



The South Carolina African American Heritage Commission Third Annual "Preserving Our Places in History Awards"

On Thursday, 24 January 2008, the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission presented its third annual "Preserving Our Place in History" Awards at Mount Moriah Baptist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Two individuals and three organizations received awards for their work in preserving the history and culture of African Americans in South Carolina. Recipients included:

Individual Award – Clifton W. Anderson

Mr. Anderson is the chairman of the Kershaw County Clean Community Commission in Camden, South Carolina. In 1997-1998, Mr. Anderson first got involved in what was the "lower end of Camden" and found that the further down Campbell Street one walked, the less attention was paid to the area's history and preservation. He brought this neglect to the attention of the city of Camden, but received very little encouragement in his efforts to document and preserve the area's



African-American history. With the assistance of other community members, however, he began several projects to document the history of the Campbell Street area, to clean up the area, to clean up and preserve Cedars Cemetery, and to place a historic memorial to mark the site of the historic Boylan-Haven Mather Academy for the Children of Freed Slaves. With grants, community support, and through his tireless efforts, Mr. Anderson succeeded in adding an African American Corridor to the Camden Trace, producing a brochure documenting the area's history, and raising the consciousness of the entire Camden community about the need to preserve the African-American experience in Kershaw County.

The Commission presented awards to two projects completed by the following organizations: the Woman's Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina and the Rock Hill Historical Marker Committee/Piedmont Regional association of Realtors.

First Project Award - Woman's Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina. In 2001, the Woman's Baptist Educational and

Missionary Convention began a statewide project to collect, document and preserve its history. Led by its president at that time, Dr. Jacqueline Canty, and the project director, Dr. Lucille S. Whipper, the organization collected the minutes of its annual meetings dating back to 1887, conducted oral history interviews with some of its former officers and senior members, and acquired photographs and biographical sketches of many of the women who were still serving the organization. One of the most important parts of the project was the three workshops that



the organization held in Charleston, Columbia, and Greenville to raise the consciousness of its members about the importance of preserving church records, programs, organizational minutes and other documents related to church history and the convention's history. The project culminated in 2006 with the publication of *Born to Serve: A History of the Woman's Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina*, the first comprehensive history of a Women's Baptist State Convention and a model of how other organizations can develop preservation projects and write their organizational histories. On the right: Dr. Lucille S. Whipper - project director and WBEMC statewide president



Second Project Award - the Rock Hill Historical Marker Committee and the Piedmont Regional Association of Realtors.

These two groups collaborated to preserve a very important site in downtown Rock Hill, South Carolina related to this nation's civil rights history. On January 31, 1961, ten Friendship Junior College students sat in at the McCrory's Department store at 135 East Main Street in downtown Rock Hill, South Carolina. Nine of the students refused bail and served thirty-day jail sentences. They

became known as the "Friendship Nine" and their strategy of "Jail, No Bail" to dramatize the injustice of segregation in public accommodations for African Americans became a model for the Freedom Rides that followed in 1961. A year ago, in January 2007, forty-six years after the Friendship Nine incident in Rock Hill, the Historical Marker Committee and the Piedmont Regional Association of Realtors commemorated the 1961 event by erecting a state historical marker and by making a part of the McCrory's building a permanent historic site to recognize and honor the Friendship Nine. In addition to preserving the site, the groups have preserved the original lunch counter and the nine stools with the names of the members of the Friendship Nine on them, and created a Heritage Hall that includes a permanent exhibit composed of text and photographs documenting this historic event in American history.

Organization Award - 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, Company I Civil War Reenactment Unit.

The 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment travels all over the state of South Carolina doing reenactments, teaching school children and



others about the often unknown role of African-American soldiers in the Civil War, and engaging in authentic demonstrations of soldiering in the American Civil War. Most importantly, the members of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment provide their services to schools and community groups for free. In a state where most re-enactors represent the Confederacy and where the African-American presence in the Civil War is often ignored, the 54th Massachusetts Regiment provides public education, preserves an important part of South Carolina history, and brings to the public's attention each July one of the most important battles of the Civil War—the Battle of Fort Wagner. By commemorating this battle—which established the bravery and the ability to fight of African-American soldiers at a time when most Americans doubted their courage--and participating in a variety of public events related to the history of African Americans in the Civil War, the 54th has become the leading organization in the state promoting the preservation of the history of African Americans in the American Civil War.

Lifetime Achievement Award - Ronald Daise

Ronald Daise is an educator, author, entrepreneur and historian. His productions, recordings, and writings throughout his 30-year professional career have documented Gullah heritage in an exemplary manner that transcends stereotypical points-of-view of Gullah culture. Since 2004 he has served as Brookgreen Gardens' Vice President for Creative Education and he is also a member of the newly appointed Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission. He began chronicling Gullah history and lore in 1978 during his employment as a reporter for the *Beaufort Gazette* newspaper. His feature stories of elderly residents of St. Helena Island, South Carolina were culled for



inclusion in his first book, *Reminisces of Sea Island Heritage*. This book and others that he has published have become valuable resources for Gullah studies. From 1986-1993, he and his wife Natalie scripted the book's contents into *Sea Island Montage*, a theatrical production which they toured throughout the United States –at a time before public appreciation of Gullah culture was popular. He was the co-star and cultural consultant for the Nick Jr. television's award-winning *Gullah-Gullah Island*. Most recently, he has published *Gullah Branches, West African Roots*. This book is unparalleled in its artistic promotion and preservation of Gullah heritage and culture through stunning photographs, poetry, memoirs of personal experiences, spirituals and short stories. According to Congressman Jim Clyburn, who wrote the foreword for the book, stated that "Ron affords readers an unabashed celebration of a vibrant culture . . . that turns what was once the embarrassment of having enslaved ancestors to one that demonstrates the value of their ancestors' talents and treasures."