

Juneteenth luncheon marks 150th anniversary celebration

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The St. Philips Heritage Center at Old Salem Museums & Gardens in partnership with Winston-Salem State University will host a luncheon on Thursday, June 4, in celebration of Juneteenth, the country's longest-running observance of the abolition of slavery.

This year marks the 150th Anniversary of the announcement of emancipation to the African-American community in Salem, which took place on May 21, 1865.

The Juneteenth luncheon will be from noon to 1:30 p.m. It will take place in the James A. Gray Jr. Auditorium at the Old Salem Visitor Center, 900 Old Salem Road. The luncheon is \$25 for adults and \$20 for students and Friends of Salem. Reservations must be made in advance by calling 1-800-441-5305.

The luncheon speaker is Dr. Reginald F. Hildebrand, associate professor of African-American Studies and History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel



Johnson



Hildebrand



McCutchan

Hill. His topic is "The First Year of Freedom in North Carolina: Pursuing Freedom with the Hoe and the Sword, the Book and the Lord." He will use first-hand accounts to explain some of the ways in which freedom was experienced in North Carolina in the year 1865.

Included are the words of black Union soldiers that liberated the people of Wilmington; the first Fourth of July celebration of the freed people of Raleigh; and a watch night service to bring in the New Year and mark the anniversary of the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

His talk will highlight moments like these to attempt to convey the excitement and challenges

of that year. Hildebrand is the author of *The Times Were Strange and Stirring: Methodist Preachers and the Crisis of Emancipation* (Duke University Press, 1995).

The 2015 St. Philips Cedric S. Rodney Unity Award will be presented to Joycelyn V. Johnson and Rev. Stephen McCutchan. The award was established in honor of the late Rev. Dr. Cedric S. Rodney, a Moravian minister who led the restoration efforts of the historic St. Philips Moravian Church. The candidates are proven community bridge builders and work successfully to move people toward a common goal for the benefit of our society.

Joycelyn V. Johnson works as the community

outreach coordinator at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center. She has been actively engaged throughout the Winston-Salem community for many years serving on the Winston-Salem City Council from 1993-2009. From housing to employment or economic development, her focus has included all members of the diverse population of this city with special emphasis on the needs of youth and seniors.

Retired pastor Rev. Stephen McCutchan spent 38 years in the pastoral ministry. In 1992, his church joined three predominantly black and two other predominantly white churches to found the Presbyterian Inter-Racial Dialogue, which celebrated

20 years of breaking down the barriers of racism with the publication of his book *Let's Have Lunch, Conversation, Race, and Community*. Following the luncheon, Rev. McCutchan will be available to sign this book and others.

The luncheon includes a tour of the Freedom Coming, Freedom For All exhibit on loan from the North Carolina Freedom Monument Project. Participants may also tour the St. Philips African Moravian Church, the oldest standing African-American Church in North Carolina, where the ending of slavery was announced on Sunday, May 21, 1865.

About St. Philips Heritage Center

The St. Philips Heritage Center in Old Salem is a sacred place significant to the unusual and unique history of this community, and it is a touchstone of the African-American experience. The African and African-American Moravian congregation, organized in Salem in 1822 among a mostly enslaved population, is one of the

oldest Black congregations in the United States.

It is the only historic African-American Moravian congregation in the country. The Heritage Center is comprised of the African Moravian Log Church, St. Philips African Moravian Church, the Strangers Graveyard, the African-American Graveyard and the Path to Happy Hill Overlook.

About Old Salem

Old Salem Museums & Gardens is one of America's most comprehensive history attractions. Its museums — the Historic Town of Salem, the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA), and the Gardens at Old Salem — engage visitors in an educational and memorable historical experience about those who lived and worked in the early south.

Old Salem Museums & Gardens is at 600 South Main St. in Winston-Salem.

For more information call 336-721-7300 or visit oldsalem.org.

WWII veteran savors life at party

BY FELECIA PIGGOTT-LONG, PH. D. FOR THE CHRONICLE

"Rise and shine young Americans, for you are the hope of the world!" Every morning, my granddaddy woke me up at 6:30 a.m. with these words," said Lorenda Jackson, one of the four grandchildren that Willie Mack Jackson and his wife of 62 years, the late Loree Butler Jackson, raised at their home.

"Ninety years is a long time. It is a blessing to be



Jackson

here," Jackson said.

