



Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission

201 Worth St. ♦ Asheboro, North Carolina 27203
336-318-6806

January 26, 2016

The Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission (HLPC) met in the Meeting Room of the 1909 Historic Courthouse at 145 Worth Street, Asheboro, NC, and the meeting was called to order by Chairman Mac Whatley at 2:01 p.m. Members present were Mac Whatley, Chairman; Warren Dixon, Vice Chairman; Lynne Qualls; Marsha Haithcock; Ross Holt; Bill Ivey; and Bill Johnson. Absent were Nan Kemp and Robyn Hankins.

Approval of Minutes

On motion of Ivey, seconded by Dixon, the HLPC voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 24, 2015.

Approve Resolution of Recognition for Spencer Patton

Chairman Whatley introduced Spencer Patton, the Boy Scout who rehabilitated the outside of the Marmaduke Swaim Robins Law Office building located at 131 N. Main Street in Asheboro. Mr. Patton explained the steps he went through to complete the project and be awarded his Eagle Scout rank. The Board thanked and congratulated him on the work he had done to preserve this Historic Landmark for his Eagle Project.

On motion of Holt, seconded by Dixon, the Commission voted unanimously to approve a Resolution of Recognition for Spencer Patton as follows:

WHEREAS, the Marmaduke Swaim Robins Law Office, located at 131 N. Main Street in Asheboro and built ca. 1860, is the last surviving building on the 19th Century Courthouse Square and one of the city's oldest standing structures; and

WHEREAS, the Asheboro City Council designated the Robins Law Office a Local Historic Landmark on November 11, 2011; and

WHEREAS, the building had fallen into disrepair some 20 years after restoration by the Randolph County Bar Association; and

WHEREAS, Spencer Patton, son of Greg and Donna Patton of Asheboro and a sophomore at Asheboro High School, undertook rehabilitation of the Robins Law Office in 2015 as his Eagle Scout project; and

WHEREAS, Spencer worked with the City of Asheboro to abate peeling lead paint on the exterior of the building; and

WHEREAS, Spencer coordinated family, friends and fellow Boy Scouts of Troop 527 at First United Methodist Church to repaint the building; and

WHEREAS, Spencer re-glazed 72 broken window panes and repaired or replaced missing or damaged pieces of the window frames, and also replaced a section of missing siding on the building; and

WHEREAS, Spencer has passed his Eagle Scout Boards and is expected to receive his Eagle Scout Award on March 5, 2016;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission recognizes Spencer Patton for his initiative to rehabilitate the Robins Law Office, and commends him for preserving this Historic Landmark for future generations.

Approval of Resolution Designating the Asheboro Female Academy as a Cultural Heritage Site

Ross Holt introduced Jessi Bowman, an intern at the Library, who wrote a report on the Asheboro Female Academy for a class at Salem College. Ms. Bowman gave a brief presentation of her findings. The following is an excerpt from her written report:

The Asheboro Female Academy sits on a quiet street in Asheboro, North Carolina, virtually indistinguishable to those passing by. Few realize that the small, dilapidated building is most likely the oldest standing structure in Asheboro, North Carolina, as well as a symbol for the early stages of private education for females in the region. With its peeling paint, spalling brick foundation, and lackluster landscaping, the Asheboro Female Academy is a building that needs and deserves attention. Methods of preservation are available for one of Asheboro's earliest buildings which is slipping into disrepair since its last restoration in the 1970s.

The Asheboro Female Academy was built in 1839 as a school for girls in Randolph County. Prominent members of the community were given the task to fundraise for the initial capital needed to construct the building on the southwest corner of Salisbury and Fayetteville streets in the original public square of Asheboro, North Carolina. Colonel Benjamin Elliott gave the half acre plot of land, along with an additional donation of \$400. The building was desperately needed to expand the educational offerings of Randolph County, which were lacking compared to neighboring counties like Forsyth or Montgomery. On June 17, 1839, the Asheboro Female Academy opened to accommodate many young boarding students in the subjects of Spelling, Reading, Grammar, Geography, Arithmetic, Philosophy, Rhetoric, Needlework, Music and Piano. Initially, there was only one teacher at the new academy. Miss Eliza Rae, a young woman from Boston, Massachusetts, was hired to teach the entirety of the classes at the new school to a variety of different age groups. Not only was she an effective teacher, but she also encouraged her students to expand their intellectual curiosity outside of the classroom, therefore increasing enrollment and the need for assistant teachers at the institution immediately after it started. The school building could accommodate up to sixty students in two rooms with large windows, seating, and even a piano. Enrollment continued to grow over the next decade. However, when the Civil War plunged the nation into conflict, both the male and female academies in Asheboro were closed and used as barracks for soldiers. A few decades after the end of the Civil War, the public school system in North Carolina was expanding so rapidly

that many smaller private schools closed to make way for public institutions. Both the male and female academies in Asheboro closed in the late nineteenth century, with the female academy officially closing in the 1892. The property on the southwest corner of Salisbury and Fayetteville streets was then sold to W.J. Armfield Jr. and the building was subsequently moved several feet west on the property to make room for a private residence. During the Armfield's ownership, the building was used as storage and later converted into living quarters for the servants.



