South Carolina’s National Historic Landmarks

South Carolina Preservation Month
May 2011
Drayton Hall is without question one of the finest of all surviving plantation houses in America. Its early date, 1738-42, makes its architectural sophistication all the more remarkable. It is far in advance of the great Georgia Georgian plantation houses for which those of South Carolina have a reputation. In fact, the original cause Drayton Hall has been barely touched in the ensuing 200 years, it remains for us one of the most treasured of eighteenth century structures. John Drayton, a member of the King’s Council, acquired the land on which Drayton Hall was built in 1720, and it was laid out by his mansion before he died in 1748. It is likely that, at this early date, the Draytons were able to invest in the house a degree of architectural elaboration very rare in America in the first half of the eighteenth century. Listed in the National Register October 15, 1966; Designated a National Historic Landmark October 9, 1960.

Built in 1843, the Robert Smalls House is located in the City of Beaufort. Robert Smalls, the hero of the Civil War, state legislator, U.S. Congressman from South Carolina during Reconstruction, and customs collector for the Port of Beaufort, was born into slavery in 1839. He lived in the John Aiken residence until 1851, when he was hired out by his master. Smalls purchased the house in which he had lived as a slave at a tax sale in 1863. He and his descendants occupied the property for approximately ninety years. The original structure has been considerably altered. Listed in the National Register May 30, 1974; Designated a National Historic Landmark May 30, 1974.

Significant as a Revolutionary War campsite, Snow’s Island served as headquarters, supply depot, and retreat for General Francis Marion’s partisan forces during the crucial winter of 1780-81. Snow’s Island is the most famous of wilderness retreats of General Marion, the man whose hit-and-run tactics and crafty elusiveness earned him the nickname “Swamp Fox.” The ideal location of Snow’s Island afforded the launching of numerous harassment and interception raids on British outposts as well as a rendezvous point for the Georgetown garrison conducted by the combination of General Marion and Colonel “Light Horse” Harry Lee on January 25, 1781. In late March of 1781, while Marion repelled and pursued one British attack force, another under Colonel Doyle penetrated to Snow’s Island and destroyed the camp. Marion never used Snow’s Island again after Doyle’s raid. Listed in the National Register March 14, 1973; Designated a National Historic Landmark December 2, 1974.

The Granvelle Historic District consists of the Granvelle Canal, which dates to 1846; the original two and one-half story Graniteville Mill constructed of locally quarried granite and completed in 1849; twenty-six original workers’ houses in Early Gothic Revival style, most of which have been virtually unaltered; nine other units of early Graniteville Company town, thus bringing into existence the first typical southern mill village. Listed in the National Register June 2, 1978; Designated a National Historic Landmark June 2, 1978.

Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (Beth Elohim Synagogue) possesses national significance as the birthplace, in 1824, of Reform Judaism in America. Originated by German Jews in the early 1800s, the Reform Movement spread rapidly throughout the United States, where it led to radical changes in Jewish doctrine during the remainder of the 19th century. The influx of German, Austrian, and Bavarian Jews that began in 1836 and continued into the 1890s was a major factor in the establishment of the American Reform Congregation Beth Elohim, establishing it as the fourth oldest Jewish community. Its present house of worship, a fine Greek Revival structure, erected in 1840, is the second oldest synagogue extant in the country and the oldest in continuous use. Listed in the National Register April 4, 1978; Designated a National Historic Landmark June 19, 1980.

(Santa Elena; San Felipe; San Marcos; Ribaut Monument) This site represents one of the most important historical sites in South Carolina. Here in a relatively small and fairly undisturbed area are the localities of three well-dated fort sites (two Spanish of 1566 and 1577 and one French of 1562) and two town plats, one of each of considerable size with a fort located in the middle of the one labeled the area of first European occupation, but the only French and Spanish attempts at occupation in South Carolina. The first historically reported structure was that of the 1562 French settlement, Charles Forte, established by Jean Ribaut. In 1566 the Spanish built a fort, named El Palomar, because of their relatively confined settlement. Fort San Miguel was built on the river in 1577. Listed in the National Register August 7, 1974; Designated a National Historic Landmark January 3, 2001.

The Exchange and Provost Building, built 1767-1771, served during the last quarter of the 18th century as a customhouse, public market, public meeting place, military prison and barracks. The British used the exchange as a barracks and military prison from 1780 to 1782, during the American Revolution. President George Washington was welcomed on the steps of this building when he visited Charleston on his southern tour of 1791. The structure was badly damaged by Union artillery fire during the Civil War and again by a Union bombardment in 1864. Repaired after each occasion the Exchange was used for Federal purposes until 1913 when an act of Congress deed the building to the Daughters of the American Revolution in and of the State of South Carolina to be preserved by them as a historical monument. Listed in the National Register December 17, 1969; Designated a National Historic Landmark November 7, 1973.

(Charles Pinckney National Historic Site) Snee Farm was purchased about 1754 by Colonel Charles Pinckney, a wealthy lawyer and planter. Upon his death in 1782, the farm then passed to his son, Charles, author of the “Pinckney draught” and signer of the Constitution, four time Governor of South Carolina, U.S. Senator and envoy to Spain, 1801-1805. The farm remained in the Pinckney family until 1882 when it was sold to Mr. and Mr. Rhyne. In 1897, the property was leased to the City of Charleston to be used as a playground. In 1907, the City returned the property to the Pinckneys and it was listed in the National Register June 5, 1970; Designated a National Historic Landmark May 11, 1976.

(Old Ninety Six Six & Star Fort) The historic district of Ninety Six National Historic Site contains numerous features associated with the economic and social development of the colonial South Carolina back country. Niafive, a slave, was captured with the other members of the Georgetown garrison conducted by the combination of General Marion and Colonel “Light Horse” Harry Lee on January 25, 1781. In late March of 1781, while Marion repelled and pursued one British attack force, another under Colonel Doyle penetrated to Snow’s Island and destroyed the camp. Marion never used Snow’s Island again after Doyle’s raid. Listed in the National Register March 14, 1973; Designated a National Historic Landmark December 2, 1974.

The Congress Hall is without question one of the finest of all surviving plantation houses in America. Its early date, 1738-42, makes its architectural sophistication all the more remarkable. It is far in advance of the great Georgia Georgian plantation houses for which those of South Carolina have a reputation. In fact, the original cause Congress Hall has been barely touched in the ensuing 200 years, it remains for us one of the most treasured of eighteenth century structures. John Drayton, a member of the King’s Council, acquired the land on which Congress Hall was built in 1720, and it was laid out by his mansion before he died in 1748. It is likely that, at this early date, the Draytons were able to invest in the house a degree of architectural elaboration very rare in America in the first half of the eighteenth century. Listed in the National Register October 15, 1966; Designated a National Historic Landmark October 9, 1960.

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