

S.C. HISTORY

The Old Slave Mart

By Ron Chepesiek

If a Yankee had not visited Charleston in 1920 and stayed, one of South Carolina's most unique museums would never have been established. Miriam B. Wilson planned to come for two weeks; she stayed for nearly 40 years.

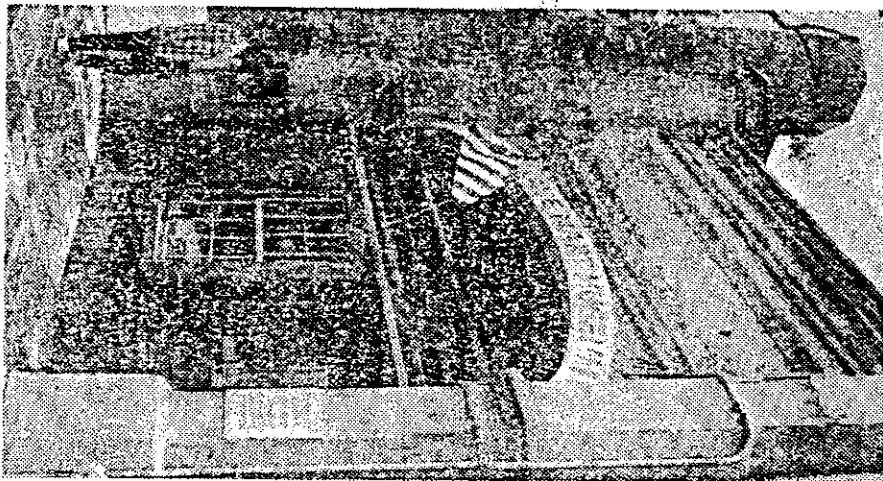
During that period, she spent much of her time roaming South Carolina and other areas of the South in search of what became her passion — slave artifacts. The more she searched and found, the more she became appreciative of the slaves' craftsmanship and artistic talents.

By 1937, she had acquired enough material to open, at 6 Chalmers St. in Charleston, the Old Slave Mart Museum. It was the country's first museum of black heritage open to the public on a regular basis.

The Old Slave Mart Museum has become one of Charleston's most popular tourist attractions. Last year alone, more than 654,000 tourists came through the museum's doors to see the exhibits.

They made their way down a cobblestone street to the inconspicuous entrance of a two-story building where a ring of a buzzer and \$3 allows entry.

On the main floor is a gift shop that sells Sea Island baskets, jewelry and reproductions of African art to help raise money to support the museum. The baskets are made by Gullah blacks of South Carolina's Sea Island region just north of Charleston. The basket making is done in private homes or beside the little roadside stands where the baskets often are sold.



The Old Slave Mart Museum, at 6 Chalmers St., Charleston, opened in 1937 as the country's first museum of black heritage open to the public on a regular basis.

founder, Mrs. Wilson, nearly 1,000 rare and valuable photos of Charleston and books on slavery and other aspects of Afro-American history. Most of the collection has been catalogued, and the entries have been published in book form by G.K. Hall and Co. of Boston.

When Mrs. Wilson died in 1959, few believed the museum would stay open. But two sisters, Judith Chase and Louise A. Graves, shared Mrs. Wilson's energy and conviction that South Carolina needed a museum that would document slavery.

Mrs. Graves, 84, the museum director, makes sure the museum is open on a regular basis, supervises the work of part-time staff members and serves as the buyer for the museum shop. Mrs. Chase, 79, serves as registrar, curator of collections, administrator of the research library and outreach programs and director of fundraising and development.

The four part-time staff members are all in their 70s or 80s.

During the last two decades, the Old Slave Mart Museum has become an important educational resource for the study of black history. Mrs. Chase has researched the artifacts, books and manuscripts in the museum and created educational materials which were used to teach an eight-week course on black history. She has developed 12 slide lectures on Afro-American arts and crafts that have been rented and sold all over the United States and assembled exhibits that have been loaned to interested schools and organizations.

Trying to handle thousands of visitors a year, administer a heavily used research library and carry out an extensive educational program would surely sap the energy of ambitious curators and librarians 50 years younger than Mrs. Chase and Mrs. Graves. But for the twosome, operating the museum has been a labor of love.

When the women took responsibility for the museum in 1960, funds to pay a staff were nonexistent. With the exception of one year when the sisters received a pittance, they have worked as full-time volunteers. Money to sustain the museum operation has often come out of their own pockets, even though a Marian B. Wilson Foundation has been set up to help raise funds.

