

Alachua County Historical Commission Minutes June 14, 2021

Meeting held virtually via Zoom.

Members Present

In Person: Karen Kirkman (Chair), Mike Hill, Nicole Nesberg, Mike O'Loughlin, Michelle Seitzmer, Gwen Thompson, Ashley Wood

Virtually via zoom: Charles Horn; Dan Weisman; Melanie Barr

Members Absent: Adrienne Denoylles, Jim Powell,

Others: Staff Liaison Kathleen Pagan (In-person/hosting the zoom meeting); Michelle Rutledge and Gerie Crawford (virtual)

Agenda approval. Motion to Approve (Wood, 2nd by Hill). Passed by vote unanimously

Minutes review: Motion to approve draft circulated via email. (Thompson, 2nd Wood). Passed unanimously.

Introductions. Members attending in-person gave brief self-introductions. Then it was reported via chat that the virtual participants could not hear. Staff apologizes for the tech error (connection on mute). Brief comments by virtual members.

Citizen Comment

Michelle Rutledge re: WPA Church Records/ errors on State website. She explained that it seems the historical (WPA) record may be correct but the website narrative shows churches as white when they are historic black/African American congregations. Chair Karen Kirkman stated she will work with FPAN staff Nigel Rudolph to ensure the State is aware of this error.

[Following the meeting this information was provided via email 6/17/2021 from Michelle Rutledge to ACHC Chair, FPAN staff and ACHC Staff Liaison—

As discussed, it appears some churches which should be listed as mainly African-American congregations are listed incorrectly in the description section of the Florida Memory website as having mainly white congregations. Please see examples below.

I would like to request the description section of the following churches listed below to be more accurately reflective of our rich and culturally diverse history in Alachua County.

And if possible, maybe the Historical Commission can consider verifying if all the church congregations in Alachua County on the Florida Memory website are accurately described?

Florida Memory examples

Churches in/near Archer, FL

- St James Baptist Church - <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/246728> **Note:** Incorrect description states as a mainly White congregation.
- Pinesville Methodist Episcopal Church (present day Banks United Methodist Church) - <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/246837> **Note:** Incorrect description states located in Gainesville, instead of Pinesville. Pinesville is located in rural Archer, approximately 3.5 miles NE of Archer.
- Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church - <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/246761> **Note:** Incorrect description states as a mainly White congregation.
- Shiloh Baptist Church - <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/246742> **Note:** Incorrect description states as a mainly White congregation.
- Mount Pisgah Methodist Episcopal Church - <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/246816> **Note:** Incorrect description states as a mainly White congregation.

FYI, in Gainesville, FL

- Emanuel Missionary Baptist Church - <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/246676> **Note:** Incorrect description states as a mainly White congregation.
- Friendship Baptist Church - <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/246692?id=2> **Note:** Incorrect description states as a mainly White congregation
- Johnson Chapel Baptist Church - <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/246697> **Note:** Incorrect description states as a mainly White congregation.
- Mount Carmel Baptist Church - <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/246709> **Note:** Incorrect description states as a mainly White congregation.
- Mount Moriah Baptist Church - <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/246710> **Note:** Incorrect description states as a mainly White congregation.
- Springhill Church - <http://www.springhillmbc.org/about-us/> **Note:** Incorrect description states as a mainly White congregation.

References:

- "Gravesites, Churches and Cantaloupe: Pinesville's History Vital to Florida's Fabric" [*References the Tuskegee History Symposium in February 2021*] - <https://www.wuft.org/news/2021/02/11/gravesites-churches-and-cantaloupe-pinesvilles-history-vital-to-floridas-fabric/>
- "Putting Pinesville on the Map" Podcast - <https://m.soundcloud.com/wuft/pinesville>
- Archer Historic Cemetery Receives \$2,000 Grant [*References Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Cemetery*] - <https://alachuatoday.com/news-featured/latest/4497-archer-historic-cemetery-receives-2-000-grant>

Michelle also mentioned the event at the St. Peters Cemetery on Juneteenth (also noted in staff report on Agenda).

BoCC Motion on Florida Indians Historic Marker

Staff Kathleen Pagan reported that both she and Nicole Nesberg attended a recent Open House event at the Cuscowilla facility. She spoke with Lexie Green, County staff Manager of site, who said she is interested in possible museum in one of the original cabins. However this will not be discussed much until the end of the summer camp session. Nicole Nesberg stated she will continue work on the Florida Indian history for future exhibit. Mike Hill mentioned he heard the Boy Scout Cabin at Cuscowilla needs work (Staff communicated this concern to Assistant County Manager and Site Manager).

