

Union County Historic Preservation Commission
Minutes Regular Meeting
7 June 2012

The Union County Historic Preservation Commission met at 1:30 pm on Thursday, June 7, 2012, in the Heritage Room in the historic Union County Courthouse, 300 N. Main Street, Monroe, North Carolina.

Present: Dr. Jerry Surratt, Brad Hudson, Dale Loberger, Sis Dillon, John Dickerson, Crystal Crump, Jane Ellickson, Danny Stegall

Also Present: Mary Lou Gamble, Harriett Moore, staff; Virginia Bjorlin, Matthew Delk, Assistant Manager Union County; Adam Bell, Charlotte Observer; Jerry Austin, Laura Stallard, Worth Barbee, Karen Carnes, Tracy, Kuehler, Ode Lobry, Hettie B. Wright, Walter Byrd, Thomas Zuniga, Patricia Poland, Tony Way

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Jerry Surratt, Chairman. Dr. Surratt welcomed those present.

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Surratt stated that the first item of business is to consider approval of the minutes of the May 3, 2012 meeting including the Public Hearing that was held. Dr. Surratt asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the May meeting. Mr. Dickerson moved to approve the minutes. Mrs. Hudson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Financial Report

Dr. Surratt asked if there were any comments or questions concerning the financial report. Mrs. Gamble said that the 4th quarter budget appropriation will be requested from Union County. There were no further questions and the financial report was accepted by the Commission members as received.

Applications for Certificates of Appropriateness

Dr. Surratt explained that an Application for Certificate of Appropriateness has been received for routine maintenance and repair of the Marshville Cemetery Gazebo, North Elm Street, Marshville, NC, circa 1901. The gazebo was designated in 1991. Dr. Surratt presented a picture of the gazebo to the Commission members. The Application described the procedure to be used for the repairs: materials that have rotted on the gazebo will be replaced with treated wood materials and will be painted white. The work will be done this summer by volunteers in Marshville including the Boy Scouts under the supervision of a carpenter. Mr. Dickerson made the motion to approve "repair" work on the Marshville Cemetery Gazebo. Mrs. Ellickson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Dr. Surratt said that the next item was the Application for Certificate of Appropriateness from Union County Government requesting a marker for the Confederate Pensioners of Color to be placed at the Union County Courthouse Plaza, 300 N. Main Street, Monroe, NC. Dr. Surratt explained that he as Chairman would like to participate in the discussion concerning the marker unless there is an objection from a Commission member. He stated that the Rules of Procedure allows the Chair to participate unless there is an objection from a Commission member. If there is objection, Dr. Surratt said that he would call upon Mr. Loberger, the Vice-Chair, to supervise the discussion. There was no objection.

Dr. Surratt said that the Commission must make one of three decisions: 1) approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness; 2) approval with modifications or 3) deny application. Request has been made by the owner, Union County Government, as is represented at this meeting by Matthew Delk, Assistant County Manager. All discussion will be among only Commission members and Mr. Delk is available should there be any questions. Dr. Surratt suggested rather than starting with one of the three motions, the matter will

be brought to the table discussed and ideas exchanged; and, hopefully, a consensus will be reached within the board so that when it is time to make a motion, the Commission will have had their questions answered. Dr. Surratt said that if that is acceptable, he would like to begin the discussion with some comments mainly to indicate a point of view, to develop some rationale. Dr. Surratt said that the members can agree or disagree with all or any part of his statement. Dr. Surratt said his comments are intended to put the matter on the table with some ideas and then allow the other members their comments.

Dr. Surratt then read from a statement he had prepared on the marker:

To begin our discussion, I would like to offer a few comments.

Our courthouse site has a variety of memorials. The American Revolution plaque names soldiers who lived in the geographical area from which the lines of Union County were drawn in 1842-- some 66 years after the War for Independence. Some named on that memorial were survivors. Other courthouse monuments name only those who died in World Wars I and II, the Korean conflict and Vietnam. Another memorial honors civilian firefighters who have died in public service. Still another kind of marker on the courthouse square recalls the visit to Monroe by a French General after World War I. He was not an American, nor did he die in the war. Therefore, with variety already present, it seems reasonable that we consider new and worthy aspects of our shared history for memorials on the courthouse site.