Senior citizens and college students have helped out by being willing to work for low wages. Other volunteers have lent a hand, too, in both the museum and library, performing such tasks as typing library cards, stuffing envelopes and filing in the office.

For more than 10 years, the museum has had a reciprocal program with volunteers from the Gamma Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta. The museum has had a yearly art contest for black school children. The society organizes and hangs the exhibits; the museum provides judges and awards.

But Mrs. Chase and Mrs. Graves say that they feel they are losing the struggle to keep the museum open. They no longer have the strength to handle the many re-

The Greenville Piedmont
Greenville, S.C.

D-24,122

JUL 10 1988

87 Finding a home for the Old Slave Mart Museum

—The New York Times

Charleston

With a handstitched mouth and button eyes, a mummy doll made by a slave for the 16-year-old child of her master lies in a display case here, a mute reminder of the peculiar institution slavery once was.

Across the room is a \$4,700 bill of sale, a record of the purchase of "Dolly and her six children" in 1863.

For 50 years such relics have been part of the Old Slave Mart Museum, an eclectic collection in Charleston's last remaining building where slaves were sold.

But now the museum is caught in a dispute involving the two sisters who own and operate it, the City of Charleston and the tax-free foundation the women created to oversee operations.

The sisters, 80-year-old Judith Wragg Chase and 84-year-old Louise Alston Graves, who have nursed the collection of slave and African crafts for three decades, are faced with a lack of money and time. As Mrs. Chase said, "We are not immortal."

They say they want to put the collection in competent hands but add that they have not been satisfied with the foundation's attempts at raising money.

But they say the foundation's board has not come up with acceptable candidates to run the museum. And they criticize the city for only recently becoming active in trying to keep the collection in Charleston.

They are so frustrated that they say they will close the museum by autumn if no solution is found.

The Old Slave Mart, advertised as the nation's first black history museum, was begun in 1920 by Miriam Wilson, a transplanted Ohioan who collected and catalogued slave artifacts until her death in 1957.

In her will, Miss Wilson left the collection to The Charleston Museum. But the museum rejected it and Miss Wilson's church, which became the beneficiary, prepared to auction the artifacts.

Mrs. Graves, a close friend of Miss Wilson, and Mrs.



Judith Chase, right, and Louise Graves, operators of the Old Slave Mart Museum

—N.Y. Times

(Please see RESOURCE, Page 3B)

Resource library used by scholars

(Continued from Page 1B)

Chase decided to step in. They rented and began operating the museum, and they eventually bought the building and the collection. They created a tax-exempt foundation to oversee operations.

Today the collection is housed in a small upper room of the former slave market, displayed in cases made by Miss Wilson and accompanied by handwritten descriptions of the items. Over the years, the collection has grown to include African arts and crafts. Today the museum's resource library is frequently used by scholars around the world, Mrs. Chase says.

The museum has survived through contributions of money and time by Mrs. Graves, Mrs. Chase and others. Federal financial support has dwindled over the years, and local support has always been minor.

"If it weren't for her, it wouldn't be there," William Saunders, the foundation's vice chairman, said of Mrs. Chase.

Still, both Saunders and Sandra Fowler, chairman of the foundation's board, say that this devotion has led to a reluctance by Mrs. Chase to relinquish control that contributes to the museum's current plight.

to act on her frequent requests to step down.

The sisters had threatened to close the museum by the beginning of summer, but Mrs. Chase said she recently received \$6,000 from the city, allowing it to operate until the end of September.

Last fall the city offered \$250,000 for the museum building and the collection of quilts, bills of sale, 1,400 books and other artifacts. But Mrs. Chase called the offer inadequate.

Brenda Scott, head of the committee Mayor Joseph Riley appointed to study the museum's future, said that appraisals of the building were under way and that negotiations with Mrs. Chase should run through the summer.

Mrs. Chase, Mrs. Fowler and Saunders all seem to agree that the best solution would be for the city to buy the building and have another entity, possibly the Charleston Museum, operate it.

Richard Ahlborn, curator at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, who has discussed the collection's future with Mrs. Chase, agrees. Even though he has expressed interest in obtaining about 150 items from the collection, he says he believes the collection would

City Of Charleston Wants To Buy Slave Mart Building For \$200,000

By KERRI MORGAN
Post-Courier Reporter

1/27/88

After hectic last-minute negotiations and more than a little confusion Tuesday, Charleston City Council agreed unanimously to offer \$200,000 to obtain the Old Slave Mart Museum.

The sale would include only the museum building, not its collection of black history artifacts.

