

# SOAPSTONE PRESERVATION ENDOWMENT

## Upstate Women Named Governor's Award Winner by PreservationSC -- Pickens County Native Mable Owens Clarke Recognized for Lifetime Achievement --

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**Columbia, South Carolina** – Mable Owens Clarke, a Pickens County native and descendent of slaves, is known for many things. Chef featured in EatingWell magazine that chronicled the “miracle of the fish fry” and her favorite recipes. Deacon in the small African American church that sits on lands donated by her great-grandparents. Prolific storyteller. A world class hugger. Winner of the Order of the Palmetto, South Carolina’s highest civilian honor. And now, 2023 PreservationSC Governor’s Award winner for “lifelong dedication to the preservation of South Carolina’s historic buildings, structures, or sites” to forever secure protection of her beloved Soapstone Baptist Church.

In a ceremony at the South Carolina Statehouse on June 27<sup>th</sup>, Governor Henry McMaster presented Clarke with PreservationSC’s 2023 Governor’s Award. Since 1995, Preservation South Carolina, the SC Department of Archives and History, and the Office of the Governor have recognized exceptional accomplishments in the preservation, rehabilitation, and interpretation of South Carolina’s architectural and cultural heritage with a series of statewide awards.

“Mable and her supporters are living proof of the validity of Margaret Mead’s oft-used quote, ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has,’” said Soapstone Preservation Endowment Chairman Carlton Owen.

The Governor’s Award which may be presented each year recognizes an individual’s significant achievements or landmark efforts in the support of historic preservation in South Carolina.

Among the 2023 award winners, Clarke alone was asked to share excerpts from her life journey with the assembled group. She shared how a promise to her dying mother led her on a 22-year journey to host monthly fish fries to help keep the doors of Soapstone open. How her small army of friends and supporters rallied to help pay off a \$50,000 loan with only 90-days’ notice when the bank called the mortgage. About work with conservation interests including the South Carolina Conservation Bank, Upstate Forever, and the Upstate Land Conservation Fund to forever protect the site via a conservation easement that thwarts plans by developers to convert the site to housing. And, most recently, how the establishment of the Soapstone Preservation Endowment, a standalone not-for-profit with a singular mission to help raise funds to protect the site and its history, will carry her legacy into the future.

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For more information about **Soapstone Preservation Endowment**, contact Carlton Owen, Chairman, PO Box 454, Marietta, SC 29661. [carltonowen1@gmail.com](mailto:carltonowen1@gmail.com). (864) 414-1325. <https://www.soapstonepe.org>

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