

SOAPSTONE PRESERVATION ENDOWMENT

"Protecting and Promoting the History and Story of the Liberia Community"

www.Soapstonepe.org

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

My friend Bill Robertson --
extraordinaire -- shared
the Larmar Valley of
might not seem intuitive to
immediately think about
Soapstone Baptist Church.
beautiful photo speaks to
all odds. The people of the
community stood strong
elements, but also against
to steal their land, burning
and so much more.



photographer
this picture that he took in
Yellowstone. While it
others, it made me
the Liberia Community and
The single tree in the
me of persistence against
once-vibrant Liberia
against not only the
prejudice, racism, attempts
of their beloved church,

YET, their legacy and a remnant of their ancestors persist -- a testament to faith and the human spirit.

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 an initial goal of amassing a
\$500,000 perpetual endowment by December 31, 2025.
The intent is to generate annual funds to forever assist
the tiny congregation that continues to worship weekly
with the responsibility of protecting the buildings and
grounds. With generous help from **YOU and many
others**, we've exceeded that hurdle and are now

focused on reaching our final objective -- **\$1 million**. We plan to accomplish this without creating an
infrastructure -- staff and long-term overhead -- requiring fundraising on an ongoing basis.

Financial Status

With generous support from friends, family, our Board, and a grant from the State of South Carolina, by
December 31, 2024, we had a total of **\$543,600** on hand. More than 150 individual donors from FL to WA and
SC to VT have made gifts as have several area foundations and businesses.

Thanks to the special efforts of Rep. David Hiott (R) Pickens and Rep. Chandra Dillard (D) Greenville, we were awarded a \$250,000 dollar-for-dollar matching grant from the State that allowed us to meet and exceed our initial goal a year ahead of schedule.

The Partnership Challenge

While the \$1 million hill seems higher than nearby Table Rock Mountain, we are currently in the final round of consideration for a \$250,000 grant from a national charity. We believe our chance of success is good as we began as 1 of 691 “letters of intent” winnowed to 200 entrants asked to submit full applications. We are now in the final round of 75 from which about 25 will be selected for funding in late February 2025. While we have no guarantee, should we be blessed to win this grant, the final leg of less than \$250,000 will be well in hand.

IN FACT, if just 63 businesses, churches, and individuals/families choose to join our PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGE by becoming **1-of-100** – making tax-deductible investments of at least \$3,000 as a one-time gift or \$1,000 per year over three years -- we will be there! All of our Board members have made pledges along with 30 others.

*ANY existing donor wishing to become a **Partner** can do so by **increasing their total gifts to \$3,000 or more** with an additional one-time gift or a multi-year pledge! If you don't recall how much you've given, just send an email – carltonowen1@gmail.com – and we'll let you know what it will take to fill the gap.*

Inaugural supporters of the Partnership Challenge are:

BUSINESS/CHURCH		
• Burr & Forman LLP Greenville, SC	• John Coggeshall & Cathy Robinson Clemson, SC	• Erwin & Nancy Maddrey Greenville, SC
• Federal Home Loan Bank Atlanta, GA	• Bruce & Flo Colby Simpsonville, SC	• Karen Beth Martinez Cleveland, SC
• First Baptist Church Mauldin, SC	• Wes Cooler & Ann Bowen Sunset, SC	• Bill & Anne Masters Greenville, SC
• Gap Creek Baptist Church Marietta, SC	• Jeff & Renee Craddock Tigerville, SC	• Kathleen McKinney Greenville, SC
• Long Branch Baptist Church Greenville, SC	• Charles Davis & Mable Owens Clarke Liberia Community, Pickens, SC	• Matt & Tabitha Owen McKinney Greenville, SC
• Soapstone Baptist Church Liberia Community, Pickens, SC	• Andy & Susan Douglas Greenville, SC	• Carlton & Brenda Owen Greenville, SC
	• Anne Farrar Greenville, SC	• Josh & Allison Owen West Chester, PA
INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY		
• Anonymous	• Bob & Sharon Fennell Clemson, SC	• Leon & Barbara Patterson Greenville, SC
• Mike & Beth Andrews Greenville, SC	• Bill Fitzgerald & Julie Martin Greenville, SC	• Don & Jane Pilzer Greenville, SC
• Peggy Baxter Greenville, SC	• Gally & Fielding Gallivan Greenville, SC	• Robert & Ariane Taylor Greenville, SC
• Steven & Robyn Bryant Taylors, SC	• Charles & Nancy Henkey Seneca, SC	• Roger & Kathy Troutman Clemson, SC
• Doug & Barbara Click Salem, SC	• Jim & Kay King Salem, SC	• Chet & Bonnie Trower Piedmont, SC
	• Don & Judy Lineback Greenville, SC	• Brad Wyche & Diane Smock Greenville, SC

Progress on Soapstone School



The former Liberia Community lies just three miles off 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). Too,

the site boasts a one-room school (1920s) and two cemeteries -- one of which serves as resting place of many community founders.