The city has been negotiating for more than 10 years to buy the nation's oldest museum of black history, which was scheduled to be sold to Charleston lawyer Gedney M. Howe III today.

City Council authorized Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. to negotiate to buy the museum two weeks ago. He said Tuesday morning that he was "shocked" when he learned last week that the owners had agreed to sell it to Howe, also for \$200,000.

The museum's owners, sisters Judith Wragg Chase and Louise Alston Graves, signed a contract with Howe last week and the deal was scheduled to be closed today. But the transaction held when Mrs. Chase learned Tuesday

afternoon that Howe already had agreed to sign his contract over to the city.

Mrs. Chase agreed shortly before City Council met to resume direct negotiations with the city, according to her real estate agent, Julian V. Brandt III.

Brandt said he thinks previous negotiations with the city fell through because the city was unable to sign a mortgage. The terms of the agreement approved by council Tuesday probably would be acceptable, he said.

The proposed contract calls for a \$75,000 down payment. The remaining balance of \$125,000 is payable at 6.5 percent interest over a 15-year term, with a balloon payment of all outstanding principal and interest being due and payable at the fifth anniversary of the closing.

Assistant City Attorney Frances Cantwell said the contract worked out by the city is preferable because the interest rate is lower than the one negotiated by Howe. Howe said he readily agreed to give his contract to the city, if necessary. He said he had wanted to use the mu-

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Slave Mart

Continued From Page 1-B

seum for office space. His office is next to the museum on Chalmers Street.

"I don't want to stand in the way of the city's desire to preserve the historically important building for public use," Howe said.

Council agreed that the building could be sold to Howe in the future if the city is unable to obtain the mu-

seum's collection.

Earlier Tuesday, Mrs. Chase denied that she had agreed to sell the museum to anyone. "The truth is, I don't know what's going on," she said. "The whole thing is up in the air. I hope to hear from my lawyer and Realtor by tomorrow."

Mrs. Chase said a written offer recently submitted by the city was "totally unacceptable," but she declined to reveal its details. But in a separate interview, Mrs. Graves said the

problem was that the city attempted to buy the museum collection, "which is something we're not prepared to sell at this time."

Riley said the city will continue negotiating to buy the museum collection. In recognizing that Mrs. Chase has kept the museum and a research library alive for more than 25 years, the mayor said he previously offered to let her keep any part of the collection and also decide who would operate the museum.

"She said she just wasn't ready to part with the collection and wasn't sure what she wanted to keep," Riley said.

Sandra Fowler, president of the Miriam B. Wilson Foundation, a non-profit organization set up to secure funding for the museum, said the foundation and a separate committee have worked with the city to find a way to keep the museum collection in Charleston. "We have always worked with the understanding that that is

what the owners want," she said.

But Mrs. Fowler said the Smithsonian Institution and Syracuse University, Mrs. Chase's alma mater, have expressed interest in buying the collection.

She said the collection has been appraised at \$20,000 and \$25,000, but that Mrs. Chase has said it may be valued at \$500,000. "The true value probably lies somewhere in between," Mrs. Fowler said. "The problem is there are no experts in this

field to give an accurate appraisal."

The Old Slave Mart Museum was founded by Miriam B. Wilson, who collected slave-made crafts from the 1930s until she died in 1959. In 1937, she moved her collection into the Old Slave Mart at 6 Chalmers St., which was an actual auction house for slaves and chattel.

Councilman Robert Ford said he hopes the city will change the name of the museum. "I think it is offensive," said Ford, who is black.

6 Chalmers

Chas. To Buy Slave Museum For \$200,000

By KERRI MORGAN
Post-Courier Reporter

The city of Charleston has signed a contract to buy the Old Slave Mart Museum for a \$200,000 cash payment, Assistant City Attorney Frances Cantwell announced Thursday.

The agreement was reached Wednesday with the owners of the museum, sisters Judith Wragg Chase and Louise Alston Graves, Ms. Cantwell said.

Their real estate agent, Julian V. Brandt III, took the contract to Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr.'s home Wednesday night, she said. Riley left town early Thursday to attend a meeting in Indianapolis.

The sale is scheduled to be closed this afternoon, Ms. Cantwell said. The city is purchasing only the building.

The owners and the city have not reached terms on purchasing the museum's contents, a rare collection of black history artifacts.

The city has been negotiating to buy the museum for about 10 years. On Tuesday, City Council authorized Riley to offer \$200,000 for the building.