The photograph shows wooden lattice work around the doorframe as well as a screen door and a tin roof. These are significant aesthetic differences from the wood shingle roof and plain weatherboard siding found in earlier documentation of the building's construction.

There were three doors leading into the structure; two primary doors on the east and west elevations that led into the center hall, and one door on the south elevation that led directly into one of the two classrooms.



After the death of W.J. Armfield Jr., the building was given to the Randolph County Historical Society and became the focus of a restoration project to be completed in the early 1970s. A new location for the building was provided by the Asheboro City Board of Education on Walker Avenue in Asheboro. Restoration work began at the original site of the building and continued after the building was moved. Exterior restoration was to be completed first, following with the interior, with a dedication ceremony taking place in 1976. After the restoration in the 1970s, not much was done with the Asheboro Female Academy. Small events took place

surrounding the building in the 1980s, but general interest, concern, and upkeep has significantly decreased over the course of the 1990s and 2000s. The building sits at its Walker Avenue location, most likely making it the oldest structure still standing in Asheboro.

Mr. Holt introduced Owen George and Reynolds Lisk, two community members who are helping with the efforts to raise money for a restoration of the Academy. Mr. George thanked Ms. Bowman for her work. Mr. Lisk stated that two grants had been awarded for this restoration project, one from Timken in the amount of \$25,000 and another from the Armfield Foundation in the amount of \$38,000. An additional \$12,000 had also been raised from private donations. Mr. George and Mr. Lisk explained how a phone call to Carl Kessler, owner of a company that performs historic restorations, had brought him to be commissioned to evaluate the current condition and restoration needed for the Female Academy. During that phone conversation, Mr. George said he learned that Mr. Kessler had done his graduate work on that building after the 1970s restoration making him very familiar with it.

Ms. Qualls asked how much of the building was original. Mr. Kessler stated that sixty percent of the building was original and he hoped to be able to restore the building properly this time unlike in the 1970s when restorations were done loosely and not always back to the original architecture.

Mr. Ivey questioned if the brick would be replaced with handmade bricks. Mr. Kessler said that the cost would be over \$50,000 and he did not recommend spending money for that purpose.

Mr. Ivey asked who would be maintaining the building once it was restored. Mr. George explained that through the process of applying for the grants, many things had been addressed including maintenance. He said because the building is on City School property, the City School Board would need to approve of the restoration as well. He had spoken with Dr. Worrell, Superintendent of Asheboro City Schools, and said that she agreed the building would be a great educational tool. Students could take field trips to the building and see the differences between schools in 1839 and now. There is already an area where buses can park next to the building. Mr. George mentioned that bathrooms would have to be installed with a cost of approximately \$20,000 and also suggested that the surrounding area might be useable as a park.

Ms. Qualls inquired as to who owned the building. Mr. Ivey said that even though the Historical Society was given the building, he felt that Asheboro City Schools should own it because it is on their land. Chairman Whatley stated that he had been working on getting the ownership issue resolved because the Historical Society had dissolved.

Mr. Ivey spoke of the significance of the building historically not only for its construction but also because most young women in that time were not educated especially in smaller southern

areas such as Asheboro. Mr. Lisk said that all of the people currently involved with this project want the restoration to go forward.

Ms. Qualls questioned whether the cultural heritage designation would help fundraising efforts or would it be better to wait until the building was restored to designate it. Mr. George commented that he was excited by the designation but would not say if fundraising would be affected. Mr. Kessler shared why he thought the Asheboro Female Academy should be designated a Cultural Heritage Site. He spoke of his certification in Historic Preservation Technology and listed many North Carolina historic properties that he had restored. He stated that not only was the Asheboro Female Academy building well documented in its construction and curriculum during a time when ladies were rarely educated outside the home, but it was also a popular choice for young southern ladies as demonstrated by how fast the school expanded in its first year. He said there is a special opportunity to get this building restored historically and culturally correct. He did his thesis to receive his certification in Historic Preservation Technology on this building and he would like this restoration project to be his last before retiring. But most importantly, he stated that this restoration would show the past in our community and be one of the best Cultural Heritage sites in the state.

Mr. Ivey congratulated Mr. George, Mr. Lisk, and Mr. Kessler on their efforts for preserving this important piece of history.