I believe the proposed marker to the Confederate Pensioners of Color has merit. These ten men represent a significant portion of current Union County residents. During the American Civil War they lived in harm's way. Their service has been documented and they represent hundreds of African-Americans who participated honorably in that conflict. To place this marker on courthouse grounds will correct an omission long suspected but now known. A noted Civil War historian believes that the work of African-Americans on Southern plantations and fields of war lengthened the life of the Confederacy by at least two years. In short, their work provided the food, the trenches, and the support system which sustained Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. They were as faithful in their role as the typical North Carolina Confederate soldier was in his.

However, I also feel that the proposed location of the pensioners' marker is questionable. The Confederate Monument was erected over a century ago to those who gave the supreme sacrifice-- their very lives. They did not come back to Union County. They are not buried in their home soil. They left widows and fatherless children. There were so many deaths from bullets and disease, five hundred and fifty-two from Union County alone, that those who proposed the monument must have felt that the deceased soldiers' names could not be carved in stone when some who died might be overlooked. So they erected a soaring obelisk crowned with a black sphere, a symbol of memorialized death. But on the question of names, there is only silence--a tribute to all who died. With this horrendous loss of life and one hundred years later, it seems inappropriate to add a new marker with names of ten survivors directly in front of this historic monument.

I can suggest several spaces on the courthouse grounds which could be an acceptable setting for a slightly redesigned pensioners' marker. The brick walkways leading from both Jefferson and Franklin Streets toward the courthouse doors are flanked by four grassy areas, any one of which could accommodate a marker of this size. And we may need such spaces in the future. For even if we approve this marker, an important part of the picture will still be missing. Of the 128,889 men aged 20 to 60 listed in the North Carolina census of the time, about 125,000 served in the military and 40,000 died, the highest casualty list of any Confederate state. Therefore Confederate mothers, wives, and daughters on North Carolina's numerous small farms kept the home fires burning, cared for their children, and worked the fields to produce food for families and for armies, because the Confederate government claimed 10% of all farm produce as a tax. The words of blind poet John Milton can apply here: "They also serve who only stand and wait." Maybe someday we will recognize the sacrifices of those who stayed behind.

Now I hope you as commission members will share your ideas and convictions as we move toward a decision on this matter.

Dr. Surratt concluded his statement by saying that this is where he is as of today. It is not written in stone even in his own mind, and that he is open to other Commission Member's ideas, comments and critique. He opened the floor for more comments.

Mr. Dickerson said that he had some thoughts he would like to present. He said that Dr. Surratt made a good presentation about the historical aspects and the message. Mr. Dickerson said that in his opinion there are two things the Commission is dealing with. One is the message that Dr. Surratt specifically spoke about. The second is the physical characteristics or the display or communication of that message. We all know that the Application of Certificate of Appropriateness is for a plaque that is to be set into the brick pavers. With respect to the message, it is my understanding that there is a precedence that the memorials on the courthouse square are restricted to persons of Union County that have died in the line of service for their country or for Union County. The pensioners do not comply with this precedence. With respect to the Confederate Monument, the north side is dedicated to those that gave their all, ie., those that died. The west side is dedicated to all Confederate soldiers. The south side is dedicated to the volunteers and the companies that were involved in the Civil War. In my mind, it could be interpreted that the Confederate Memorial is not just a memorial to those that died in the Civil War but a memorial to all Union County soldiers that fought in that war. That could be argued. Since the pensioners were not considered soldiers, technically, they are not represented by the Confederate Memorial that stands. Since I am not sure that the Confederate Memorial is truly restricted to those that died, I am not sure that the Application for Certificate of Appropriateness should be denied on that basis. It seems to me, the more important consideration in determining whether or not we should approve this certificate is the proposed alteration of this historic site. That is the primary responsibility of this Commission and that is it is not so much the message, although that could be a factor, it is how the message is communicated. It is my opinion that the County Commissioners have already approved the message. This Commission has been very diligent in complying with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Structures. Mr. Dickerson said, "I have reviewed the Guidelines section on Building Sites and the site of the courthouse is what is in question, and I have not found any apparent conflict between this Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness and the Guidelines. The Guidelines recommend the following and that is: Preserving buildings and their features as well as features of the site that are important in defining its overall historic character. It recommends that we follow that. The Guidelines also say that the site features can include walkways. So, the walkway is a feature that we deal with. The walkway in question is composed of brick pavers that were installed about twenty five years ago. Had this pavement been handmade brick, cobblestones installed one hundred or one hundred twenty years ago, their removal may be a problem in maintaining the historic character of the site. It is my opinion that replacing four square feet or excuse me, eight square feet of these brick pavers with a granite plaque will not diminish the historic character of this site. The Guidelines recommend "Retaining the historic relationship between buildings, landscaped features and open space". It is my opinion that this application does not compromise this recommendation. The Guidelines recommend that any additions to the site remain as unobtrusive as possible. It is my opinion that this plaque installed flush with the surrounding brick pavers is unobtrusive and complies with that Guideline. On Wednesday, May 9, of this year, Paul Fromberg, our State Historic Preservation Officer, visited Monroe to consult with the Commission on several historic properties. I took the opportunity to review this application and the courthouse site with Paul and solicit his professional opinion. It was his stated opinion that the Application for Certificate of Appropriateness did not have an adverse affect on the historic quality of the courthouse or the site. Based on the physical aspects of the plaque, the Secretary of Interior Standards, and Paul Fromberg's recommendation, I respectfully think that we should give this Application serious consideration."