Brandt and Ms. Cantwell had negotiated an agreement requested by Mrs. Chase that called

for a \$75,000 cash down payment with the remainder to be paid over a 15-year period.

But the city wanted to pay the full amount in cash and Mrs. Chase agreed with those terms, Ms. Cantwell said.

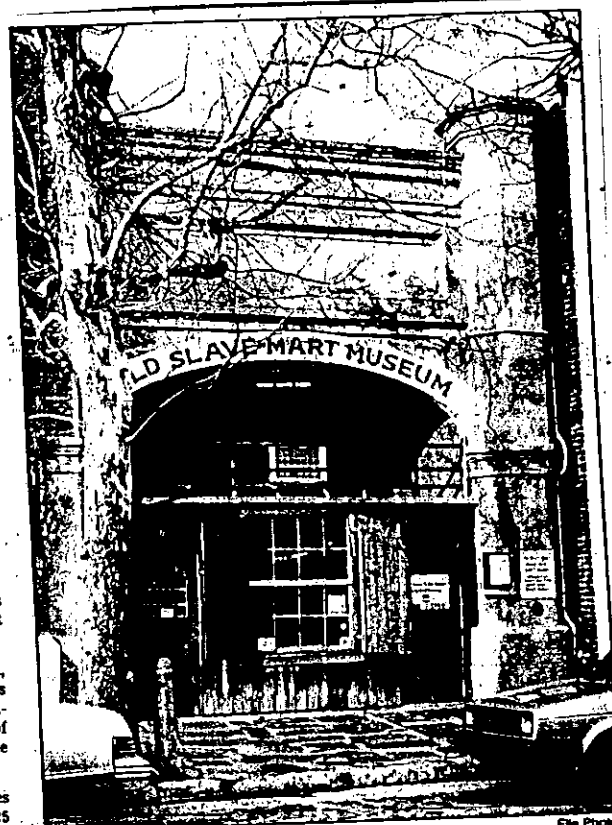
The money will come from community development funds, which can be used for historic preservation purposes.

The museum was scheduled to be sold Wednesday to Charleston lawyer Gedney M. Howe III. But Howe had agreed to sign his contract over to the city when he learned the city wanted to preserve the building.

When Mrs. Chase learned of his plan, she agreed to resume direct negotiations with the city.

The Old Slave Mart Museum, located at 6 Chalmers St., was founded in 1937 by Miriam B. Wilson, who moved her collection of slave-made crafts into the building.

Mrs. Chase and Mrs. Graves bought the museum more than 25 years ago, after Mrs. Wilson's death.



Old Slave Mart Museum at 6 Chalmers St.

3/22/88

Slave Mart Museum Auction Is Scheduled For Saturday

By KERRI MORGAN
Post-Courier Reporter

Those with fat purses or just a dollar or two can come away with a part of Lowcountry history when fixtures and gifts from the Old Slave Mart Museum are auctioned off Saturday.

Among items available are a 1938 oak rolltop desk owned by the museum's founder, Miriam B. Wilson, said Ed Roumillat of Roumillat's Auction. "We expect it to bring \$500 to \$800. It's in mint condition," he said.

Four oak showcases used to display the museum's collection also are to be sold. Roumillat says they should fetch \$250 to \$300 each.

Also available are prints by Lowcountry artists Julie Wilson, V. Livingston, M. Chisolm, and other showcases, a bookcase, a file safe, and shop fixtures.

The auction also will provide any-

one who has a dollar or two a chance to be a part of history, Roumillat said. Remaining gift items, ceramics, and mobiles sold in the museum will be auctioned for what amounts to spare change.

A preview of the goods will begin at 11 a.m. The auction begins at noon.

The museum's collection of black history artifacts is not included in the sale. The museum building, located at 6 Chalmers St., was sold to the city of Charleston in January.

The city plans to keep the building as a museum and is attempting to acquire the collection, which remains in the hands of the museum's former owners, sisters Judith Wragg Chase and Louise Alston Graves.

Mrs. Wilson, who collected slave-made crafts from the 1930s until she died in 1959, founded the museum in 1937. Several bills of sale for slaves indicate they were sold at that site.

WO men killed

HELLE KILLINGBECK
Staff and Courier staff

men were killed in North
ton Friday in separate
s, and a man has been
with murder in one of the
police said.

