



**SAVANNAH-CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORIC SITE AND MONUMENT
COMMISSION
HISTORICAL MARKER RECOMMENDATION**

PETITIONER: **Sandy Battise for the Crusader Club
81 Coffee Bluff Villa Road
Savannah, GA 31409**

FILE No.: **19-000018-HM**

LOCATION: **745 White Bluff Avenue; 367 Coffee Bluff Villa Road;
616 Rose Dhu Road; W.Back Street**

DATE: **February 7, 2019**

NATURE OF REQUEST: **Historical Markers**

FINDINGS:

The petitioner is requesting approval of four similar historic markers in the White Bluff/Coffee Bluff area in order to recognize and preserve the cultural identity of African-Americans who settled in the area in the nineteenth century. The area was settled by freed slaves from St Catherines, Ossabaw, and Sapelo Islands. Each marker is located at a historic point of access to the water. The interrelationship of early residents with the water was integral to their survival and allowed the community to thrive. The waterways not only provided sustenance for their families, but provided a source of income as shrimp, oysters, crabs and fish were sold at Savannah's City Market. The waterways also provided transportation and lines of communications between different African-American communities.

The markers are part of an initiative by the Crusader Club, established in 1954 to provide recreational services for youth and seniors in the community, and still active today.

The following standards from the Historic Site and Monument Commission Guidelines for Markers, Monuments and Public Art apply:

Evaluating Themes for Markers and Monuments. New markers and monuments commemorate and honor people, places, and/or events.

Proposed themes should fall into one or more of the following categories.

Arts and Humanities. Includes art, architecture, music, theater, literature, education, etc.

Science and Engineering. Includes technology, inventions, medical, communications, etc.

Civil and Institutional.

Social and Humanitarian.

Industry and Commerce. Includes economics, agriculture, transportation, etc.

Politics and Government.

Military History. Includes people, places, or events.

Religious History. Includes people, places, or events.

Maritime History.

Colonial History.

Local History. Includes folklore and/or local heroes.

Cultural and Ethnic History.

Education.

The standard is met. The themes of the markers include Industry and Commerce, Local Historic and Cultural and Ethnic Heritage.

The proposed theme should have documented significant, clear and direct local relevance to the history and development of Chatham County. The local focus should be the predominant theme of the monument.

The level of significance should be high enough to warrant a public presence.

The person, place or event commemorated should not have been sufficiently commemorated elsewhere in the County. The theme should be distinct and original, and not be duplicated in other existing markers or monuments.

The theme should reflect a larger connection to the community as a whole, and not only to one distinct group.

Commemorated events should have enduring historical significance and have occurred over fifty years ago.

There should be significant documented evidence (written or oral) of the commemorated event, person, or place.

The standards are met.

Evaluating Sites for Markers, Monuments, or Public Art. *Certain factors should be taken into consideration when evaluating whether a site is the appropriate location for a marker, monument or public art [hereto referred to as “object” to indicate the inclusion of all three types]. These factors include:*

The installation of an object should not cause overcrowding of the site, if there are existing objects. Objects should be sited far enough away from other objects as to allow the visitor proper appreciation of each individually.

The proposed object should not damage or disturb existing established vegetation on the site including low tree limbs, or significant tree roots.

The proposed object should not require the removal or alteration of existing above or below ground utilities.

The proposed site should be large enough to accommodate an object, and should not encroach on other existing object sites, buildings, or designated green space.

The proposed site should not be utilized for special events (such as sports, festivals, ceremonies, etc) on a regular basis which an object would disrupt.

The proposed site should not be prone to frequent automobile accidents which could damage the proposed object.

The proposed site should be easily accessible to pedestrians and the physically challenged (excluding marker sites).

The proposed site should be visible and accessible from a public right of way.

The proposed site should have adequate parking nearby (excluding marker sites).

The proposed site should not have a high probability of significant archaeology unless an archaeological study is part of the proposal.

The proposed site should be easy to maintain.

The installation of the object should enhance the space and character of the surrounding neighborhood.

The installation of the object should not require the alteration or removal of existing signage (traffic, street, etc).

The installation of the object should not significantly affect automobile traffic sight lines.

The installation of the object should enhance the design of the overall site.

The installation of the object should not require the removal or alteration of existing sidewalks, unless it is part of a comprehensive redesign for the entire site (which is generally discouraged).

If periodic memorial services are likely, the site should be able to accommodate them without causing undue disruption to the neighborhood, plantings, etc.

The standards are met.

Site in Relation to Theme for Markers or Monuments. *The relationship between site and theme for a marker or monument is critical in determining the appropriate site for a particular theme.*

Marker. *A marker should be erected in as close proximity to the site to which it is related as possible and be clearly visible from a public right-of-way.*

A marker commemorating a place, such as a significant piece of architecture, should be located within 100 feet of the place or adjacent to the nearest public right-of-way.

The standards are met.