Dr. Surratt opened the floor for more discussion. Mr. Loberger said he had not written down his thoughts but has tried to formulate them over time and am very torn on this topic. "I think it is appropriate for us to take a hard look at everything related to this monument, this request, especially in light of the vote we just took regarding replacing similar materials to an existing structure. So I think that everything about this monument certainly falls under our ability to discuss. I really appreciate the idea and what this is trying to

accomplish, and I think that I would like to see something along these lines happen. I have some specific concerns about the design as been given to us. One was the names being listed there. One thing I got from the public hearing was that we don't know if that list of ten names is complete or not. What happens if an eleventh name or another name comes along. How do we modify that? How do we accommodate at that point? The other thing that troubles me is that if someone serves, regardless of who that person is, were they afforded a monument to them? I am not aware of anywhere else that I could stand on that person's name. And I have a problem with standing on a memorial for black men while looking up to a Civil War monument. I have a great problem with that. So, I am not sure about it being located in the sidewalk. I am not familiar with any other memorial for service where I could stand on a man's name. The other thing - making this to the pensioners specifically given the research about who the pensioners were, disrespects other men of color, people of color who may have or did serve during the war. So I think that it is another very narrow focus in the way it has been presented at this point. But I am open to hearing other opinions and I certainly like the idea of doing a memorial, but I would like first of all to be respectful to those who it is honoring in that the inclusive as to what that message is to be about."

Dr. Surratt thanked Mr. Loberger. Mr. Dickerson commented that the Vietnam Memorial did not have all the names on it, but they still built it and have added more names to it. So, that can always be a problem. Mr. Loberger added that the World War II plaque outside the main door to the courthouse has had a name added. Dr. Surratt said that regarding reluctance to stand on a monument to another person there are two things he would point out. "In England, when you go to Westminster Abbey, you walk over many memorials to very brave men including Winston Churchill. If we found an acceptable place such as alongside the courthouse, it would not be seen from the sidewalk if you put it flat - it would need to be something slightly elevated but not a stand up straight monument such as a tombstone. It could be something level in the front and in the back so it could be read but not walked on."

Mrs. Hudson said, "I am a Civil War buff having two great grandfathers: one who served for the north, one served for the south. One lived and one died. I have always been fascinated by the war. I don't know if she is here, but the lady whose father's name is on the list - "it just blew me away". This was over 150 years ago and here you have a true daughter of the Confederacy. I just think it is so unusual to have a recognition particularly like someone up north coming down here and seeing that there were actually black people who were part of the Confederacy, even if they didn't fight. But they did what they had to and there might have been opportunities during all the confusion that they could have escaped but they did not. I think they should be recognized out there somewhere."

Mr. Dickerson agreed that this is a unique situation although we do not want the courthouse to have monuments and markers all over the place.

Mr. Loberger mentioned that he is a Revolutionary War buff and over the Memorial Day weekend he visited Limestone College in South Carolina and went to the graves of three unknown British soldiers who were being honored after 230 years. He said that he felt it shows great honor and integrity to those people who served and for our recognition of those men who were our adversaries in that conflict. I am not opposed to the message; of those who served, it is more of the specifics of the design that bother me. I really don't want to vote no on this, but I would like to see something that I could vote for.

