A meeting of the History Commission will be held on Wednesday, April 6, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. at City Hall, 80 Broad Street. The agenda will be as follows:

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes
   a. December 15, 2021
   b. March 2, 2022
3. Old Business
   a. Judge Fields Plaque
   b. Slave Trading Complex
4. New Business
   a. Charleston Work House
5. Adjournment

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, people who need alternative formats, ASL (American Sign Language) Interpretation or other accommodation please contact Janet Schumacher at (843) 577-1389 or email to schumacherj@charleston-sc.gov three business days prior to the meeting.
This Court room is dedicated to the Honorable Richard E. Fields. A native Charlestonian, born on October 1, 1920, Judge Fields was selected in 1969 as the first Black Municipal Judge in the City of Charleston. He was later elected a Family Court Judge in 1975 and in 1980 he was elected as a South Carolina Circuit Court Judge, where he served until his retirement in 1992. Judge Fields was universally respected for his court room demeanor and the respect shown to all those who appeared before him. His patience, wisdom and intelligence bestowed honor on the judicial system.

Judge Fields was the first African American attorney to open a law office in South Carolina since the early 1900’s upon his admission to the District of Columbia and South Carolina Bar Associations. In 2013 The Charleston County Bar Association honored Judge Fields with the prestigious James Louis Petigru Award, in recognition of his contributions to the legal profession and his community.

Judge Fields graduated from West Virginia State College in 1944 and earned his law degree from Howard University in 1947. As a member of the historic Centenary United Methodist Church he served for over 50 years as its treasurer. In 1952, he was elected to the Board of Trustees of Claflin College in Orangeburg, SC.
Hi Harlan,

Thank you again for the Commission’s feedback on the draft inscriptions for the “Slave Pen” and “The Mart” historical markers. Attached for the Commission’s consideration are two texts that have been revised in light of the comments from the meeting earlier this month. These inscriptions have been accepted by both our office and the sponsoring organization (cc’d). Most of the edits should be clear, but a few points probably warrant some explanation:

- The proposed title for both markers is now “Slave Trading Complex.” This seemed like the best way to address the Commission’s well-put concern that the “Slave Pen” title might create confusion as to the pen’s actual location, and also to ensure that the marker inscription can be quickly and easily understood by lay readers who may be unfamiliar with local history. I think this title better-accomplishes that latter goal than the Commission’s proposed title of “Enslavement Complex,” which is overly broad and doesn’t really capture the site’s specific connection to the slave trade.

- The main text for both markers still includes the phrase “slave pen,” but now inside quotation marks. This term was used historically (it seems principally by critics of slavery) as well as by later historians to describe several types of facilities used for confining enslaved people, including high-walled yards like the one at the Mart. The clearest reference to the enclosed area of the Mart as a “slave pen” is in Bancroft’s *Slave Trading in the Old South* (1931), where he writes on page 171 in reference to the pen and the Queen St. “jail” building, “Brick walls, about 20 feet high, helped to make, out of what had probably been some rich man’s residence, an exceptionally large and complete slave-jail and slave-pen.” Other similar facilities include the Williams slave pen in Washington, D.C., and the Franklin & Armfield slave pen in Alexandria, Va. More information on these, including use of the phrase “slave pen,” may be found at:


  o “Williams’ Private Jail (Slave Pen),” Histories of the National Mall, [http://mallhistory.org/items/show/45](http://mallhistory.org/items/show/45).


- To avoid over-use of quotation marks, those that previously enclosed The Mart, Ryan’s Mart, and Ryan’s Jail have all been removed. Given all these terms are capitalized, it should still be apparent that they were proper names and not, for instance, that the Jail was an actual, traditional jail.

- To accommodate these and other changes, any statement that the Mart was for a time the largest slave trading site in the City has been removed. We therefore also did not add any explicit reference to the presence of other trading sites around the city.