On motion of Holt, seconded by Ivey, the Commission voted unanimously to approve a Resolution of Recognition for the 1839 Asheboro Female Academy as follows:

WHEREAS, the Asheboro Female Academy, opened in 1839 to expand educational opportunities for girls in the county, is likely the oldest standing structure in Asheboro; and

WHEREAS, the Female Academy stood on the corner of West Salisbury and North Fayetteville streets in Asheboro; and

WHEREAS, the Female Academy was sold to W.J. Armfield, Jr., when the school closed in 1892 and converted to servants' quarters for a family home built on the property; and

WHEREAS, the building was donated by the Armfield family to the Randolph County Historical Society in the 1960s, relocated to Asheboro City Schools property on Walker Street in the 1970s and restored to an appearance suggesting its original state; and

WHEREAS, the Female Academy has since fallen into disrepair, and a community effort is underway to restore it again and put it to an adaptive reuse for schoolchildren; and

WHEREAS, the Female Academy is a symbol for the early stages of private education for females in the region;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that official recognition as a Randolph County Cultural Heritage Building is given to the

ASHEBORO FEMALE ACADEMY

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution is approved by the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission and recorded in its minutes, with appropriate history and photographs placed on the Commission's historical website, notation made in the county's GIS database and a suitable copy of the Resolution presented to the recipient;

BE IT EVEN FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission applauds the current initiative to restore and preserve this important building and encourages the community to support these efforts.

Approval of Resolution Designating the Odd Fellows Cemetery as a Cultural Heritage Site

Chairman Whatley spoke of how he came to know of the Odd Fellows Cemetery when citizen Don Simmons and City Manager John Ogburn asked him to research it. It is located next to Mount Calvary Cemetery which is the main cemetery for African Americans in Asheboro. It was given by the Col. A.C. McAlister family to the City of Asheboro in 1953. Mr. Simmons, with the help of Asheboro High School students, has been overseeing the clean-up of the Odd Fellows Cemetery. There is no deed on file for the Odd Fellows Cemetery and since the last Odd Fellow in Asheboro, Buddy Matthews, died in 1999, there is no one to contest a deed. Chairman Whatley said the City plans to purchase a parcel of land adjacent to the cemetery and bordering Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. Once the City owns that property, a Quit Claim Deed for the Odd Fellows Cemetery would allow the City to have three contiguous pieces of land for the entire cemetery. Chairman Whatley explained that the City of Asheboro plans to take over responsibility for it when the deed could be resolved.

Mr. Holt mentioned that Thomas Rush, while having people identified in the H. Lee Waters film, may have found an image of Buddy Matthews, the last Odd Fellow in Asheboro.



After some discussion about what was to be included in the designation, it was clarified that the vote would be on the Resolution and its contents.

On motion of Dixon, seconded by Ivey, the Commission voted unanimously to approve a Resolution of Recognition designating the Odd Fellows Cemetery as a Cultural Heritage Site as follows:

WHEREAS, fraternal orders and benevolent societies proliferated in the 19th Century and were primary providers of mutual benefits, financial support and care to members of their communities; and

WHEREAS, the Diamond Star Lodge No. 3711 of the predominately African American Grand United Order of Odd Fellows was established in Asheboro prior to 1894, and incorporated by an act of the state legislature in 1897; and

WHEREAS, the Diamond Star Lodge No. 3711 likely provided significant philanthropic support to Asheboro's African American community; and

WHEREAS, the Diamond Star Lodge No. 3711, in the early 20th Century, acquired a lot south of Cedar Falls Road and north of what is now Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, and established the first African American cemetery in Asheboro, now identified as the Odd Fellows Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, the Odd Fellows Cemetery is the last surviving remnant of Diamond Star Lodge No. 3711; and

WHEREAS, the Odd Fellows Cemetery is emblematic of the charitable and beneficial work of what may be Asheboro's first and oldest African American fraternal order, and therefore sheds light on a lost world of 19th Century African American culture;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that official recognition as a Randolph County Local Cultural Heritage Site is given to the

ODD FELLOWS CEMETERY

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution is approved by the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission and recorded in its minutes, with appropriate history and photographs placed on the Commission's historical website, notation made in the county's GIS database and a suitable copy of the Resolution presented to the recipient.

Updates

Chairman Whatley presented the new History and Heritage brochure available at the Heart of North Carolina Tourism office and at the Visitor's Centers throughout the state.

Mr. Holt gave updates on H. Lee Waters films and the North Carolina Civil War History Center.

He said that Thomas Rush has had community involvement in his project to identify the local African-American citizens in the 1940s in an H. Lee Waters film. Since the last HLPC meeting,

Mr. Holt said Dale Robbins, who had collated and posted clips of the Waters films on YouTube, found seven or eight more minutes of film of the African-American community. Mr. Holt indicated that after two public meetings, Mr. Rush has had 48 people identified in the film and has the list of those names. Next, Mr. Holt discussed the fourteen H. Lee Waters reels that the Asheboro Public Library turned over to Duke University in 1991. He said he contacted Duke to find out if any of those could be digitized but has not received a response to date.

He then reported on the NC Civil War History Center saying that City Manager John Ogburn was serving on that advisory board. He then explained that the Center was collecting 100 stories from 100 counties on the antebellum civil war. The Library had hosted an event where twenty stories were collected and five were received online.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, on motion of Qualls, seconded by Holt, the meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m.

Mac Whatley, Chairman

Dana Crisco, Clerk to the HLPC