Charleston police charged
old William Wade Phillips
unt Road with murder in
of Kenneth LeVane Wash-
2, of Mount Pleasant.

found Washington's body
trailer on Target Street
a.m., said Capt. Tony
Washington, of Presidio
and a single gunshot wound
ck.

is about 100 yards from
was shot. We think he
around and fell there (af-
ooting)," he said.

ooting may be drug-related
officers found an unknown
of what they believe is
aine in a bag in Washing-
ket, Smith said. Police
abundance to the State Law
ent Division to be tested.

link a semiautomatic gun
in the shooting, but had
ered a weapon late Fri-

is expected to have a
ing at 9 a.m. today. Po-
oking for a second sus-
Target Street shooting,
not release any informa-
man Friday.

to have him in custody
th said.

er shooting occurred
p.m. near Ward Avenue
e Drive, where a man
dead in a car, said
County Sheriff's Maj.
Oliver.

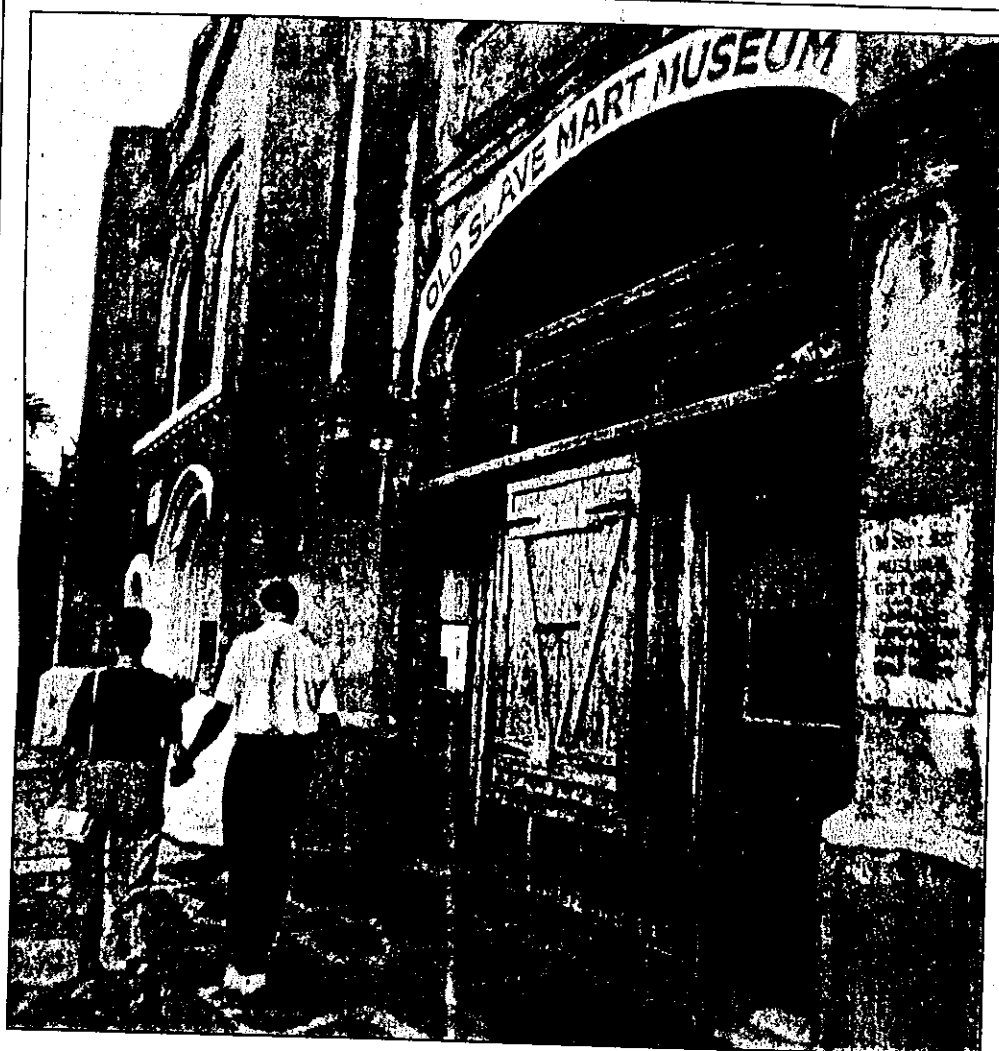
as would not release any
on the victim late Fri-
ing notification of his
rees said the man is in
s or early 20s and was
t once in the face.

Two cars were travel-
Vard Avenue to Eagle
Midland Park Road at
and witnesses said the
vehicle pulled alongside
victim was driving.

he fired by a passenger
car, Oliver said.
told police the victim's
er numerous times be-
to a stop in an open
d Avenue, Oliver said.

office is looking for a

HOOTINGS, Page 4-B



Staff Photo by Robin Cometel

The city of Charleston is planning to re-open the Old Slave Mart Museum on Chal- mers Street by next spring. The city bought it in 1988 for \$200,000.