- Concerning the Commission’s strong desire that the marker use the phrase “dead-house” to refer to one of the Mart buildings, I have attached a copy of the email that I sent you last week explaining that our initial drafts did not include this term due to a lack of compelling evidence that this building was actually a morgue. The email also acknowledges that there was some
confusion between SCDAH and the sponsoring organization concerning the exact reason why this building was described as likely a “sick house” rather than a “dead-house.” I would ask that the Commissioners please review that email and carefully consider the substantive reasons why we did not use the phrase “dead-house.” In the meantime, I have gone ahead and revised the texts per the Commission’s instruction to incorporate this term; each marker now refers to this building as “a small structure later recalled as a ‘dead-house.’” Given the documentation issues described in my previous email, this sort of matter-of-fact acknowledgment that there is a later account that identifies this building as a “dead-house” is likely the only way that our office would be able to approve this term’s inclusion, should the Commission still feel it must be used.

Please don’t hesitate if you or the other Commissioners have any questions concerning these drafts or the rationale behind them. Otherwise, I’ll look forward to their feedback.

-Edwin

Edwin C. Breeden, Ph. D.
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Hi Harlan,

Thank you and the rest of the Commission very much for the close eye to detail on the two historical markers that have been proposed for OSMM. Thank you also for taking the time to speak with me last Thursday afternoon to offer some more context on the points that were discussed by the Commission at last Wednesday's meeting. I ended up being out of the office sick on Friday and Monday, otherwise I would have responded sooner. Most of the Commission's requests look fine to me. It will likely be next week before I'm able to revise the texts for the sponsor's consideration, after which I'll resubmit them for the Commission's review.

In the meantime, I would like to address an apparent misunderstanding concerning the inscriptions' statement that one building on the Mart property was likely a "sick house" rather than a "dead-house," i.e. a morgue. Based on your email and our conversation, I understand that the Commission may be under the impression that SCDAH proposed "sick house" as a means of softening or even obscuring that building's actual historic function as a morgue. This is absolutely not the case.

Our office proposed the "sick house" language based on careful, detailed examination of all known documentation concerning this building's historic use at the Mart. That review ultimately indicated that the sole source for this building being a morgue is one interview that historian Frederic Bancroft conducted in 1902, decades after the Mart ceased operation. There are no sources dating to the Mart's years of operation that state it included an on-site morgue, and there are no known later sources that refer to such a facility that seem to be based on anything other than Bancroft (there is also nothing directly indicating it was a "sick house," hence the marker's qualified statement it was "likely" one). Secondary research I conducted on other slave markets and similar sites also found no other comparable examples of on-site "slave morgues." In other words, it seems the presence of such a facility at a place like the Mart would be highly unusual and thus, especially for the purposes of an historical marker, should only be accepted if based on the sort of strong, clear documentation that does not seem to exist in this case. Based on that secondary research, it seems more likely that this building was a small "slave infirmary" or "sick house"--other instances of which can be documented--where ill or injured enslaved people were kept isolated and/or offered very superficial medical treatment prior to sale, with the memory of the building as a "dead-house" perhaps speaking to the dire condition and frequent fate of those enslaved people who were taken there.

If the Commission feels it would be helpful, I am happy to provide greater detail on the "dead-house" claim and the substantive issues that informed how the draft inscriptions addressed this point. I should also note that I have since spoken with both Christine Mitchell and Tony Youmans (both cc'd) of the Old Slave Mart Museum, and they confirmed that they were unaware of any additional sources relating to this point that our office has not already reviewed. There was apparently a misunderstanding among the
three of us as to the exact reasoning why the inscriptions did not refer to a "dead-house," which we have since clarified. I apologize for the confusion this seems to have created.

I will still plan to revise the marker inscriptions with the understanding that the Commission would like to use some version of the "dead-house" language—if nothing else, we could perhaps include a very matter-of-fact statement that this building was "later recalled as a 'dead-house'" and just leave it at that. However, I also wanted to make sure that the Commission's recommendation on this point was not based solely on the mistaken suggestion that "sick house" was used merely as a more palatable or less discomforting version of "dead-house." I assure you that our office fully shares the Commission's desire that these markers communicate the Mart's significance to Charleston history with full honesty and transparency towards its tragic, painful nature.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Otherwise I will be in touch once the sponsor and I have worked out new inscriptions.

