

Historically Speaking

VOLUME 46

ISSUE TWO


A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF HISTORIC COLUMBIA FOUNDATION

FALL 2007

Civil Rights Landmark Becomes One of Our Own

HISTORIC COLUMBIA FOUNDATION
ACQUIRES MODJESKA SIMKINS HOUSE

PAGES 4-5



“I cannot be bought
and I will not be sold.”

– Modjeska Monteith Simkins



from the Executive Director

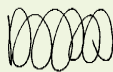
In August Historic Columbia Foundation realized the distinct privilege of taking responsibility for the home of one of 20th-century South Carolina's most significant figures. In partnership with BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina and the City of Columbia, Historic Columbia Foundation became the steward of the Modjeska Monteith Simkins House and its adjacent dependency. Under the Foundation's care her former residence will find new life as a house museum, exhibit space, and gathering place for those interested in engaging in dialogue for positive change.

Preserved by the Community for Collaborative Trust in the late 1990s, the buildings located at 2025 Marion Street hold the stories and memories of the Civil Rights Movement in South Carolina. On a recent walk through the property with Beatrice McKnight, often referred to as Mrs. Simkins' right hand, Foundation staff had the unique experience of hearing first-hand the activities that took place here, from the meals Mrs. Simkins cooked in her small kitchen to the company with whom she held court from a chair in the front room. As much of Historic Columbia Foundation's house museum interpretation relates to the 19th-century, it is rare to have the opportunity to speak with individuals whose first-hand experience can inform the way we approach interpretation.

Addressing the Civil Rights era provides an extraordinary opportunity to learn directly from those people personally involved in the movement.

Last winter's work with the Waverly Neighborhood Association and former residents to understand the story of Columbia's first suburb offered the first foray into interpreting this seminal event in our recent past. Riding and walking through the neighborhood with the people who spent their childhood in Waverly, we heard many disturbing memories of racial discrimination, but also the most heart-warming stories of what it meant to be part of this community, whose elders wrapped their arms around all who resided there. Many of Columbia's most prominent leaders thrived and excelled in the Waverly neighborhood. As part of the 2007 Jubilee Festival of Heritage, Historic Columbia Foundation honored one of these individuals - Judge Matthew J. Perry. Over 150 individuals joined us to recognize the extraordinary accomplishments of this man who achieved so many firsts and profoundly affected the lives of so many people.

These past few months we have come full circle to become an organization that addresses Columbia's earliest days through our most recent history. It is an honor to tell the stories of the 18th-century founders of this community AND those who continue to walk in our midst today.



Robin Waites



(Left to Right) The Honorable Cameron Currie, The Honorable Joseph F. Anderson, Jr., The Honorable Matthew J. Perry, Jr., The Honorable Ernest A. Finney, Jr., The Honorable Costa M. Pleicones, The Honorable Jean H. Toal, The Honorable Margaret B. Seymour, The Honorable E.C. Burnett, III

JUBILEE HONORS Judge Matthew Perry

Judge Perry's colleagues, friends, and family joined Historic Columbia Foundation's board and staff at a special luncheon at the Summit Club in August.

Historically Speaking

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF
HISTORIC COLUMBIA
FOUNDATION

FALL 2007
VOLUME 46, ISSUE TWO

PRESIDENT
Stephen G. Morrison

1ST VICE PRESIDENT
J. Calhoun Watson

2ND VICE PRESIDENT
Gloria S. James

SECRETARY
Susan A. Brill

TREASURER
Mel Hart

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Robin Waites

Historic Columbia FOUNDATION

The Mission of Historic Columbia Foundation is to nurture, support, and protect the historical and cultural heritage of Columbia and Richland County through programs of advocacy, education and preservation.



Publication of the Fall 2007 issue of *Historically Speaking* is sponsored by



Cover: Modjeska Simkins House. Portrait courtesy of the Modjeska Simkins Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, University Libraries, The University of South Carolina.

All photos courtesy of Historic Columbia Foundation unless otherwise noted.

Historically Speaking In This Issue

Collecting for the Collection3
 A Civil Rights Landmark
 Becomes One of Our Own 4-5
 Wilson Home Rehabilitation Update6
 Fall Programming7
 Historic Holidays8

COLLECTING FOR THE COLLECTION to Ensure the Past's Future



This portrait was transported from a New Orleans antique shop months before Hurricane Katrina. W.H. Scarborough painted the unknown subject by in Columbia 1849. The piece needs conservation and restoration work.

Requiring food, clothing, and shelter, museum collections are much like people. Any good collection grows by being “fed,” or nourished, through new acquisitions of artifacts. Collections are “clothed,” or covered, by insurance and a myriad of files containing their histories and administrative documents. And, collections are sheltered from the harmful effects of time, whether their

artifacts rest in storage or are on display for public viewing.