Design. *The design of a marker, monument, or public work of art should be of the highest quality and caliber, and enhance public space. In order to promote the high standards the City of Savannah has historically enjoyed in its markers, monuments, and public art, the following guidelines should be observed.*

Markers. *Markers may be mounted on a freestanding pole, wall-mounted, or embedded in the ground. As the primary purpose is to inform the public about an event, place or person, the aesthetic significance of a marker is generally minimal.*

Markers not erected through the GHS's marker program shall not bear the GHS or state seal.

Except the marker title, the marker text should be not more than 1" in height, and not less than 1/2".

Marker text should be created in a manner that, to the extent possible, prevents fading and erosion.

Markers should be made of an enduring, non-corroding material.

Markers should be considered permanent and designed accordingly. Temporary markers may be considered provided they serve an educational function, are made of a material designed to last for the proposed life of the marker, and a plan for removal or replacement of the marker at the end of the temporary period is submitted.

The proposed marker face will be 2.5 feet tall and 3.5 feet wide. It will be mounted on two wooden posts approximately 4.5 feet from the ground. The sign will be green with gold lettering on aluminum. This signage type is consistent with other existing signs in the neighborhood. The standards are met. Ensure that the text (except the title) is between 1/2" and 1" in height.

Text. *The text for a marker, monument or work of art is considered part of the overall design concept. Placement of the text, font type and size, etc. should be included with the final design drawings.*

Text should be well-researched and based on historically accurate, documented facts.

The text should accurately and effectively convey to the reader the desired message.

Quotations should be noted accordingly and permission from the appropriate authority received.

Text should avoid offensive, obscene, or inflammatory language.

Donor names may be included provided the names are in an identical but smaller font than the rest of the text and that no slogans or corporate logos are included.

In the original proposal, the petitioner requested approval for the same text to be on all four markers. The proposal was subsequently revised to include slightly different text on each of the four markers to commemorate different aspects of the community's history. See revised text below.

Marker 1:

This is one of four sites historically used by African-Americans in the community to access the water. The community thrived on maritime activities such as fishing, shrimping, oystering and crabbing. These resources were not only used to feed families, but were also walked or drawn by horse to Savannah's City Market to be sold. This marker has been placed here to preserve the cultural identity of the White Bluff/Coffee Bluff community.

Marker 2:

This is one of four sites historically used by African-Americans in the community to access the water. The White Bluff/Coffee Bluff area is in close proximity to St Catherines Island, Ossabaw Island, and Sapelo Island, in addition to the Vernon and Ogeechee Rivers. This proximity allowed for communication and travel between the different communities and the intermingling of slaves, which eventually led to the settlement of this area. This marker has been placed here to preserve the cultural identity of the White Bluff/Coffee Bluff community.

Marker 3:

This is one of four sites historically used by African-Americans in the community to access the water. The White Bluff/Coffee Bluff area was originally settled in the nineteenth century by freed slaves from the nearby islands of St. Catherine, Sapelo and Ossabaw. Many families in the community today can still trace their roots back to these areas. This marker has been placed here to preserve the cultural identity of the White Bluff/Coffee Bluff community.

Marker 4:

This is one of four sites historically used by African-Americans in the community to access the water. The White Bluff/Coffee Bluff area is unique in that, primarily because of its relative isolation, the community has been able to preserve many of its Gullah traditions and culture, including folklore, language, food, spirituality, and music. This marker has been placed here to preserve the cultural identity of the White Bluff/Coffee Bluff community.

Funding.

Budget. *The Mayor and Aldermen do not fund new markers, monuments, or works of art. The applicant is fully responsible for funding the design, construction, installation, and any necessary landscaping, paving, or lighting involved with a new marker, monument, or work of art.*

The project cost is \$2000. Funding has been secured through Alderman Tony Thomas.

***Escrow Payment.** All markers, monuments and public art erected on public property become the property of the Mayor and Aldermen. The Mayor and Aldermen assume responsibility for the future maintenance and upkeep of the marker, monument or artwork. Therefore, an initial Escrow Payment is required of the applicant subsequent to approval of the application. The Mayor and Aldermen, or their designee, will determine the appropriate Escrow Payment and will notify the applicant. The Escrow Payment must be paid prior to construction/installation of the monument or public art. Any marker, monument or artwork erected on private property is the responsibility of the property owner.*

The sites are all located on public right-of-way and the City of Savannah will be responsible for maintenance of the markers. No escrow payment is required.

Public Notice. As required in the Master Plan and Guidelines, written notice was sent to all property owners, and the neighborhood association, within 200 feet of the subject property. A sign was posted on the property fifteen days prior to the meeting. Multiple comments were received from the public at the meeting. One written comment was received from McCorkle & Johnson, LLP. The nature of the comments included concerns regarding the marker content, public notice being met, and property ownership questions.

RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL:

The HSMC recommends approval of the four markers in the White Bluff/Coffee Bluff area with the condition that the markers are only located on public right-of-way because the standards are met.

Dr. Nicholas Henry, Chairman **Date**
Historic Site and Monument Commission

Melanie Wilson, Executive Director **Date**
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

Ellen I. Harris, Director of Urban Planning and Historic Preservation **Date**
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission