

Center for State of the Parks



CHARLES PINCKNEY NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE A RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

SNAPSHOT

Charles Pinckney (1757-1824) was an 18th-century politician and Southern plantation owner who first gained recognition for rejecting the Articles of Confederation, precursor to the U.S. Constitution, in 1783. At that time, Pinckney was a member of the South Carolina legislature. South Carolina chose him as a representative to the Continental Congress from 1784 to 1787, but he is best known as a framer of the U.S. Constitution. His contributions to this important American document include the articles granting Congress the power to regulate commerce and granting the House of Representatives the power of impeachment.

Congress established Charles Pinckney National Historic Site in 1988 to preserve the site of Pinckney's former home at Snee Farm in present-day Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, interpret his life and the lives of all the farm's past inhabitants (including slaves), and interpret the early history of the United States. Charles Pinckney National Historic Site is the only National Park Service site commemorating a Southern signer of the U.S. Constitution. The staff of nearby Fort Sumter National Monument manages the site.

Although the original house and outbuildings of Snee Farm no longer



The park's visitor center and museum are located in this house, which was built in 1828 on the site of Pinckney's plantation.

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stand, the main house that remains today (built in 1828) is a fine example of a coastal cottage. Several later outbuildings also remain.

In 2007 more than 41,000 people visited the park to learn about the life of Charles Pinckney and his role in drafting the U.S. Constitution, life on a southern plantation, and the culture that developed among the enslaved peoples who lived at Snee Farm.

In recognition of the importance of preserving the history resident at Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, the National Parks Conservation Association's Center for State of the Parks assessed the condition of cultural resources there using peer-reviewed methodology based on the National Park Service's own standards and guidelines. (NPCA also assessed resource

conditions at Fort Sumter National Monument, which is managed by the same staff as Charles Pinckney National Historic Site. See www.npca.org/state-of-the-parks to read that assessment.) According to this assessment, cultural resources at the park are in "good" condition overall, with a score of 82 out of 100. Following are challenges identified through the assessment and work the Park Service is doing to ensure the park's irreplaceable resources are protected into the future.

CHALLENGES

Ethnography: An ethnographic overview and assessment is needed in order to understand Gullah/Geechee culture at Snee Farm. This unique culture formed among enslaved peoples on isolated plantations along the southeast coast of the United States through the blending of West African cultures. An ethnographic overview and assessment would examine Gullah culture at



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the park, identify any cultural resources related to the Gullah people, and inform planning and interpretation. Without this study, the stories of these people and the impact they had on the park's history and cultural resources cannot be fully interpreted.

Historic structures: The park needs a historic structure report for the main house at Snee Farm. The report will document the house and its history, and it will document condition, threats, and treatments needed to better preserve the house.

WHAT'S BEING DONE

Archaeology: Charles Pinckney National Historic Site is the first park assessed by the Center for State of the Parks to score an "excellent" for archaeological resource conditions, based on a full archaeology assessment. The field-work component of the park's archaeological overview and assessment is complete, and staff at the Southeast Archeological Center are drafting a report of the findings.

Staffing: The park is developing a cultural resources division that will ultimately include a historian, a curator, a cultural resources management specialist, and a resources management chief. In addition, the park plans to hire a car-

penter within the next year or two to maintain structures that have wood components. Without this expertise, the wooden structures have been deteriorating. Visitor services will also be increased by two positions through funding made available with money brought in by the park's concessionaire.

Museum storage: The park recently installed fire and security systems in its curatorial storage facility, which protects the Charles Pinckney National Historic Site and Fort Sumter National Monument museum collections. Work to install proper climate control systems will begin in January 2009. In addition, the park has received funds for fire detection and suppression systems for the Snee Farm house and barn during fiscal year 2009.

Preserving Gullah/Geechee culture: Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, along with several state historic preservation offices, is part of a new Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission that will work to preserve the Gullah/Geechee culture along the southeastern coast. This culture still survives today, primarily in the low country of South Carolina and Georgia. The Park Service fosters the interpretation and continuation of this culture through exhibits at Fort Sumter,

Fort Moultrie, and Liberty Square in Charleston, and through cultural events and programs, such as cooking and craft demonstrations, lectures, music, and storytelling. (Gullah sweetgrass baskets are pictured on the previous page.)

ABOUT NPCA AND THE CENTER FOR STATE OF THE PARKS

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.

NPCA initiated the State of the Parks program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks. The goal is to provide information that will help policymakers, the public, and the National Park Service improve resource conditions in national parks, celebrate successes as models for other parks, and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations. Research for this assessment was completed by Kendall Edwards and Erin McPherson.

CONTACT US

To get copies of reports on other parks, or for more information about the Center for State of the Parks, visit www.npca.org/stateoftheparks or contact Dr. James Nations, vice president for the Center for State of the Parks, at jnations@npca.org. For more information on Charles Pinckney National Historic Site visit the park online at www.nps.gov/chpi. To learn more about what the public and our elected officials can do to help improve the health of this park, visit www.npca.org/take_action.

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT SCORES

