

# LIA at Work

Literacy InterActives, Inc.

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Sponsor of the Parker Sydnor Historic Preservation Site

VOL. 3 NO. 1 2022

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## A Southside Virginia Endangered "Species" Gains National Attention

What comes to mind when you hear about endangered species? Many of us think about grizzly bears, Monarch butterflies, "flights of the condors," whales, or red wolves as species that are endangered. Or you may know that the Florida panther's current status is listed as endangered. Today



Sonja Ingram and Jody Lahendro capture images of the officially endangered 19th century Parker Sydnor cabin structure in Mecklenburg County, Virginia.

there are only 120 to 130 Florida panthers left in the wilds of the Sunshine State.

When animals are in threat of becoming extinct, various organizations and government agencies often work for their recovery and to reduce the threats to their survival.

While not a species (from the Latin word

that means "form" or "appearance") like a biological organism, buildings classified for their architectural significance can also be threatened or endangered. In this sense, the concept of species can be applied to the dynamics of buildings and the sense of place connected to them, which are important parts of our shared history, living memories, and diverse cultures. Just as national attention can focus on endangered animals, we can also be aware of significant endangered buildings and empowering stories about the people who lived in them.

The Parker Sydnor historic site in Southside Virginia has been selected by Preservation Virginia as one of Virginia's Most Endangered Historic Places for 2022. Certainly, the distinction of endangerment is not an award! Bestowing such a statewide distinction on the historic site, however, enables more attention to the significance of this African American dwelling, an architectural species of its kind, that's being threatened into "extinction" in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Extant dwellings of once enslaved people are rare and often disregarded. Time, habitat, weather, and/or deferred maintenance cause these ennobled structures to become

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## Renowned Architect Brings the Past to the Future

On a crisp early fall morning, renowned historic preservation architect Jody Lahendro, FAIA walked with unflinching energy into the wooded area of a "new" building job site where he will do a scope of work for this new preservation project. Dressed in his field uniform of jeans and plaid shirt; and carrying a hefty satchel filled with his architect's tools, camera, and laptop, Lahendro was ready to tackle anything hiding in the natural landscape underfoot or in the recesses of the solemn 165-year old log cabin, which had been a part of the Prestwoud Plantation slave quarters. This was his first site visit to the Parker Sydnor historic log cabin site.

Lahendro was excited about the challenging project. He will identify preservation work for stabilization and protection of the historic dwelling. Accompanying him were Glenn E. Reyes from Clarksville, Virginia; and Sonja Ingram from Preservation Virginia and the LIA Board of Directors. A great grandson of Patrick Robert "Parker" Sydnor (1854-1950), Reyes lived in the

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## Advisory Council

LIA has an Advisory Council of community, regional, and national consultants who help us to pursue our mission with new directions that will advance our community initiatives and collaborations. Come and join us!  
 Contact:  
 Cameron Patterson at  
 434 426 6606 or email:  
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### 2021-2022 VENUES and Programs Literacy InterActives, Inc.

- Preservation Virginia Award for Achievement in Historic Preservation Research
- National Trust for Historic Preservation Diversity Scholars Award
- National Trust for Historic Preservation National Virtual Conference
- American Association for State and Local History Leadership in History Award
- Slave Dwelling Project
- "This is Us: Preserving Our Church Histories," Virginia Humanities sponsor
- ARCUS Leadership Academy for Historic Preservation Fellowship Award



To support the historic preservation efforts of LIA, tax deductible monetary gifts according to tax guidelines, may be made via PayPal at Literacy InterActives at <https://literacyinteractives.org/donate/>

*Renowned Architect, continued from page 1*

cabin with his grandmother and uncle when he was a teenager attending high school in Clarksville. "This [architectural inquiry] was like a field trip for me," he said. "I had fun."

Sonja Ingram brought the Sydnor historic site and LIA's efforts for its historic preservation to the attention of Lahendro. He has worked with the AMMD Pine Grove Project.



Glenn Reyes, Sonja Ingram, and Jody Lahendro at the Parker Sydnor historic site. The trio are preparing an architectural condition study of the dwelling that was built ca. 1863. The site will be open to the public in the near future.