In order to showcase more material culture specific to the city and county, Historic Columbia Foundation must have the wherewithal to be able to respond to opportunities to purchase artifacts with local provenance. We must be able to secure artifacts at auction and to broker transactions with individuals and other institutions when

opportunities to grow the collection present themselves.

Like all museums, Historic Columbia Foundation wages a constant battle to preserve and interpret the past while maintaining a collection of historic artifacts. Our objects require care; some periodically require more than others. At the hands of professional conservators damaged pieces experience longevity and stability, like patients receiving medical services. Unattended, artifacts languish.

Both building our collection and caring for that which we already have requires support from members and friends like you. Neither of these worthwhile endeavors can be realized until Historic Columbia Foundation can draw from standing funds earmarked for such purposes. Please consider what you can do to ensure the past will have a future at Historic Columbia Foundation.

For more information about how you can assist, please contact John Sherrer, Director of Collections and Interpretation, at 803.252.1770, ext. 28 or jsherrer@historiccolumbia.org.

Accessioned into the permanent museum collection in 1983, this Preston family silver plated meat dome has yet to be displayed due to its poor appearance.



COLLECTING FOR COLLECTIONS

Yes! I would like to donate to the collections department!

\$ _____ Acquisition Fund
 \$ _____ Conservation Fund
 \$ _____ Collections General
 (supplies, staffing, equipment)

Name _____
 Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

Check is enclosed made payable to HCF or Charge my Visa/Mastercard/Discover in the amount of \$ _____
 # _____ exp. Date _____

Mail form to: Historic Columbia, 1601
 Richland Street, Columbia, SC 29201

Signature _____



A CIVIL RIGHTS LANDMARK Becomes One of Our Own

HISTORIC COLUMBIA FOUNDATION ACQUIRES MODJESKA SIMKINS HOUSE

By: Latrice Williams



“ I cannot be bought
and I will not
be sold.”

- Modjeska Monteith Simkins

As a pioneering leader for more than 60 years, Modjeska Monteith Simkins lived by those words that gave insight to her spirit, strength, and tenacity. She challenged the norm and became one of the state’s most important civil rights leaders — struggling for public health reform, fighting racism and inequalities, and addressing social issues. Thanks to contributions from one of the state’s largest employers and the City of Columbia, her life’s work through historic interpretation can further be told.

Simkins was born in Columbia in 1899. She graduated from Benedict College in 1921. The same year, she began teaching at Booker T. Washington High School. Because public schools in Columbia did not allow married women to teach, Modjeska Monteith had to resign when she married Andrew Simkins in 1929. In 1931, she became the Director of Negro Work for the South Carolina Anti-Tuberculosis Association and the state’s only full-time, statewide African-American public health worker. In this role Simkins launched her renowned statewide reform work and made a significant impact on the health of African Americans in the South.

It was during her career in the health field that Simkins moved to 2025 Marion

Street. She purchased the property in 1932 for \$2,000. The Columbia Cottage-style house was built sometime between 1890 and 1895, based on existing maps. Simkins used the property as a residence, office, meeting place, and for lodging civil rights associates. Her guests included Thurgood Marshall, who stayed here when hotels in the city were closed to African Americans.

Beatrice McKnight, a close friend and personal assistant to Simkins, remembers how she loved entertaining and hosting guests at her house. “She loved to cook. Yellow grits were her favorite. She loved highly seasoned foods and all types of wines,” said McKnight. Her generosity even extended to strangers on the street. “Sometimes people stopped by who didn’t



Image courtesy of the Modjeska Simkins Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, University Libraries, The University of South Carolina.

have food. She would go to her kitchen just to prepare food for them.”

In 1942, Simkins lost her position with the Anti-Tuberculosis Association — partly due to her increasing involvement with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). A year earlier, she had been elected secretary of the state conference, the first woman to serve as an officer. In this capacity she was instrumental in gaining support for teacher equalization lawsuits in Sumter and Columbia.

Perhaps Simkins’ most significant work was with Reverend J.A. DeLaine, school principal in Clarendon County, on the 1950 South Carolina Federal District Court case *Briggs v. Elliott*. Simkins helped write the declaration for the school lawsuit that requested equality for black schools. The case, along with others from around the South, led to the 1954 United States Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* that separate was in fact not equal, thus violating the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Throughout the years, Simkins’ house became a personal library and resource center, where she kept files from her work with the NAACP, fundraising letters, press releases, personal notes to colleagues and politicians, and books on a variety of topics.

She also used it as her personal office space where she kept ledgers from her husband’s liquor store business.