Slave Mart museum may serve as Lowcountry black history hub

■ **OPENING:** Officials hope the renovations to the building are complete by next spring.

By ROBERT BEHRE
Of The Post and Courier staff

Those who criticize Charleston for not doing enough to present its black history could be silenced by next spring.

By that time, the city of Charleston hopes to reopen the Old Slave Mart Museum on Chalmers Street, which will serve as an orientation point to some of the Lowcountry's most important black history sites.

The museum could be just a part of a larger network that would include all sites and eventually could lead to an even larger black history museum in

Charleston.

Renovation plans for the Old Slave Mart moved ahead this week as City Council approved a \$30,250 contract for Warren Parker Unlimited, a Brooklyn, N.Y., graphic and exhibit design company. Parker will make five trips to Charleston for at least three days to consult on the exhibits and to do other work.

"We're really hoping for a spring opening," City Clerk and Tourism director Vanessa Turner-Maybank said recently.

The Slave Mart, a stucco, brick and wooden structure, was built as a fire engine house in 1820. It is believed to have served as one

of several privately owned slave marts that opened after 1856, when the city forbade selling slaves in public streets.

It has stood empty since 1988, when the city of Charleston bought it for \$200,000. In recent years, a special committee, including city staff, preservationists, Avery Research Center officials and others have discussed what to do next.

The interior of the Slave Mart is relatively small, and consultants have said it should serve to direct visitors to other black historic houses, sites, research centers and museums in the Charleston area.

Turner-Maybank said the Slave Mart could join with McLeod

See MUSEUM, Page 4-B

Arre mad '87

■ **MORE TO COME:** A woman arrested at the time of the murder in North Charleston is one

By COLETTE BAXLEY
Of The Post and Courier staff

It's been 9½ years since a 6-year-old barber was beaten to death outside his Goose Creek shop in an apparent robbery, but police said Friday they finally arrested a suspect.

Cristal Cheatham Nash of Goose Creek was arrested Thursday and charged with the January 1980 murder of Josefino F. Bugarin in North Charleston. She would have been 14 years old at the time of the killing, police said.

Other arrests are expected this week, said Detective Sgt. William Kelley of the Goose Creek Police Department.

Nine more to be over

By ARLIE PORTER
Of The Post and Courier staff

Three years after a study described Charleston County's 19 boat landings as among the worst along the coast, work is scheduled to improve nine ramps.

"Boaters have been waiting a lot of years," said Jeff Schryver, director of planning and development for the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission.

The improvements are expected to cost more than \$3 million, funded by the \$34 million bond referendum for park and recreation improvements approved by Charleston County voters in 1992.

According to Schryver, the ramps that will be improved include:

■ Sol Legare, also known as Battery Island. The ramp is closed and should reopen on Aug. 28. The old ramp will be torn out and a double-lane, longer ramp installed. Light-

leton County fire deaths attributed to homemade loc

FBAUER
Courier staff

ORO — It was only a
firefighters put out the
in six minutes. The

litz. "In a fire that size, that's highly unusual. That's what makes it so hard to deal with this."

Stiegitz was one of the firefighters summoned at 9:30 a.m. Thursday to 617 Seventh St. in the

son, who lives two trailers from Walling. "I rammed on the side of the trailer and hollered for Ann. The meter reader and me, we went on the back side and beat and hol-

a homemade lock that used a long nail as a bolt.

Lamar's mother, Gloria Ann Walling, 29, was lying in the hallway.

the State Law Enforcement Division showed that the fire started in the teen-ager's bedroom on the mattress.

MUSEUM

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Plantation, the Aiken-Rhett House and the Avery Research Center as a National Heritage Museum. "That's the big picture," she said. Both McLeod and Aiken-Rhett are owned by the Historic Charleston Foundation. The foundation re-opened Aiken-Rhett earlier this month after it was shuttered for al-

most two years. McLeod, an antebellum James Island plantation with many slave cabins still intact, has not opened to the public on a regular basis. Efforts to link together these black historic sites seemed to get a big boost last month. State legislators agreed to form a special commission not only to study a monument to Black South Carolinians on the Statehouse grounds, but also to look at the feasibility of establishing a black history museum in

Navy clinic closes this fall

By TERRY JOYCE
Of The Post and Courier staff

NAVACARE, the civilian-operated clinic for military families and retirees, will close on Sept. 30, the Charleston Naval Hospital said Friday.