An original Rosenwald school in Cumberland County, the Pine Grove School was part of the system of African American schools conceived and supported by Booker T. Washington and the famous philanthropy of Julius Rosenwald during the Jim Crow era.

Lahendro is the recipient of numerous honors and awards including the 2022 Outstanding Community Preservation award from Preservation Virginia.

Recently retired from the University of Virginia, Lahendro was the Historic Preservation Architect in the Facilities Planning & Construction department for 16 years. Prior to joining UVA, he had his own architectural practice specializing in historic preservation, restoration, and adaptive reuse.

LIA enthusiastically welcomes Jody Lahendro to this inspiring historic preservation project. ✨

## Meet a New LIA Board Member!



### Adam T. Erby

is curator of Fine and Decorative Arts at George Washington's Mount Vernon. Adam oversees the institution's fine and decorative arts collections, historic interiors, special exhibitions, and conservation program. "I was born and raised in south central Virginia in a sort of a rural community in Lunenburg County. I grew up around many historic buildings and people very interested in the antiques trade. From an early age, I liked to tromp around old buildings. There were a lot of late 18th- and early 19th- century buildings that were just sort of hanging out in the middle of agricultural fields." Adam is excited about working on a "new" kind of old building with its setting that's close to Lunenburg County. The LIA historic preservation project will benefit from Adam's enthusiasm and expertise. Adam will also lend his skills to LIA's grant writing work, community engagement, and regional networking.

*Welcome, Adam!*

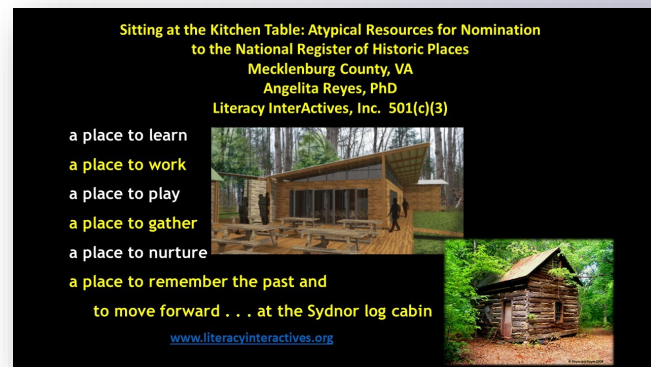


especially vulnerable. Literacy InterActives currently owns the Parker Sydnor historic cabin and considerable resources are needed for the dwelling's full "recovery" through various phases of historic preservation.

"Inclusion on the Virginia's Most Endangered Historic Places list can have a profound influence on bringing organizations and individuals together to forward solutions and solve threats," said Elizabeth S. Kostelny, Preservation Virginia CEO. "This year is no exception." Indeed, Virginia's Most Endangered Historic Places list offers a track record of success with bringing its historical species into recovery.

Like many organizations, LIA was challenged in many ways during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic. As we indicated in last year's *LIA at Work*, we found silver linings. With a Project Team in command, LIA took a deep dive in the spring of 2021 with a video conferencing series entitled, "This is Us: Preserving Our Church Histories."

With superior and innovative achievements, the projects that earn AASLH Leadership in History Awards serve as inspi-



rations and models to others in the field. Award-winning projects are rooted in "good history" and reflect AASLH's aspirational philosophy. The video conferencing series showcased the challenges of preserving African American church history. The series demonstrated diversity and inclusiveness among its participants. The pandemic enabled greater impact for the series with a larger number of people attending via Zoom.

Through state-wide and national recognitions and awards, the Parker Sydnor historic site tells the full American story in the larger narrative and context of working for positive social transformation. With your support, the Parker Sydnor site will become a center for gathering and learning. Please join us in the creation of this reality with your [donation](#) today!

**Literacy InterActives, Inc.**  
invites you to a  
video conferencing series

**This is Us:  
Preserving Our  
Church Histories**

Why should you help to preserve your church history? How can you? Join us for an exciting video conferencing series about new ways to celebrate and research your church history as a sacred and vital part of the home place – especially for generations to come and for bridging communities. All are welcome!