Kathleen also noted the Assistant County Manager Gina Peebles asked if anyone knows history of the Briar Creek Country Club, that someone mentioned was at the Cuscowilla property around 50 years ago. Several persons mention a subdivision by this name on the south rim of Paynes Prairie (on west side of US 441). Staff will check in County Ancient records for information. Charles Horn noted that his late father was in the real estate business and he spoke of a South Florida investor, a business associate (by name of Cablishco—verify spelling), who invested in the effort to establish a Country Club. However it was not successful.

Truth and Reconciliation

There is now information on the County website from the homepage or <http://truth.alachuacounty.us/about.html> (view with Chrome browser). Karen Kirkman reported on the June 12 event when the winning student essays were read, and announced two EJL markers will be dedicated in Gainesville in October. She also announced the June 26 event in Alachua for Soil Collection, and asked Dan Weisman (who serves on the Alachua Subcommittee of the Community Remembrance Project) if Gallows Pond would be the collection location. Dan stated another person will make this decision.

B. History of Former County Commissioners (since Mid- 20th Century)

Report from Melanie and Staff that letter was edited but decision was made to wait until early Autumn to send (in order that responses would not be impacted by summer schedules).

C. History Readings

Florida Indians Pt. 2 --Nicole Nesberg shared a draft for another reading on Florida Indians. Melanie commented on the length, so staff will check if 5 minutes would be considered too lengthy to present to BoCC. Nicole asked for any photos of the Potano Mission (for a future reading). Discussion included mention by Ashley Wood of expert Dr. Boyer at the University of W. Florida, who did archeology work of the village at the Richardson Field site near Evinston. He stated that the De Soto expedition (1539-1542) would have followed higher ground. Gwen Thompson mentioned the Spanish Mission at Ichetucknee that lasted about 50 years, and Melanie Barr mentioned an engraving from Calusa or Tebago cultures. Staff note: Staff had mistakenly mentioned a State Historic Marker on DeSoto in Bradenton, while in fact the site there is DeSoto National Memorial Park, managed by the National Park Service. Also, an online search using the term "De Soto" here creates 11 results-- <http://apps.flheritage.com/markers/> .

D. State Historic Markers as needed

Gwen Thompson will work with the Pinesville community on the proposed State Historic Marker.

E. Historic Cemeteries

Abandoned African American Cemeteries State bill signed by Governor (Chair will update)

Karen Kirkman provided brief information about the legislation that will create ten (10) person Task Force, to be chaired by the Florida Secretary of State. She noted a report will be compiled including a review of a previous (1998) task force recommendations. Here is a link to the enrolled text of Florida HB 37-

<https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName= h0037er.docx&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=0037&Session=2021>

Karen mentioned there are 5 known African American Cemeteries still requiring documentation, since she and Nigel Rudolph of the Florida Public Archeology Network (FPAN) have begun the work of adding sites to the Florida Master Site File (FMSF). There was some discussion of the difficulties of knowing what sites are in fact abandoned, with the fast growth of vegetation in our area. Karen also noted that transition planning for maintenance is an issue with family cemetery sites, and that churches typically have better maintenance over time. Karen expressed she thinks there should be a category termed "At risk." Gwen asked about the Patterson Community Cemetery, and Karen noted that archeologists dug trenches on the site, with two organizations vying for control.

Announcements of two cemetery clean-up events during June. Saturday, June 19th at 8:30 am- St. Peter Missionary Baptist Church cemetery, 17026 SW 83rd Ave, Archer, FL 32618; Saturday, June 26 at 9:00AM at BME Cemetery – 14309 SW 175TH Terrace, Archer, FL 32618.

Staff Report

Staff Kathleen Pagan noted a website for New Deal History www.livingnewdeal.org (and stated the organization also holds educational events via the Facebook page)

Member Briefing Points

Melanie Barr mentioned she heard from a community member that UF Historic Preservation Director Marty Hylton will be leaving UF. Mike Hill noted he heard that he is going to National Park Service. [Staff confirmed with the Professor that he will be the first Historic Architect at NPS] Group asked staff to bring a card for their signatures in August.

Meeting adjourned at 6:31 pm. [Gwen shared with staff following the meeting the website www.CentreFurnace.org as good example for historic efforts. She recently visited the area for family genealogy research].