Best,
Edwin
SLAVE TRADING COMPLEX

From 1856 to 1863, this was the north end of a slave trading complex known as The Mart or Ryan’s Mart. It was opened by Thomas Ryan and extended south to a lot on Chalmers St. that became its main sales room. Prior to auction, enslaved people were held, prepped, and inspected in a large “slave pen” formed by high brick walls connecting the north and south ends of the Mart. The Mart also included a two-story kitchen house and a small structure later recalled as a “dead-house.”

(continued on next side)

SPONSORED BY OLD SLAVE MART MUSEUM/CITY OF CHARLESTON, 2022

SLAVE TRADING COMPLEX

Enslaved people were also confined and sometimes sold at Ryan’s Jail, a brick four-story double-house here on Queen St. After slavery was abolished, local Black residents lived in the Mart buildings. African American families still resided in the Queen St. building as late as 1950 when the county health department condemned it as uninhabitable. It was torn down by 1951. The Chalmers St. sales room, now the Old Slave Mart Museum, is the last extant Mart building.

SPONSORED BY OLD SLAVE MART MUSEUM/CITY OF CHARLESTON, 2022
SLAVE TRADING COMPLEX

This was the south end of a large slave trading complex known as The Mart or Ryan’s Mart. It was opened in 1856 by Thomas Ryan after the City banned auctions of enslaved people and other goods from streets near the Exchange building. At that time, this Chalmers St. lot was an alleyway that led to the rest of the complex, which extended one-block north to Queen St. In 1859, the Mart’s second owner had the alley covered and converted it into a formal auction space.

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Side 2

SLAVE TRADING COMPLEX (continued from other side)

Behind this lot was a large “slave pen,” kitchen house, four-story “jail” building, and a small structure later recalled as a “dead-house.” None remain. Bombardment during the Civil War forced the Mart’s abandonment in 1863. Sales of enslaved people continued at other sites until Confederate forces evacuated Charleston in 1865. The Mart buildings later became tenements, portions of which African Americans occupied for decades. The Old Slave Mart Museum opened here in 1938.

SPONSORED BY OLD SLAVE MART MUSEUM/CITY OF CHARLESTON, 2022
Based on the English practice of housing the poor, the first act to establish a work house locally came in 1736. The first building, doubling as a public hospital, opened in 1738 at the southwest corner of Magazine and Mazyck (now Logan) streets. By 1740, laws calling for all captured runaway people who were enslaved to be confined in the Work House until claimed by their owners or sold changed the building’s original purpose. In 1768, a new hospital for white paupers was built to the south, and the old Work House became exclusively “a place of correction” for enslaved people.

After a fire and damage in May 1780, the British occupying the city moved the Work House to a former sugar refinery at the west end of Broad Street to use for these purposes. Charleston, incorporated in 1783, continued to imprison and punish enslaved Blacks there before moving the Work House to a newly constructed jail near its original site in 1786–87. In 1804 the Work House returned permanently to the old jail which stood next door to the extant Charleston District Jail of 1802.

At the Work House, city-paid staff collected fees from owners for incarcerating enslaved people and those “corrected by whipping.” There were charges for shackling and unshackling people, with rules noting no more “than twenty lashes at one and the same time, nor more than two corrections in a week.” The city also received revenues from the sale of those unclaimed enslaved people who had escaped from bondage. In 1825, a large treadmill, an especially onerous form of forced labor, was installed. The building was enlarged and remodeled in 1850–52 to resemble a fortress-like structure in the Gothic Revival style. Union soldiers were imprisoned here in the Civil War, and with slavery’s end in 1865, the building was repurposed as a segregated Black hospital. The building was razed after the 1886 earthquake and the land sold. The brutal history of the Work House was formally addressed in the City of Charleston’s 2018 resolution apologizing for slavery.
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Charleston Work House

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In 1825, a large treadmill, an especially onerous form of forced labor, was installed. In July 1849, enslaved Nicholas Kelly led a rebellion that enabled the escape of 36 others; all, however, were recaptured and Kelly and two others were hanged. Afterwards, the building was enlarged and remodeled in 1850–52 to resemble a fortress-like Gothic-revival structure. Union soldiers were imprisoned here in the Civil War, and with slavery’s 1865 end, the building became a segregated Black hospital. The building was razed after the 1886 earthquake and the land sold. The brutal history of the Work House was formally addressed in the City of Charleston’s 2018 resolution apologizing for slavery.