Part 1 (4/17/21): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dd6jIA8Y6\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dd6jIA8Y6_Y)  
Part 2 (4/24/21): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q\\_FENBh\\_dvs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_FENBh_dvs)  
Saturday, April 17, 2021 and  
Saturday, April 24, 2021

**Our Team**

**AARP**  
Virginia  
CHAPTER 741

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Virginia Humanities

For its work in producing the series, LIA received the prestigious Leadership in History Award from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). A national program, Leadership in History Awards was initiated in 1945



to build standards of excellence in the collection, preservation, and interpretation of state and local history throughout America.

"It is always inspiring to see the amazing work of individuals and organizations across the nation through the Leadership in History Awards program," said Christy Crisp, AASLH National Awards Chair, "but the challenges we have all faced over the past two years make the incredible work displayed through this year's award-winning projects all the more extraordinary.

*In Memory of*  
Linda Davenport  
1948-2022

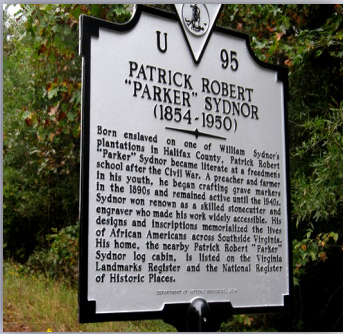
Our dear friend Linda Davenport Morton of Buffalo Junction, Virginia, passed away on Saturday, February 26, 2022. Linda



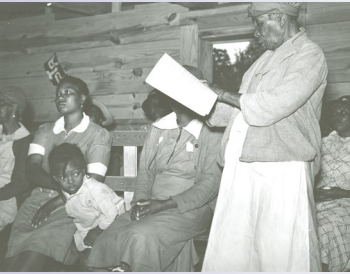
was a member of the Literacy InterActives Advisory Council. Linda owned and operated Galleria on the Lake and was an avid supporter of local artisans. From the beginning of LIA's 2007 public inauguration of the Parker Sydnor historic African American site in Southside Virginia, Linda

was involved with the activities of LIA. Undoubtedly, she was a champion of the beloved community and worked for social justice. We are thankful for Linda's dedication and gracious efforts to make a better and kinder community for all of us.

# “Literacy is more than reading a newspaper or a book....”



The Virginia historical highway marker commemorates the Parker Sydnor historic preservation site for statewide significance and national integrity. Mecklenburg County, VA  
Photo courtesy of Ania Rzeszutko



82 year-old woman learning to read in the 1930s. Literacy was an essential part of freedom and justice for African Americans.  
Courtesy of The New Public Library on Unsplash



“Literacy is more than reading a newspaper or a book!” In today’s world literacy includes new learnings and being accurately informed via multiple interactive media, technological, historical, and cultural sources.



*LIA connects the literacies of culture, public history, and digital technology through creative initiatives and programs in order to maximize new directions for diversity and bridging our communities.*

*Literacy InterActives is the sponsor of the*



An interactive historic preservation project  
Mecklenburg County Virginia



Honoring and bringing the past into the future by working together in the beloved community.



Sonja Ingram and Jody Lahendro at the Preservation Virginia Awards Ceremony in Scotchtown, VA. September 2022.



All hands on deck! Community clean up at the Parker Sydnor historic site. November 2022. A beautiful day with great team work!

## Literacy InterActives Video Conferencing Series

“This is Us: Preserving Our Church Histories” Recording Links:

April 17, 2021 - "Conversations with the Ancestors: Women Collecting Funeral Service Programs"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dqk9iA6Y6\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dqk9iA6Y6_Y)

April 24, 2021 - "Preserving Our Church Histories for the Generations" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q\\_FENBh-dvs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_FENBh-dvs)



Final Jeopardy! Question (Travel) on October 5, 2022: The 1948 edition of this publication said, “There will be a day... in the near future when this guide will not have to be published.” Answer: What is the *Negro Motorist Green Book*?



“So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.” Baha’i Writings