Historic Columbia took over the stewardship of the site in 2006. In 2017, we received the African American Civil Rights Grant from the National Parks Service to further rehabilitate the Modjeska Monteith Simkins Site to better continue the legacy of our state’s fiercest civil rights activist. By using her life as a lens through which we view historical inequality, the role of organizing and the power of protest, the home of Modjeska Simkins will once again become a center of engagement and action for the community.

From 1934 until her death in 1992, Modjeska Monteith Simkins’ home in Columbia, SC served as the center for civil rights and social justice activities.

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History of the Site

The Columbia Cottage style home, located one parcel south of the northwest corner of Elmwood and Marion streets, was built sometime between 1890 and 1895 according to existing maps, although its architect and builder are unknown.

Over several decades, Simkins boarded key Civil Rights figures at her home, which also served as a place for developing and organizing legal strategies on issues with local, state and national significance.

Under the stewardship of Historic Columbia the last twelve years, the site has been used as an educational and public meeting space.
The Life of Modjeska Simkins

Modjeska Monteith Simkins was born in Columbia, S.C. on December 5, 1899 to Henry and Rachel Hull Monteith. She served as a leader in several organizations, including the SC NAACP, the South Carolina Tuberculosis Association and the Southern Negro Youth Conference. She was also the co-owner of Motel Simbeth, which appeared in the Negro Traveler's Green Book.

Although her activism extends across more than seven decades and numerous causes, she is best remembered for her leadership during the early Civil Rights Movement in South Carolina. Simkins herself is the defining figure of Columbia’s early movement, but the site lends itself to a broader interpretation of activism in the city and across rural South Carolina - activism that would help lay the ground work for the more widely known struggle for equal rights in the following decades.

Project Goals

The proposed new interpretation and educational activities will focus on Simkins’ life and work from 1929 to 1956 under four major themes: citizenship and activism, health disparities and remedies; economic discrimination and self-sufficiency; and political inequalities and action. The themes will be addressed using interactive exhibits, dynamic classroom and makerspace activities, and public programming focused on understanding historic and addressing contemporary civil rights issues.

2018-19 Historic Columbia Annual Fund

"I woke up this morning with my mind set on freedom."
— Modjeska Monteith Simkins

Each year, Historic Columbia’s Annual Fund program supports a meaningful project that will have a lasting impact on our community. This year’s Annual Fund will focus on interpretative and educational upgrades at the Modjeska Monteith Simkins House.

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