
**Gwinnett Historical Restoration & Preservation Board
Monday, December 18, 2023 - 10:00 AM**

Lawrenceville Female Seminary, 455 South Perry Street, Lawrenceville, GA 30046

Present: Demetrios Lambros, Sara Howe-Silvers, Ann Bender, Amelia Lewis

Absent: Justin Walsh, Matt Butti

1. Call to Order
2. Welcome/Opening Remarks
 - a. Chair Lambros acknowledged 50th anniversary of HRPB and thanked staff and board members for their contributions this year.
3. Approval of Agenda:
{Action: Approved; Motion: Howe-Silvers; Second: Bender; Vote: (3-0) Lambros-Yes; Howe-Silvers-Yes; Bender-Yes}
4. Approval of Minutes: October 16, 2023, Regular Meeting
{Action: Approved; Motion: Bender; Second: Howe-Silvers; Vote: (3-0) Lambros-Yes; Howe-Silvers-Yes; Bender-Yes}
5. Announcements (Board Members)
 - a. Board member Bender read a statement, requesting the board make a motion for the statement to be entered into the official minutes.
 - i. The Board made a motion that Board Member Bender's statement be entered into the official minutes.
{Action: Approved; Motion: Howe-Silvers; Second: Lambros; Vote: (3-0) Lambros-Yes; Howe-Silvers-Yes; Bender-Yes}
 1. Statement and referenced letters (documents attached)
 - b. County Historian Lewis stated the United Ebony Society's annual MLK Day Parade will take place on January 15, 2024 beginning at 11am at the Gwinnett Justice and Administrative Center.
6. Old Business
 - a. Board Member Bender presented updates on the Quilt Unveiling
7. New Business

8. Project Updates

- a. Staff member Cammie Mansfield presented on the following:
 - i. Livsey Family Big House Restoration Project
 - ii. Preservation Hall of Fame
 - iii. Hooper-Renwick Preservation Project

9. Program Updates

- a. Staff member Jason West presented on the following:
 - i. Recent and upcoming historical and cultural programming

10. Exhibit/Artifact Updates

- a. Staff member Cammie Mansfield presented on the following:
 - i. Year to date report

11. Comments from Audience

12. Adjournment at 10:49am

{Action: Approved; Motion: Lambros; Second: Howe-Silvers; Vote: (3-0) Lambros-Yes; Howe-Silvers-Yes; Bender-Yes}

Dec 18th

First, I make a motion that my statement be entered into our official minutes. I will provide a PDF

Today's meeting will be my last as the representative for Commissioner Carden on the Historical, Restoration and Preservation Board. Over the last four years I have had the most rewarding, **and** the most frustrating experiences. I have enjoyed learning how local government works and I've met some truly amazing people.

Sadly, I am leaving the board with so much unfinished business.

I am talking about The Promised Land or Big House project.

If you haven't heard Thomas Lisvey passed away on Dec 5th. His hope was to see the Big House turned into a museum honoring his family, as well as the Maguires, who were the original owners.

For the last 3 years the HRPB has been asking questions of county staff. What we've received in response can only be described as misleading and incomplete reports. I will give you three examples

First – The HRPB has asked countless times about how the community stakeholders can be involved – Dr. Mark Patterson, from July 2022, **“once we have a Request for Proposal (RFP)”** Glenn Boreman June 2023 says **“The timeline for the restoration process includes current meetings held with Lord Aeck Sargent (LAS) to plan and coordinate the community outreach and engagement phase which is planned to take place this Fall. This will include at least two events which will be planned at different times of the day/week to allow for greater participation. Additionally, we've discussed having an online survey be available for input and feedback.”** Lord Aeck Sargent has brought in a consulting company to engage with the community. But --- still no meetings have been scheduled. Nor do we know who the consultant is.

Second - In 2019 a report was made by Lose Design with input from Lork Aeck Sargent. This 60 plus page document was never shared with us.

Lastly, in late 2018 historian and Maguire descendant Ruth Abrams began working with The Dept. of Community Services. Dr Patterson stated in Nov. 2020 that **“Ruth Abrams continues significant progress on research and interpretation”** Why will none of her work be considered?

We have heard from multiple members of the Livsey family about the history and cultural importance of the Promised Land. There are descendants of the Maguires still living in the region. – I hope we will hear their stories too.

The Big House has a unique story to tell – not just for Georgia.