Mr. Stegall said, "I just want to thank all the individuals who have taken a lot of time in the last two years on this issue and there has been a lot of diligence whether in favor or not in favor. Likewise, I think the County Commission, County Government, and Mr. Delk, as its representative, have all been diligent and much thought has been put into it. Personally, I have gone back and forth and try to look at all the thoughts and the comments on either side. I feel it is a very unique contribution these gentlemen made."

Dr. Surratt said that the Commission needs to frame a motion that would conform to the three possibilities 1) to approve Application as presented in terms of its message, character and location. 2)to deny the Application as presented 3)approve the Application with modifications which could have to do with the

message, character, location, or design. Then, this could be referred back to the Board of Commissioners representing the owner for suggestions for a design we feel would be in keeping with the courthouse and a location that would be acceptable.

Dr. Surratt said that the floor is open for a motion, however you wish to phrase it, then a second of the motion and see if that is what we want to vote on. Mr. Dickerson made a motion to approve the Application of Certificate of Appropriateness with minor design modifications to the size. Mr. Dickerson said that the marker should be associated with the Civil War monument. He felt the location and message is fine, but the four foot size may be larger than it needs to be. I am not saying that it would not be accepted at that size, but I would like to reserve the option for final approval of the size. Mrs. Hudson seconded the motion.

Dr. Surratt asked if there were any further questions or statements anyone would like to make in favor or support of the motion. Mr. Loberger asked if amendments can also be offered. Dr. Surratt responded that amendments to the motion can be made and would have to be voted on before voting on the motion.

Dr. Surratt asked if anyone would like to speak in opposition to the motion as made. Mr. Loberger said that the motion did not address some of his concerns that it be more inclusive of all people of color who served. The pensioners specifically are those who had to be indigent and be able to prove that. I think some of the qualifications was such that it limited others who served from being recognized through the way the message is crafted on the monument. He said that he is concerned that this is to a very narrow group of pensioners rather to all who served. Mrs. Hudson suggested putting the names of the known pensioners as well as adding and all others who served. Dr. Surratt added that on the Application there is a sentence that says in honor of courage in service by all during the war between the states. Dr. Surratt said he had a question as to who "all" refers to. Does it refer to all African Americans who served or all other individuals. Mrs. Hudson asked for an amendment to be added to the motion to read - "all other African Americans during the War between the States". This would clear what "all" refers to.

Dr. Surratt said that this would be a modification in the message to clarify the meaning of the word "all" by adding African American after that in the engraving. This would be an amendment to amend the motion to add African American after the word "all". Mrs. Ellickson seconded the amendment. Mr. Dickerson said he would feel more comfortable if the County approved any changes. Dr. Surratt said the Certificate will be sent back to the County with an approval subject to modifications and if they do not like the modifications they can nullify.

Dr. Surratt asked that all in approval of the amendment to the motion, please say aye. The amendment adds "all African Americans" to the final sentence on the plaque. Dr. Surratt asked if there are further amendments to the modifications. Mr. Loberger expressed his concern on standing on the names of these black men while looking up at the Civil War Monument. Mr. Stegall said he did not hear any opposition to that in the public hearing. Ms. Crump asked about names that may need to be added to the marker, and Dr. Surratt said there may be space for a couple more. Mr. Dickerson added that the existing pavers are loosely laid and could be pulled up to add more if needed.

Dr. Surratt asked all in favor of responding to the County Commissioners with an affirmative with modifications as outlined. Mr. Loberger asked for a clarification of the motion before voting having to do with the size and option of approval of the modification of the size. Mr. Dickerson suggested perhaps cutting piece of cardboard two feet x four feet and placing it on the ground and look at it relative to the existing monument to determine scale, then go with it. Let the size be left open. The modification will have to describe the actual size. Mr. Loberger also asked if the size of the letters on the memorial to the Confederate Pensioners would be similar in size. He also asked if the word "Pensioners" is not going to be larger than the "all African Americans who served". Mr. Loberger felt the heading should be the same size as the last line. Mrs. Crump asked if a motion could be made by the Commission to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness with modifications; and, then the Commission would meet again and consider the

modifications are and then present a decision to the County. Mr. Dickerson said the County should do a mock up of the marker showing size and the lettering that could be placed on the site for review by the Commission before approval.