"The decrease in the number of NAVACARE users and the consolidation of health care services led to the decision," the Navy said in a prepared statement.

NAVACARE moved to its present location at 8088 Rivers Ave. in North Charleston about 2½ years ago. It has a staff of about 77 full-time and part-time civilian employees, all of whom work for an out-of-state civilian contractor.

Details on what will happen to the staff members' jobs weren't immediately available, a Navy hospital spokes-

woman said.

"We are extremely sensitive to the fact that NAVACARE was a popular medical facility," said Lt. Cmdr. William Storey of the Navy hospital in the prepared statement.

"However, over the last three years, the number of visits have declined by almost 50 percent, costing the government at least \$1 million in unused services."

NAVACARE usually treated patients suffering from relatively minor ailments, but the Navy had planned to change it to a primary care facility as part of the new tripartite health management system.

Families who use NAVACARE can still use facilities at the Charleston Naval Hospital, the Charleston Naval Weapons Station and Charleston Air Force Base.

Charleston. "The Slave Mart could be a component of that, and that's very exciting," Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. said recently. "I think obviously there's a great opportunity for linkage."

The statewide effort could lead to a needed infusion of money into the project. The collection once housed in the Slave Mart could be lost to the Lowcountry if no one steps forward to buy it. W. Marvin Dulaney, director of

Bodies identified in two counties

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Two decomposing bodies found in separate parts of the state have been positively identified, authorities say.

An autopsy Friday confirmed a body found by hikers in Richland County was that of Theresa Arnold, 56, of Swansea, who had been missing for a week.

Arnold's car was also found near the pond off Interstate 20 early Thursday.

Autopsy results indicated the woman may have died of natural causes, but toxicology tests were still pending.

In the Pee Dee, a body found in wooded fields outside Florence was identified as that of 67-year-old George McCray, missing since May 10.

There was no evidence at the scene to indicate how McCray died, said Florence Police Lt. Pete Beck-

the Avery Research Center, said he has talked with the owners of the collection — the two children of the late Judith Wragg Chase. He said they are seeking to sell the collection for a sum of \$300,000.

"We're trying to raise some funds for it, but so far, we've been unsuccessful," he said. "Chase's children expressed a desire not to break up the collection."

The collection was started in the 1930s by Miriam Wilson, and it includes one-of-a-kind slave crafts

HAMILTON

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to learn together."

Such enthusiasm doesn't surprise Hannah High School Assistant Principal Joyce Fogle, who worked alongside her during the majority of Hamilton's 14-year tenure as director of guidance at Goose Creek High.

"She is very much a people person. There's no other way to put it," Fogle said. "She is dedicated to the students, and she really takes ownership in the school. It's not a power thing. It is just a part of her commitment and enthusiasm."

Hamilton, 46, knows it will take more than enthusiasm. The Catholic schools have had a history of poor standardized test scores. She refuses to look back, though, telling everyone who will listen, "This is a new school, a fresh start." She wants Canby Middle School to be a blend of the old and new.

"It's going to be a little bit of the old-fashioned way," she said. "My students will have to learn the Preamble to the Constitution. They will have to say the Pledge of Al-

and artifacts, some of which have been loaned to the Smithsonian. Even if a deal goes through, not all the artifacts would return to the Slave Mart Museum.

However, the reopening of the Slave Mart Museum — especially as part of a larger black history tour or network — could quiet some criticism of how Charleston has dealt with that aspect of its past.

A recent New York Times piece on Charleston and the Spoleto Fes-

tival noted the Slave Mart Museum has remained closed and that a slave cabin at an outlying plantation was dubbed "an antebellum cabin."

Those working to reopen the museum brush aside any criticism.

"The city should be commended for acquiring the building, which could easily have been lost," Riley said. "We felt that what was in the museum was good, but the building was more important than the collection."

glance. This is a community school in a community with old-fashioned, conservative values. We're going to go by the old saying, 'The rule is respect and respect is the rule.' "I want lessons to be relevant. I want high expectations for students. My kids will have reading projects, science projects, field trips. They will have novels they have to read and presentations to make in front of the class."

As for discipline, it must be consistent, said Hamilton, whose mother, Virtheleen, taught for 40 years in Berkeley County schools.

Every teacher will post rules and consequences in the classroom. Hamilton believes in allowing teachers to play a major role in discipline. Besides, she's the only administrator at the school.

"I'm not washing hands of discipline, but the teachers will have the main control of their discipline problems, especially the less serious ones."