In conclusion I have four letters of support that I will share with you: Tom Houck of Civils Rights Tours of Atlanta, Ben Sutton, Director of Preservation with The Georgia Trust, Lonnie Bunch, Smithsonian Secretary and founder of the National Museum of African American History, and Elizabeth Sikes of The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience.

Thank you



November 28, 2023

TO: Nicole Hendrickson, Chair of the
Commission: Nicole.Hendrickson@gwinnettcountry.com; Glenn Stephens, County
Administrator: Glenn.Stephens@gwinnettcountry.com Tina Flemming, Director,
Department of Community Services: Tina.Flemming@GwinnettCounty.com

FROM: Tom Houck, Chairman Civil Rights Tour Atlanta
275 Memorial DR SE #217 ~~Atlanta, GA~~ 30312
404 386 0992
houcptom80@gmail.com

It has come to my attention that Gwinnett County purchased the Promised Land Plantation's "Big House" and some property from the Livsey family over five years ago, promising to preserve it and to open it as an historic site. I understand the County has not yet made good on its promise so the property has deteriorated.

Most of my life has been in pursuit of justice and civil rights. Some of my most precious memories are of my time as driver and confidant of Martin Luther King and my work with John Lewis, Julian Bond and Maynard Jackson to name a few. Now, I run "Civil Rights Tours," which transports visitors to sites associated with the struggle for Civil Rights. We stop at places associated with well known people, such as Rev. King and others less known but very important to the movement's success such as Rev. Joseph Lowey, known as the "Dean of the Civil Rights Movement."

There is a profound difference between having heard about someone or seeing their names on posters and stepping into the places they knew so well. It is in these places that they come alive as human beings, making us want to know more.

The Promised Land was home to three primary groups of people: The Maguires who founded the plantation, the Black people enslaved there (their descendants now being located through genealogy), and the Livseys, an African American family who remarkably bought the Plantation in the midst of Jim Crow, farmed, built small businesses, became community leaders and raised several generations there. Through these stories, visitors will learn about the ante-bellum South, the rationale used to justify slavery, how Black people survived forced servitude including the laws which limited their advance, and the efforts of Black and White people to eradicate slavery, Why is that important? Because, as Dr. King said, "We are made by history." American history includes moments of triumph and moments of despair; moments when we are on the track toward democracy, and moment we have fallen off. Through history, we confront the people we do and do not want to emulate, gaining an understanding critical to our development. As Ida B. Wells said, "The way to right the wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them." By saving the Promised Land Plantation, you will do just that ...and much more.

I will be monitoring your progress with great interest. I hope to read soon that the restoration is underway, and a date set to open this important site to the public. Thankyou.

Sincerely, Tom Houck,

PS: I would be pleased to have you, your colleagues, family and friends join me on a tour of Atlanta's Civil Rights history and discover what a difference seeing an historic sight makes. Call 404-386-0992 to make a reservation.



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The Georgia Trust
for Historic Preservation
1516 Peachtree Street, NW
Atlanta GA, 30309-2908
404-881-9980
Fax: 404-875-2205
www.georgiatruster.org

December 5, 2023

Director Tina Fleming
446 W Crogan Street
Lawrenceville, GA 30046

Dear Director Fleming,

I am writing in support of the full rehabilitation and interpretation of the Promised Land site in a way that honors the full history of the site, including the efforts made by the Livsey family and other African American families who purchased the land in this area and created a thriving community. This historic site should be interpreted in a manner that reflects the community's wishes and elevates the voices of the people who have called this area home for generations.

I want to commend you and the county for making the commitment to preserve this piece of Gwinnett County's history. The house is a unique resource reflecting nearly 200 years of the county's historic development. I encourage this board to prioritize the stabilization and rehabilitation of this unique piece of Georgia's history in a way that honors all past owners of the site and ensures its preservation for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Ben Sutton
Director of Preservation



Smithsonian

9:14 AM (41 minutes

Secretary <SmithsonianSecretary@si.edu>

ago) Re

to Nicole.Hendrickson@gwinnettcountry.com, Glenn.Stephens@gwinnettcountry.com,ply
Tina.Flemming@GwinnettCounty.com, Greg, me

Dear Chairperson Hendrickson, Administrator Stephens, and Director Flemming,

I am writing to support the restoration and interpretation of the Promised Land Plantation. As a historian, I know the importance of preserving historic sites, including this one. As a nation, our history guides us – not just to celebrate, but to commemorate and help us reach the ideals of freedom and liberty. It is vital that we support history through preservation and scholarship. My career has been spent preserving history in various ways, and that work – and all of the work done by my colleagues in museums, preservation organizations, and cultural institutions across the nation – has helped us preserve history for a better shared future.

