

LIA at Work

Literacy InterActives, Inc.

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Sponsor of the Parker Sydnor Historic Preservation Site

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Community Workday Brings Southside Volunteers to Historic Site

World-renowned poet Maya Angelou tells us, "When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed." On Saturday, July 29, 2023, a group of enthusiastic community volunteers with various levels of carpentry expertise came to a community



Community Workday volunteers come together to begin preparation for the historic preservation of the Parker Sydnor log cabin in Southside Virginia.

workday event at the Parker Sydnor historic site located in Southside Virginia. Literacy InterActives (LIA) sponsored its first community workday event.

The purpose of the workday was to do needed stabilization of the 150+-year-old Sydnor log cabin in preparation for upcoming historic preservation. The building is

threatened by deterioration and deficiencies that are actively destroying its structural integrity as a historic resource.

Black history is American history and it is essential in our schools and communities. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Virginia Landmarks Register, and the Virginia Historical Highway Marker program, the Parker Sydnor historic site is remarkable because of its enduring African American legacy in Southside connected to slavery, Reconstruction, legal segregation, and the long civil rights era.

Volunteers with "rudimentary skills" as well as those with professional experience were able to secure doors and windows; replace missing roofing nails; and install temporary piers, braces, and rafter collars.

Jody Lahendro, a retired University of Virginia architect and recipient of numerous honors and awards, coordinated the on-site workday. Lahendro's leadership reflected his extraordinary volunteer work for which he received the prestigious 2022 Outstanding Community Preservation award from Preservation Virginia.

Residents of the community who volunteered their skills included Inez Arnett-Ferrer, Graham Callaway, Charles Jones,

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Underground Railroad Mapped in Mecklenburg County

In 1998, Congress created the Network to Freedom program (NTF) to honor and preserve the history of the Underground Railroad (URR) and African American freedom seekers and their resistance to enslavement through escape. Literacy InterActives (LIA) received an NTF seed grant to chart evidence of the URR in Southside associated with the Parker Sydnor historic site. Mecklenburg County has a rich history of URR activity during the 18th and 19th centuries. Popular images of the Underground Railroad are those of dramatic and cunning escapes of enslaved African Americans fleeing to the North or Canada in search of freedom. We are familiar with Harriet Tubman. However, there were many unsung freedom seekers.

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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: info@literacyinteractives.org



2022-2023 VENUES for Literacy InterActives, Inc.

- Preservation Virginia’s List of the Most Endangered Historic Places
- 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
- Black History Month Series *The Mecklenburg Sun* and *The News & Record*
- “This is Us: Preserving Our Church Histories,” Virginia Humanities grant sponsorship



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/>

Underground Railroad, from page 1

The Sydnor site was originally the outlying slave quarters or “Forest Lands” of Prestwould Plantation. In 1834, William a freedom seeker escaped from Prestwould. He

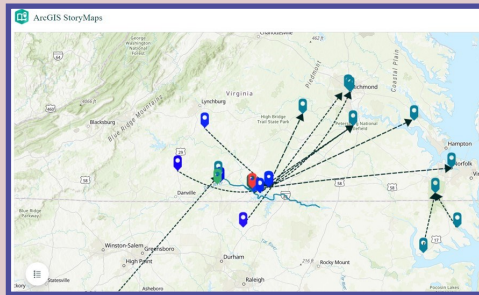


“Sunday Morning,” Smithsonian American Art Museum.

was captured at the James C. Bruce plantation in Halifax County and returned to Prestwould.

The Story-Map indicates runaway slave ads and the routes

that identified freedom seekers took from



and through Mecklenburg County going North to freedom. Freedom seekers who could read or write enabled their self-liberation and the civil right of attaining literacy.

Undoubtedly, literacy was also an escape to freedom. Based on 19th-century runaway slave newspaper ads and personal planter correspondences, the interactive ArcGIS StoryMap helps to visualize the NTF narrative and plots the URR routes in Mecklenburg County and the Southside region.

Hailey Belote, an undergraduate in Public History at Longwood University and intern for the LIA NTF grant project, created the remarkable interactive StoryMap.

ArcGIS StoryMap: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/17ba149ad5b046b8a639bcc40a837301>

Community Workday Tells an Oral History Story



Charles Webster

A licensed electrician and builder, Charles Webster answered the call with his expertise to the Community Workday sponsored by Literacy InterActives. While the Workday was the first time that Charles was at an LIA event, it was not his first time to be connected to the Sydnor historic site.

When Charles was growing up in Southside, he used to walk past the log cabin on his way to school. As a boy, he knew Mrs. Cora Irene Shields, owner of the property, who lived in the cabin with her young son and grandson. Mrs. Shields was still farming and would give Charles and his friends rides to school or town.

Charles said that he was always grateful for the rides because they had to walk a long distance to school in those days. Speaking to Dr. Angelita Reyes, Charles said, “I know this log cabin and people who lived there. I remember your grandmother [Mrs. Shields] and how she always helped us in those days. She was a hard-working and very kind woman.”

Harry Marrow, Glenn Reyes, Irene Parrish, Dorothy David, Larry Shields, and Joseph Shields. Dr. Audrey Horning, a member of the LIA Advisory Council, also joined the workday volunteers.

