

SOAPSTONE PRESERVATION ENDOWMENT
“Protecting and Promoting the History and Story of the Liberia Community”
www.Soapstonepe.org

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Overview



The Soapstone Preservation Endowment (SPE), chartered as a standalone public charity June 22, 2022, has as its sole purpose to protect and promote the history and story of the Liberia Community and its centerpiece, Soapstone Baptist Church. The Board of Directors established a goal of amassing a \$500,000 perpetual endowment to generate annual funds to forever remove the responsibility of protecting the buildings and grounds from the tiny

congregation that continues to meet weekly. We plan to accomplish our goal without creating an infrastructure – staff and related overhead – requiring fundraising on an annual basis.

Financial Status to Date

With generous support from our Board, friends, and a number of foundations we are within a whisper of achieving 30% of our goal -- \$150,000. Foundation supporters to date are:

• First Horizon Bank Foundation	• The Hilliard Family Foundation
• Hayne Hipp Foundation	• Jolley Foundation
• Spinks Family Foundation	

>100 individual donors from FL to WA and Greenville to Columbia have added their gifts.

*We operate with no paid staff or paid consultants.
100% of gifts are invested in the perpetual endowment.*

The Partnership Challenge

The next phase of our work is rooted in the vision of finding 100+ businesses, churches, and individuals/families who will make a tax-deductible investment in SPE of at least \$3,000 as a one-time gift or \$1,000 per year over three years. We call this the Partnership Challenge. Launched in late 2023 we already have those who have embraced the challenge.

Inaugural supporters of the Partnership Challenge include:

BUSINESS	CHURCH	INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY
• Burr & Forman LLP Greenville, SC	• Gap Creek Baptist Church Marietta, SC	• Mike & Beth Andrews Greenville, SC
	• Long Branch Baptist Church Greenville, SC	• Matthew & Tabitha Owen McKinney Greenville, SC
		• Carlton & Brenda Owen Marietta, SC
		• Brad Wyche & Diane Smock Greenville, SC

*We welcome the opportunity for ANY of our current donors to become **Partners** by increasing their total gift to \$3,000 or more. It can be done via an additional one-time gift or over a three-year pledge!*



Next Steps in Readyng the Site for Visitors

The heart of the Liberia Community – Soapstone Baptist Church – lies just three miles off Scenic Highway 11 (The Cherokee Scenic Highway). The site itself sits atop an old “soapstone” mine used by the Cherokee for materials to make cooking implements. The freed African American slaves that settled the site later and that persisted there for nearly 160-years, used the same soapstone rock as markers for the graves of family members. Those who’ve visited the site know that the remnants of large soapstone outcrops adorn the hilltop to this day surrounded by the modern church (built after the original structure was burned by arsonists in 1967) as well as the one-room school (1920s) and two cemeteries -- one of which serves

as resting place of many community founders.

STEP 1: Thanks to a generous commitment by Greenville-based Harper General Contractors, rehabilitation of the one-room school will be the first restoration project undertaken by SPE. In addition to stabilizing and restoring the historic building, our goal is to furnish it with period items and open the building to periodic visits by tourists as well as area schools.

STEP 2: We are working with Angela Agard, Founding Executive Director of the Clemson Area African American Museum, to include Soapstone as a stop on a “Black History Trail” in the Upstate. Too, over time, we hope to link with the International African American Museum in Charleston.

Charleston and plantations are top of mind when thinking about slavery in SC. The 1865 Census included 4,000 enslaved people in the Pickens District (Pickens and Oconee counties).

Our Board

Two of our founding Board members – Diane Smock and Don Lineback – had to step off from active Board membership for personal reasons, but both remain ardent supporters of SPE. We are proud to say that 100% of our members (past and present) are financial supporters, as well! Active members are:

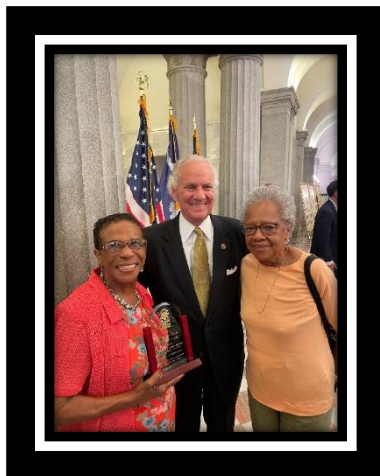
• Carlton N. Owen , Chairperson	• Andy Douglas , Secretary & Treasurer
• Peggy Baxter	• Mable Owens Clarke
• Dr. Jeffrey Craddock	• Pastor Chet Trower

Support Comes in Many Shapes and Sizes

We've been blessed to have folks that give money to help reach our ambitious goal. Some give money and time, talent, and other needs, as well. Among those we are especially thankful for:

- **Florence Colby** who helps keep our books in order.
- **Cary Hall** of Wyche Law Firm who guides us on all things legal.
- **Alex Reynolds** and colleague **Diana Holder** who've kept us web straight.
- **Terry McConnell** of McConnel Wood Products, Inc., Marietta, SC. Siding for the school.
- **Steven Bryant** of Chick-fil-A, Greenville & Travelers Rest, SC. Cookies for the last fish fry.
- **John Mack** and **Discover Fresh Foods** of Easley, SC. Cakes for the last fish fry.
- **John Boyanoski**, **CompletePR** for promotional advice and assistance.
- **Travis Waters & Evan Hamo**, **SynTerra Corp.** environmental assessment of school.

Our Matriarch Keeps Winning Recognition



Mable Owens Clarke (left), granddaughter of Liberia Community's founders, with South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster and SPE Board Member, Peggy Baxter, inside the Capitol Rotunda where she received Preservation SC's 2023 Governor's award.

The only one of eleven honorees asked to speak, Mable said, *"Growing up, as a little Black girl in rural Pickens County, I never dreamed that one day I would have the chance to stand with the Governor of my state and be recognized for anything,"*

Year-End and New Year Thoughts from Our Chairperson

The Liberia Community and Soapstone Baptist Church have persisted for nearly 160-years against insurmountable odds -- shallow soils, insects and diseases, droughts and floods that threatened crops. Some White neighbors trying to retake the land and others even burning the old church building. Outmigration for better opportunities. And yes, even the bank called the \$50,000 mortgage with only 90-days' notice. – This and so much more. Yet, those generations who came before and the effort led by Mable and her team of volunteers for more than two-decades using monthly fish fries to generate additional funds to keep the doors open, showed the power of vision and tenacity.



When the Soapstone Preservation Endowment was chartered in June 2022, the mountain ahead – amassing \$500,000 in just over three years – too seemed impossible. Eighteen-months in on a 42-month journey, and with God's blessings and the help of many, we are 30% of the way home. As we go into 2024, we ask that you stay with us by either continuing to give generously and/or helping point us to and connect us with others who share the vision of protecting and promoting the history and the story that is the Liberia Community and Soapstone.

To Make Online Gifts: www.soapstonepe.org

Checks to:
Soapstone Preservation Endowment
P.O. Box 454
Marietta, SC 29661

To discuss special gifts email: carltonowen1@gmail.com