Thank you for the work that you are doing to help America preserve its past and prepare for a better tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Lonnie G. Bunch III

Lonnie G. Bunch III | Secretary

Phone: 202.633.1846

Email: SmithsonianSecretary@si.edu



December 7, 2023

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Gwinnett Justice & Administration Center
c/o Chairwoman Nicole Henrickson,
Glenn Stephens & Tina Flemming
75 Langley Drive
Lawrenceville, GA 30046

Dear Gwinnett County Leaders,

I write to you today as Executive Director of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC), the only global network of historic sites, museums and memory initiatives fostering civic engagement through site-based narratives of the past and present. With over 350 member sites in more than 75 countries, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is dedicated to transforming places that preserve the past into dynamic spaces that promote new understandings and connections.

Throughout its 25 years of work with sites remembering a range of histories the world over, ICSC has seen time and again that historic sites have an essential role to play in fostering thoughtful and rich dialogue about the struggles and triumphs of the past. When narratives are developed and shared in an inclusive, community-centered way, grounded in historic truths in all their complexities, visitors begin to see history in a new way, allowing the bridging of differences and strengthening of personal connections in the present. Historic sites that embrace such a process through intentional interpretation of—often—painful pasts find that positive social transformation is possible, rather than the deepening of social divides that is assured when partial or revised narratives are presented as truths. Embracing and sharing of truths in all their complexities positions historic sites, their staff and administrators as leaders in the local, national and international heritage communities.

I urge you in your role as Gwinnett County leaders to uphold your commitment to the community to preserve and interpret The Promised Land Plantation with integrity befitting the site, the commission and the community. The approach taken to the preservation and interpretation of The Promised Land carries great weight and potential, especially at this moment as parks, towns, and counties just like yours across the United States seek ways to come to terms with histories rooted in the slave trade as well as histories of resistance and resilience that can be inspirational to new generations.

This is also a moment when organizations such as mine, with global networks of heritage professionals as well as engaged and vocal members of the public, carefully monitor the interpretation of sites that are at risk of promoting narratives that are neither inclusive of local community members' perspectives and experiences nor truth-based. ICSC is often called in to correct interpretation in such instances, as visitors today have

many methods of calling immediate attention to experiences at sites that deviate from historic truths. Above all, however, this is a moment when the opportunity to be a part of expanding the national narrative can reflect in profound and positive ways on those who commit to being part of social transformation through an honest reckoning with the past.

The story of The Promised Land is but one of many that make up the constellation of United States history. In the case of The Promised Land Plantation, historians, genealogists and the Livsey family have begun laying the groundwork for the site's interpretation through the collection, archiving, and memorializing of a diversity of histories and lived experiences. The original land on which the Plantation's "Big House" stands offers an ideal space to amplify and anchor these truths, a complete narrative of the land, its inhabitants and their descendants, their struggles and triumphs, along with the socio-political history that shaped their experiences. To be able to return to the original site where history unfolded and share that story with new generations is a privilege that time and circumstance do not often allow. The power of place facilitates transformative dialogues that can catalyze a shared conscience, bridging gaps between visitors, local community members, descendants of those enslaved at The Promised Land, and those who struggle to confront this history.

Through its many decades of work with entities such as the Smithsonian Institution, the National Parks Service, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences, ICSC has seen that preserving and sharing stories at original sites of history has far greater impact than at sites removed from or recreated from their original structures, a practice that is often perceived as ahistorical.

The history of slavery and its legacies is not an experience unique to Gwinnett County, but the opportunity that you have to preserve and provide interpretation for The Promised Land Plantation is singular. Gwinnett County is at a crossroads, one amplified by social and political relevancies as the United States begins to reckon with its past and expand its national narrative, and the world looks for models for best practice around sharing their own histories. We look to Gwinnett County leaders to preserve The Promised Land Plantation and center community members in developing its interpretation as a site of history that moves us to face the darker stories of our past as well as moments of transcendence. It is only through facing divisive and painful histories that repairing the social fabric can begin. Gwinnett County can become a new voice of authority and experience on addressing history with courage and conviction and, in doing so, strengthen community relations through heritage. We very much look forward to following your progress.

With kind regards,



Elizabeth Silkes
Executive Director