The Parker Sydnor site was the home and work area of Patrick Robert “Parker” Sydnor (1854-1950) who was a stonemason, preacher, and farmer in Southside during the mid-19th and 20th centuries. Mr. Sydnor was born enslaved on a Sydnor plantation in Halifax County Virginia. After the Civil War, he attained reading and writing skills from a Freedmen’s Bureau School. He promoted reading and writing among African Americans by carving and writing epigraphs on cemetery headstones.



Photo Credit: Peter Hedlund, Encyclopedia Virginia.

LIA is named in honor of African American men and women who struggled for the civil rights of literacy before and after Emancipation. Through their resilience, they sustained generational values for the civil rights of literacy and “getting an education.”

LIA promotes historic preservation as an interactive platform for African American history, culture; as well as technology and education in our communities. The Parker Sydnor historic site will serve as an inclusive heritage center and community gathering place sustained with the support of LIA, the community, regional stakeholders, and county and state agencies.

Aside from the community workday event, LIA had a number of stakeholders during 2023 who assisted at the historic site in the areas of archaeology, architecture, anthropology, and drone filming.

Peter Hedlund, Director of Encyclopedia Virginia at Virginia Humanities was instrumental in providing a stunning set of drone-based photos and filming of the Parker Sydnor log cabin site. The drone film will result in the virtual tours seen on Encyclopedia Virginia’s website. Encyclopedia Virginia’s mission is to provide a free, reliable, multimedia resource that tells the inclusive story of Virginia for students, teachers, and communities who seek to understand how the past informs the present and the future.

Another group of stakeholders joined the efforts to advance the historic preservation project. They included Dr.

Dennis J. Pogue, University of Maryland Historic Preservation Program (retired), Dr. Douglas W. Sanford, University of Mary Washington Historic Preservation Department (retired), and Dr. Audrey Horning from William & Mary.

According to Doug Sanford, “The Parker Sydnor cabin is an intriguing mixture of traditional construction practices and new materials and methods. Doug is like a history detective “figuring out how a building has changed over time, including into the modern era.”

Graham Callaway, a doctoral student in anthropology at William & Mary directed the archaeological survey that the site needs. As part of his dissertation work, Graham was in charge of a crew of undergraduate students who helped to do fieldwork for the survey.

LIA gratefully thanks everyone for all the work and assistance with this interactive historic preservation initiative. 🌟

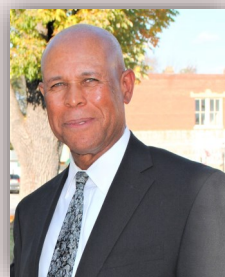
Literacy InterActives has a new logo designed by Robert Wolfersteig from 1pt6 Design. The new LIA website is coming soon!

In Memory of

Glanzy M. Spain, Jr.

March 30, 1944 - December 5, 2022

Our dear friend Glanzy M. Spain, Jr. of Chase City, Virginia, passed away on December 5, 2022. Glanzy was a dedicated member of the LIA Advisory Council. He attended the historic Thyne Institute in Chase City. A member of Bluestone Baptist Church, Deacon Spain earned his Associate Degree

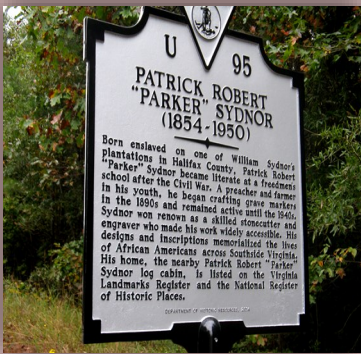


from Southside Virginia Community College. He was a US Air Force veteran and had retired from Burlington Industries. Deacon Spain served as a member of the Mecklenburg County Board of Supervisors for twenty-seven years. Supervisor Spain was a champion of social justice and civil rights. In 2020, Supervisor Spain spearheaded

discussions to remove the confederate statue from courthouse grounds in Boydton, VA—the county seat. In 2021, after much county debate the statue was removed.

Glanzy, you are gone, but not forgotten.

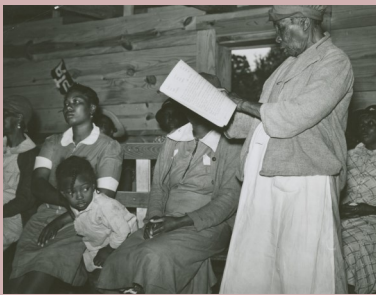
“In the 21st century, literacy is more than reading a newspaper or a book.”



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



Community Workday at the Parker Sydnor Historic site. July 29, 2023.



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



Dr. Audrey Horning and Graham Calloway work on the interior of the Sydnor log cabin during Community Workday, July 29, 2023.



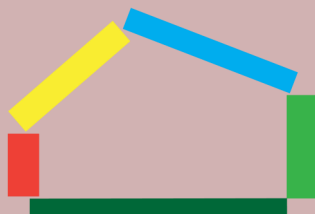
In today's world literacy includes new learnings, new applications, and being accurately informed via reliable interactive media, technological, historical, scientific, and cultural sources. Historic preservation is a part of our literacies.



Graham Calloway directed the archeological survey with undergraduate students from William & Mary during the summer of 2023. Dr. Audrey Horning accompanied the group.



Community Workday gathering for lunch.



LIA introduces its new pictorial logo for the Parker Sydnor project. Designed by Robert Wolfensteig.

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?

Conversation: Why did the publication stop?



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