Because of its historical significance, the house and property behind it were purchased by the Collaborative for Community Trust in 1997. The Trust became stewards of the house and utilized the property as a center for justice, ethics, and human rights. Soon after the purchase, preservation efforts were initiated. Cosmetic repairs were made to the house and the structure to the rear.

Sometime prior to Simkins’ purchase, the house in the rear became associated with 2025 Marion Street. Because this property was not actively in use for quite some time, it requires more restoration work than the main house.

Recently, the Simkins property became vacant with the Collaborative no longer serving as steward. BlueCross Blue Shield of South Carolina became aware of the imminent foreclosure on the important historic site through media reports in April. The company paid the debt and is working closely with Historic Columbia Foundation, the City of Columbia, and community leaders to restore the house.

“Modjeska Simkins is perhaps the most important civil rights figure in South

Carolina’s history. Her untiring efforts, courage and leadership helped change a fundamental injustice on a national scale. Her home is the physical remains of her legacy to all of us, and we feel it must be preserved, restored, and maintained for the future. It is a powerful reminder of the past and will ensure that future generations will know and appreciate what Mrs. Simkins accomplished. We’re privileged to be a part of this effort,” said Ed Sellers, Chairman and CEO of BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina.

Simkins worked in the community and lived at her property until her death in 1992. Much has been preserved through oral history, her writings, and close friends and relatives. The City of Columbia also has vowed to provide annual operating support and some capital support. Historic Columbia Foundation will manage the property.

Historic Columbia Foundation is working diligently with community leaders on plans for public use of the property. Expectations are to include the house for exhibit space, meeting space, and educational center. For more information or to submit photos or historical documents on Simkins, please contact Robin Waites at 803.252.7742, ext. 24.



The Columbia Urban League honoring Simkins in 1982. Vernon Jordan, National Urban League President and J.T. McLawhorn, Jr., Columbia Urban League President.



Simkins with friend and personal assistant Beatrice McKnight.

Images from the Modjeska Simkins Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, University Libraries, The University of South Carolina.

Wilson Home

REHABILITATION UPDATE

By: John Sherrer, Director of Collections and Interpretation



These images of the Woodrow Wilson Home illustrate the degree of damage found throughout the structure.

Months of research by representatives from John Milner Associates (JMA) and Historic Columbia Foundation staff have produced an historic property report that will serve as the guiding document for the rehabilitation of the 28th president's former home. Meshing incredibly detailed analyses of the building's physical construction, systems, and finishes with archaeological findings, contextual research, and interpretive and programmatic interests, JMA has delivered an unparalleled product the likes of which have never been applied to Historic Columbia Foundation's other house museums. Included in JMA's findings are proposals for restoring certain historic components of the circa-1872 Italianate villa whose evidence was discovered during field analysis last winter and spring, in addition to cost estimates for the various stages of work involved in the multiphase rehabilitation.

With the report in hand, Historic Columbia Foundation can proceed with much-needed physical improvements at the property, which has been closed to public tours since October 2005. The rehabilitation will quite literally assume a top down approach with the Reconstruction-era residence most likely receiving a wood shingle roof by next February. Once in place, this historically appropriate feature will significantly alter the revered building's appearance, returning it to a time when most Columbia homes featured such treatments. More changes will follow in an effort to return portions of the home for which evidence was found back to their Wilson-era appearance. The most notable backdating will occur on the structure's rear, or north elevation,

where electrical, plumbing, and architectural infill have altered the original 19th-century façade. Here, too, JMA has called for a redesign of the property's ADA-accessible ramp so that this amenity will both outline the no longer extant kitchen house and better accommodate disabled visitors to the site.

Research has granted insight into not only the physical needs of the building, but also approaches to interpreting various aspects of the Wilson family's time here in Columbia, including domestic services and technology, politics, religion, and social history. In developing its working interpretive plan the Foundation's staff incorporated the evidence JMA uncovered that indicated historic uses of each space in the house while determining which artifacts within the museum's collection would best tell the Wilson family's story. Also, the future role of technology in interpreting the site factored significantly into how best to represent various aspects of Woodrow Wilson's presidency and its salient features.

With the submission of the historic structure report Historic Columbia Foundation has taken its first, and perhaps most, important step toward realizing the Wilson Home's rehabilitation. Armed with an array of historic facts, physical evidence, and best practice guidelines for historic preservation we will be able to showcase this National Register-listed property unlike in any previous efforts. To stay abreast of the latest developments during the property's rehabilitation, visit our website blog at www.historiccolumbia.org and to contribute to this exciting project contact Sara Salley, Director of Development, at 252-7742, ext. 21 or ssalley@historiccolumbia.org.

People, Places and Progress

Fall Programming Offers a Variety of Historic Activities

Just because the summer has ended doesn't mean you have to stay inside with nothing to do. Historic Columbia Foundation is offering a variety of programs to keep you busy and provide educational opportunities showcasing the "people, places and progress" in our great city.

