



HISTORIC COLUMBIA

Project Overview

This May, Historic Columbia will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Hampton-Preston Mansion and will unveil much-anticipated improvements to the site and grounds. This milestone reopening will showcase the historic property in unprecedented ways intended to broaden appreciation for both the property and the people associated with it from 1818 through the mid-20th century. This debut will follow more than a year's worth of comprehensive work—from capital repairs to the former estate's mansion, to massive additions to the gardens and grounds, to a holistic re-evaluation and restructuring of the site's historical interpretation.



History of the Site

Wealthy Columbia merchant Ainsley Hall and his wife, Sarah, had this mansion built in 1818. They lived here briefly, until 1823, when Ainsley sold it to Wade Hampton I, who was known as one of the South's richest planters. For the next 50 years, the estate grew to be Columbia's grandest residence under the Hampton and Preston families and the many men, women and children they enslaved. In the 100 years following the Civil War, the mansion and its touted gardens hosted many different owners, including colleges and a tourist home. After an extensive rehabilitation, the property opened to the public in 1970 as an historic site.

The Hampton and Preston families ensured that the four-acre grounds around the mansion signaled their extensive wealth and influence. Through enslaved labor the landscape was transformed into regionally-acclaimed gardens that contained a remarkable collection of native varieties and plants from around the world.



Reopening May 12, 2018

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

HistoricColumbia.org/HP200

Gardens

With the oversight of its Garden Committee, Historic Columbia is currently implementing Phase II of rehabilitation of the Hampton-Preston Gardens, which is outlined in the organization's Cultural Landscape Master Plan. This much-anticipated phase will return the garden's central sections to the historic site's horticultural "golden age" (1840s-60s). Work will include installing an urban arboretum densely populated with trees, re-establishing historic pathways and plant beds, introducing period-appropriate plant materials and garden structures, and repairing the perimeter wall as well as introducing electrical and irrigation systems.



Capital Repair

The property is undergoing capital improvements, which will be environmentally intertwined and holistically address the preservation of this important 1818 structure. The Richland County-owned property will receive a new heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system; waterproofing measures, including site drainage to mitigate interior moisture levels; and a stucco assessment and replacement. Among the most dramatic changes will include the site's exterior color, which will change to an ochre and brown combination that is representative of the site in the 1850s.

Interpretation

The new interpretive framework will critically explore historical perspectives beyond the mansion's antebellum owners and their planter-class peers. These enhancements have dramatically built upon the foundational exhibit *Home to Many People*, which debuted 15 years ago and provided the first significant coverage of the roles enslaved people played at the site and in Columbia in general. This exhibit has been further developed and integrated into both of the site's main floors to ensure a more balanced representation of African and African American voices. New interpretive panels and exterior wayside signage, as well as a supplementary tablet tour and a variety of artifacts, will debut when the site reopens.



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