympic Yachting Cauldron, as well as the Flagpole. Although there is a potential for overcrowding, Staff determined that the marker would be sited far enough away from these objects to allow for proper viewing.

It is unknown at this time as to whether existing tree roots could potentially be damaged by the installation of the marker and bench at their proposed location. The information on whether existing utilities would be affected by the relocation of the marker or not was not included; this information is unknown. This site may be considered designated green space; this information is unknown to Staff; however, the large green space could accommodate the historical marker. The applicant has not proposed the use of the site for special events. The site is not prone to frequent automobile accidents. The site could potentially not be easily accessible with the historical marker if set back from the sidewalk and not having a walkway or handicap accessible path. Staff recommends ensuring that the marker be installed at the edge of the sidewalk to allow for proper viewing. The site is accessible by an existing sidewalk and is proposed within an existing maintained park area. The relocation of the marker, as well as the installation of the granite bench, will enhance the empty section of sidewalk bordering the west boundary of Morell Park.

The site is home to multiple other objects; however, the relocation of the marker, as well as the installation of the granite bench, will enhance the empty section of sidewalk bordering the west boundary of Morell Park. The site is not proposed to be utilized for memorial services. The relocation of the marker to its proposed location on the north side of River Street places the marker closer to the Savannah River, which is the location for which the 'Liberty' ship would have sailed. The marker itself is a pre-existing marker and meets the above requirements. The decorative pedestal enhances the design of the marker and allows for the marker to be more easily viewed. The granite viewing bench enhances the marker and allows for a location of rest and relaxation on an end of river street that does not include a lot of resting areas.

The Applicant has approved a Budget Expenditure for this project of \$2,000, which is believed to be sufficient. However, additional funds will be made available to fully cover the costs once a final design is approved, if necessary. The applicant did not provide information on an escrow payment to cover the future maintenance of the bench and pedestal; ensure that this information is provide prior to the future designated Savannah City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Historic Site and Monument Commission hereby recommend approval to the Savannah City Council for the relocation of the 'Liberty Marker' from its existing location on the south side of River Street at Morell Park, to the north side of River Street at Morell Park, with the following conditions, because otherwise the petition meets the guidelines set forth within the HSMC Masterplan and Guidelines.

1. Ensure that the information for the escrow payment for the bench and pedestal are provided along with the submittal to the future designated Savannah City Council

meeting.

2. Ensure that the marker be installed at the edge of the sidewalk to allow for proper viewing.

PETITIONER COMMENTS:

Mr. Lamar Davis stated the purpose of the petition is because it cannot be seen. Acknowledges adjustments of verbiage is needed.

BOARD COMMENTS:

Would like to see site of proposed placement of commemorative bench and recommend on final decision of the bench.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mr. Steve Westgate and **Mr. Frank Hardeman** both agreed the verbiage should be corrected and the location to be more visual. They appreciate the work of the Board. They would prefer to vote tonight on one of two locations and confer with staff regarding the best location for the bench.

Mr. Monroe stated it is important to know specifically as to where it will be located.

Motion

Continue to the January 7, 2021 HSMC Meeting to adjust verbiage, final design, and location in concert with Green Scapes.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Kristopher Monroe

Second: Thomas Gensheimer

Thomas Gensheimer	- Aye
Dr. Nicholas Henry	- Abstain
Kristopher Monroe	- Aye
Sean Mannion	- Aye
Lisa D. Watson	- Aye

IV. Other Business

[5. Chairman to Appoint a 3-Person Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary Nominating Committee](#)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

Lisa Watson

Kristofer Monroe

Thomas Geinsheimer

[6. Review of Request to Savannah City Council Regarding the Civil War Memorial Taskforce's Final Report](#)

📎 [Memo to City Council regarding Civil War Memorial Taskforce_.pdf](#)

Mr. Monroe requested additional review of communication to the City and further discussion.

Motion

Add additional sentence as suggested by wilson and e-mail to city.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Kristopher Monroe

Second: Sean Mannion

Thomas Gensheimer - Aye

Dr. Nicholas Henry - Abstain

Kristopher Monroe - Aye

Sean Mannion - Aye

Lisa D. Watson - Aye

[7. Presentation of the 2021 HP Department Calendar](#)

[📎 2020-12-02-Calendar.pdf](#)

Mr. Jarles presented the 2021 Calendar to the Board.

V. Adjournment

[8. Adjourn December 3, 2020 Savannah Chatham County Historic Site and Monument Meeting](#)

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