Mr. Delk commented on behalf of the owner that the size of the memorial was never discussed. Mr. Delk listed a size on the Application and had looked at the picture of the proposed marker and estimated the size. Mr. Delk felt the size would not be a major issue by voting under the condition that the County bring back an administrative change to this board to approve the actual size once there is a new mock up of the plaque.

Dr. Surratt stated that we understand that the Commission will get one more chance to look at a mock up of the marker. He then asked that all in favor of the motion as made to please raise their hands. The vote was unanimous.

Mrs. Gamble said that we will now send the Certificate back to the County with a letter stating the stipulations. Mr. Delk will act for the owner in regards to the stipulations.

Mr. Delk then asked to comment when appropriate on a detail that had come up with regards to the request from the Town of Marvin. Mrs. Gamble told Mr. Delk that a Resolution supporting the Designation had been received and a packet has been sent to the County. Mrs. Gamble explained that Lisa Thompson, Town Planner for Marvin was to send the request asking Union County to call for a public hearing to designate the property to Jeff Crook. Mr. Delk said that she sent the Resolution. Mrs. Gamble said she would talk to Jeff Crook. Mr. Delk said that he did not know how long it would take to correct this discrepancy - approval by the Board of Commissioners must be made before it can be resolved.

Dr. Surratt asked for a short break.

Applications for Historic Landmark Designation

The Kerr Farm, 9616 Joe Kerr Road, Waxhaw, NC, owner is Paulette Kerr, has been referred to the County Commissioners and there will be public hearing. Mrs. Gamble said that it sounds like it will be delayed from what Mr. Delk said because of some miscommunication between the Town of Marvin and County Attorney, Jeff Crook.

The C. C. Stokes House, 903 W. Franklin Street, Monroe, NC circa 1919; Gail Marshall, owner. Mr. Dickerson said that he, Mrs. Gamble and Mr. Fromberg went through the house and Mr. Fromberg, that in his opinion, that he thought the house was not qualified for designation. It has two or three different architectural styles and has been altered significantly. Mrs. Gamble read a paragraph from Mr. Fromberg's letter regarding the significance of the house. An evaluation using the point system was conducted by the commission. The criteria for designation received only 20 points. Dr. Surratt signed, dated, and noted that the Application was not approved. The Application and a letter will be sent to Ms. Marshall.

The Neese Apartments, 104 E. Windsor Street, Monroe, NC, circa 1945-46; owner James Kerr. The Application for Designation was received April 11, 2012. Mrs. Crump read the report from Mr. Fromberg regarding the Neese Apartments. He stated that it is a good candidate for designation. Mrs. Gamble said she had been trying to contact Mr. Kerr, the owner, to see if he had replaced the windows (2003) or if they were done prior to his purchase of the building. She also called Dr. Neese's son who thinks J. S. Stearns was the builder and will send us any information he may have. Interior and exterior photographs sent by Mr. Kerr were passed around to the commission members. Using the point system for evaluating properties for historic designation, the property received 42 points. Mr. Dickerson made motion to approve the designation of the Neese Apartments. Mr. Loberger seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Mrs. Gamble said that she, Paul Fromberg, Senior Preservation Specialist, NC Archives, and Mr. Dickerson visited the Concord Avenue stone houses and he was very impressed. Mr. Fromberg gave the opinion that if the owners do not want to do individual designations, it would be an excellent candidate for a National Register Historic District. Mr. Dickerson mentioned they had met one of the owners and the houses are well maintained. Information about the designation process was delivered to the Mrs. Keeter by Mrs. Gamble the day after the visit. Mrs. Gamble, Mr. Loberger, and Mr. Fromberg also went to the Monroe Hardware Apartments.

Dr. Surratt said that everyone attended the Preservation Workshop on May 24 and the program was very informative.

Dr. Surratt said a meeting will not be scheduled for July 5, but if we get a response from the County regarding the Application that needs immediate attention, a special meeting may be called in later July.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for August 2, 2012 at 1:30.

Respectively submitted,

Jerry Surratt, Ph. D
Chairman