Annual Meeting

Join Historic Columbia Foundation's Board of Trustees and staff for our Annual Meeting on Wednesday, October 17 at the Seibels House and Garden from 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm For reservations, call 252.7742 ext.29 or Email reservations@historiccolumbia.org.

Volunteer Training

Interested in history but don't know where to turn? Consider volunteering for Historic Columbia Foundation. Whether leading tours, working with school groups, researching, or gardening, we have a place for you. Training is scheduled for Monday, October 22 and Tuesday, October 23 from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at the Seibels House. Contact Ann Posner at 803.252.1770, ext. 24 or aposner@historiccolumbia.org.

Palladium Society's 4th Annual Silent Auction

This year's auction is scheduled for Thursday, October 25 from 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. at the historic Arcade Mall, 1332 Main Street. Guests will enjoy music from Spencer Rush, heavy hors d'oeuvres, beer and wine. The silent auction begins at 7:00 p.m. and ends at 9:00 pm. Advance tickets are \$25, \$20 for members of Historic Columbia Foundation. Tickets at the door are \$30, \$25 for members. For reservations, call 803.252.7742, ext. 27 or email reservations@historiccolumbia.org.



Historic Hauntings

Sometimes the truth is scarier than fiction! Join ghoulish guides on moonlit evenings as they recall tales of Columbians long-since passed. Tour Elmwood Cemetery during Historic Hauntings on Friday, October 25 and Saturday, October 27. Tours begin at 6:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. each night. Tickets are \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members. For children/students 6-18, tickets are \$3 for members, \$5 for non-members. Elmwood Cemetery is located at 501 Elmwood Avenue. To reserve your space, call 803.252.7742, ext. 29 or email reservations@historiccolumbia.org.



Columbia During the Great War

Join John Sherrer, Director of Collections and Interpretation on Thursday, November 15 from 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm at the Carriage House as he presents *Columbia During the Great War*. Sherrer will discuss aspects of World War I's impact on Columbia and Richland County. He'll also share information about Historic Columbia Foundation's participation in the Forward Together: South Carolina in the Great War consortium. Special guest Dr. Edward Beardsley will portray Woodrow Wilson in a living history program featuring the nation's first modern international statesman. For reservations, call 803.252.7742, ext. 29 or email reservations@historiccolumbia.org.

Teacher Appreciation Days

To celebrate American Education Week and Teacher Appreciation Week, Historic Columbia Foundation invites teachers to visit our Museum Shop on Saturday, November 17 and Sunday, November 18 to receive special offers, discounts, and information about our school tours and programs.

Historic Holiday PROGRAMS

CULINARY LECTURE

For more holiday gift ideas, join Mia Hillman on December 1, from 11:00 am - 12:30 pm for an antique fan viewing and presentation at the Museum Shop. No holiday is complete without a taste of history. John Sherrer, Director of Collections and Interpretation, will present "Dining in South Carolina's Backcountry from 1825 to 1865" at 1:00 pm in the Robert Mills Carriage House.

HOLIDAY TOURS

Draw inspiration from the past when decking your halls! Learn how Columbians of yesteryear celebrated holidays past and pick up a decorating tip or two for showing your home this season. Tour Historic Columbia Foundation's three decorated historic house museums from November 16 until December 30.

For costs and times, please call 803.252.1770, ext. 24 or visit www.historiccolumbia.org.

CANDLELIGHT TOURS

On December 6-8, Historic Columbia Foundation will present its annual Candlelight Tours. This holiday event tradition will feature family-friendly activities including crafts, holiday music, hot chocolate, and tours of the Robert Mills House, Hampton-Preston Mansion, and Mann-Simons Cottage decorated for the season.

Tours are scheduled from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. Adult tickets for all holiday events are: **\$12, \$10 members, youth tickets are \$6, \$5 members.** Call 803.252.1770 ext. 24 for more details or visit www.historiccolumbia.org.



WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR 1ST QUARTER MAJOR DONORS

AgFirst

AT&T

BlueCross BlueShield of SC
Childs & Halligan, P.A.

CW 47

Joanne Flowers Duncan
and Gary M. Duncan

Kiss 98.5 FM

Mildred W. Buist Residual Trust

Palmetto Garden Club

SC Midlands Master
Gardeners Association

Sowell Gray Stepp & Laffitte, LLC

State Farm Insurance Company

Mr. Robert G. Waites

Wistaria Garden Club Est. 1937

Historic Columbia
FOUNDATION

1601 RICHLAND STREET
COLUMBIA, SC 29201
www.HistoricColumbia.org

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
COLUMBIA SC
PERMIT # 1000