Willie Mack Jackson was born on May 15, 1925 in Darlington, S.C. He was the only child born to Ben Jackson and Annie M. Jackson. However, his parents adopted the famed Lawrence Joel, for whom the Winston-Salem Coliseum is named, and his sister Geraldine Joel at the ages of 9 and 10 because Mother Joel "had too many children to raise." Jackson is very proud of his adopted brother.

"He took care of the wounded soldiers as a paramedic. He deserved that honor. He saved many lives. He was a hero," said Jackson. "He went under fire, and dragged many men to safety."

More than 90 family members and friends gathered at New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church on Saturday, May 16, to celebrate the 90th birthday of Willie Mack Jackson, a World War II veteran. Black and white photos of Jackson from 1941 and 1942 as a master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force with the 4th Air Force Unit were circulated during the party. These photos also decorate the mantle in the living room of his home. His daughter Irma Jackson,

who planned the party, made a large poster of one of Jackson's photos when he was 19, and friends and family members autographed the poster as a memoir. Jackson was grateful for reaching age 90.

"I feel like I did when I was 75 or 80. I still have a good mind, but I ain't too strong. I am still living off of the prayers of my mother," Jackson said.

The family relocated to Winston-Salem when Jackson was 5 years old because his mother was hired to stem tobacco at R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. His mother then sent for Jackson and his father to come to Winston-Salem. His family also had a convenience store on the corner of Oak Street and Northwest Boulevard. Jackson is known for his strong work ethic. Jackson graduated from Atkins High School in 1942, and the recruiters told the students about taking the test for the U.S. Air Force.

Jackson completed three years in the Air Force. He was inducted at Fort Bragg, and he was assigned to the Tacoma, Washington, and Fresno, California. He made \$20 a month. During basic training, he met many of the girls at North Carolina A&T State University. They would come and look through the fence as they trained.

"In the Air Force, I operated the Skeet Range, training pilots how to shoot. I was an expert marksman. We used the M-1 rifle, the 12-gauge shotgun and the 16-gauge shotgun. Because of my marksmanship, I stayed ready in case they would ask me to guard President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt," Jackson said.

Jackson won two medals for his expert shooting, and he worked in the personnel department.

There was a shortage of guns, and the blacks and whites trained separately. The whites would use real guns, and the blacks would have to use limbs off of a tree during training and marching.

Jackson returned to Winston-Salem after three years in the Air Force, and

he was hired at R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. in the 1940s, and where he retired after 36 years of service in 1982.

His daughter Irma Jackson remembers when she almost lost her father on May 12, 2014. They had his birthday party at a nursing home last year.

"He had to spend some time in hospice, and he thought that he would be leaving us, so he would no longer be a burden, but God restored his health," said Irma Jackson. "He is still with us. During his birthday, we traveled to various places such as Myrtle Beach, Savannah, Washington, D.C., Charleston, or Virginia Beach. We are blessed that he is still with us."

Donovan Jackson, the honoree's great-grandson and Murray Miller, the honoree's grandson-in-law, offered special reflections honoring Jackson's contributions to the family. Jakeana Paul welcomed the

guests, and Nina Cooper read a poem to honor Jackson. Other expressions of love through poetry and special remarks came from Cekia Young, Zariah Young, Gerald Chalmers, Alice Hill, Juanita Wilson, Belinda Smith, Rev. Wilbert and Glenda Blandon. Pastor Ronald Speas offered a closing prayer.

During World War II, Jackson recalled that segregation was the order of the day.

"I was a part of Squadron C. That 'C' stands for 'Colored.' We could be together on the Army base, but coming back South when we hit the Mason Dixon Line, we had to separate," said Jackson. "The blacks rode in the front of the train so all of the smoke from the engine would come on us. The white soldiers would get the tail end of the smoke, but when we got off the train we were smoky and greasy from the smoke."



File photo

During the elections on May 26, state NAACP board members, who conducted the elections, only allowed members who were eligible to vote in the original elections inside the NAACP Enrichment Center, 4130 Oak Ridge Drive.

NAACP elections

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in January. Other current members of the chapter are not looking at the past but more focused on the future. Tonya McDaniel said that the discrepancies from past elections will not hold the chapter back, and believes the future is bright.

"I am proud to be a member of the Winston-Salem Chapter," McDaniel said. "I know that no matter who is elected, the

future is bright." Members of the state NAACP board declined to comment on the election or past elections, but did say that winners would be notified in a matter of days. It is unclear when the public will know the results.

Patterson did not attend the elections on Tuesday, but did leave a few words of advice for whoever the new president will be.

"To whom much is

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