Thanks to the generous commitment of good friend, Doug Harper, and Greenville-based Harper General Contractors, structural rehabilitation of the one-room school was completed in 2024. We are now in the final stages of preparing the school for visitors. Two tasks remain: Refinishing the floors; and finding “period items” to furnish the building.

We have 8 of a desired 12 wooden children’s school desks. Too, we are looking for a large blackboard (not the modern green ones) to affix to the wall. *(If you have a desk or know someone who does – or even more difficult -- the blackboard, let us know!).*

Unlike the 5000 one-room schools built and paid for by the Rosenwald Family, Soapstone School was built with sweat equity and financial support from the Liberia Community.

Our Board

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

Support Comes in Many Shapes and Sizes

We’ve been blessed to have folks that have given money to help reach our ambitious goal. Some give money and time, talent, and help meet other needs, as well. We are especially thankful for these in 2024:

- **John Boyanoski, CompletePR** who provided guidance with press and public awareness.
- **Florence Colby** who helps in many ways now including the hunt for school furnishings.
- **Gally Gallivan** for assistance in developing our first investment policy.
- **Cary Hall** of Wyche Law Firm who guides us in all things legal.
- **Doug Harper and Team** for sweat, materials, and talents invested in restoring the school.
- **Alex Reynolds** and colleague **Diana Holder** who’ve kept us “web straight.”

Looking Ahead to 2025

We have lots of important things planned for the year ahead, among them:

- *For the “believe it or not” category ... Mable is planning a single fish fry likely in April. This will be to support the needs of the church NOT the Endowment. Regardless, we’ll let you know the date when it is set.*
- We’ve engaged a videographer to help capture some of the key people behind Soapstone while we still have them available – among those targeted, Mable, Pastor Trower, and Professor Coggeshall. We hope to have the first piece done by February to coincide with Black History Month.
- In 2025 we will make our first distributions from the perpetual endowment -- we will NEVER invade the corpus – instead, using only a conservative portion of interest and earnings as we work to grow the corpus to ensure intergenerational equity. Among initial plans: assist with roof and ceiling repairs from damage due to Helene; cover the cost of windows by replacing the “temporary” ones *(been there for years)* in the one-room school; capturing Mable and friends on film; along with a list of smaller items necessary to keep things going.

Year-End and New Year Thoughts from Our Chairperson

We began the journey of establishing a standalone non-profit to ensure that the history and legacy of the Liberia Community and Soapstone Baptist was done in the face of a declining All of our Board approached the challenge meet the challenge of even the first to effect real change? With more than **GENEROSITY**, any skepticism is gone, and through so many people to make it *know what the future holds; but I know* quotes that, if applied, might help all of us have an even better 2025:



Church would continue into the future. Such congregation due to out-migration and deaths. with energy yet trepidation. Could we really \$500,000 and then on to \$1 million necessary half our goal in the bank due to **YOUR** we are reveling in how God has worked happen. One of my favorite sayings is *"I don't who holds the future."* Let me share a few

"The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones." — Confucius

"The biggest temptation is to settle for too little." — Thomas Merton

"You pray for the hungry. Then you feed them. That's how prayer works." — Pope Francis

"To love means loving the unlovable. To forgive means pardoning the unpardonable. Faith means believing the unbelievable. Hope means hoping when everything seems hopeless." — Gilbert K. Chesterton

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress." — Frederick Douglas

"Anything in life worth having is worth working for." — Andrew Carnegie

"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it." — Edith Wharton

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now." — Anonymous

"There can be no greater gift than that of giving one's time and energy to help others without expecting anything in return." — Nelson Mandela

"Don't aspire to make a living, aspire to make a difference." — Denzel Washington

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