Count on one thing, she said. "We will not allow any student to disrupt the learning process of 23-25 other students."

There's a telling sign on Hamilton's desk. It reads, "Parents are teachers, too." She lives in Moncks Corner, but she has been attending churches in the Canby area for a couple of reasons — her faith is important to her, and she wants to meet parents.

"We have a community group using the gym during the summer, and I welcome that," Hamilton said. "About two weeks ago, one of the parents came up and said, 'I don't see the man who are supposed to be here. I don't mind staying.' I said, 'Good. I want you to do more of that.' Let me tell you something. His son was so proud. You should have seen the child's face."

It was a face filled with pride.

She wants to see more of those looks on the faces of "her" children. "I want my kids to be able to compete," Hamilton said. "I want them to be able to go to any high school and be singled out, not because they are from Canby but because they are performing equally or better than any of the other students there."

Old Slave Mart to be restored

Groundbreaking for S.C. Aquarium may be delayed; site has creosote

By KERRI MORGAN *WFO*
Of the Post-Courier staff **MAY 23, '90**

The Old Slave Mart Building at 6 Chalmers St. in downtown Charleston will be restored this year, thanks to a grant from the S.C. Department of Archives and History, city of Charleston officials said Tuesday.

The department awarded the city, which owns the building, a matching grant of \$23,625. The city will use the same amount of Community Development funds to match the grant.

Council also learned Tuesday that groundbreaking for the planned S.C. Aquarium may be delayed while the site is tested for levels of creosote, an environmentally hazardous material.

The money for the Slave Mart will be used to restore the building, which has been vacant since 1988, to a usable condition, said Rhet Wilson of the city planning department. The city will begin drawing plans this summer and hopes to begin the renovation next fall, she said.

The Avery Normal Institute is interested in using the building as an interpretative and community center for its black history activities, Ms. Wilson said.

"I've been meeting with them every couple of weeks to talk about it," she said, adding that one of the uses might be for black history film festivals.

The city bought the building from Mrs. Chase and her sister, Louis Alston Graves, in January 1988 for \$200,000.

The Old Slave Mart Museum closed in 1987 and its collection of black history artifacts, owned by Judith Wragg Chase, was moved out of the building. The city attempted to buy the collection, but negotiations were unsuccessful.

Without the collection, the city was unable to reopen the museum and it had not determined another

use for the building.

Regarding the proposed aquarium, it's not clear how long the project will be delayed if large amounts of creosote are found at the site, Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. said.

Soil samplings taken by the National Park Service, which owns the property, found a small amount of creosote, an oily substance obtained from the distillation of wood tar or coal tar, he said. The substance, which is harmful if ingested, is present because there was a creosote manufacturing plant in that area years ago.

The proposed aquarium site, located at the east end of Calhoun Street by the Cooper River, is owned by the National Park Service. The city is leasing 1.5 acres for the aquarium.

Riley said the city and the park service began meeting with the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control last fall to determine how to test the soil and remove the creosote. Hurricane Hugo delayed that process, but the park service is planning to hire an engineering firm soon to conduct the tests, he said.

A park service spokesman could not be reached for comment Tuesday night.

The amount of the creosote and the method of removal will determine whether construction of the aquarium will be delayed, Riley said.

If there isn't much creosote, one remedy is to cover the site with several inches of clay. But if a great deal of the substance is present, the site may have to be excavated. The state health department will determine the removal method after the site is tested, he said.

The city got preliminary approval of its aquarium design from the

MART

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Board of Architectural Review on Monday and hopes to break ground and begin driving pilings for the foundation late this year.

"We're moving full speed ahead with the design," Riley said. "We're confident that any problem that exists can be corrected. This could delay the groundbreaking, but we're hoping that it won't. It just depends on what the soil analysis shows."

The city also found some creosote last summer in soil at a city playground at the corner of Calhoun and Concord streets, which is adjacent to the aquarium site. The playground was closed immediately and will remain closed until further testing determines how much creosote is present and how removal should be handled.

That procedure has been delayed while the city recovered from the hurricane, but should resume soon, Riley said.

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4/5/01

Slave auction house to become museum

BY KATHERINE LOWRIE
Of The Post and Courier Staff

WANT TO DONATE?
Anyone interested in donating an item to the Old Slave Mart Museum's holdings may call Amanda Barton at 965-4178.

Once a turn-of-the-century tenement and then an auto shop, the Old Slave Mart located on Chalmers Street is in line for yet another life.

Built in the 1800s, the structure will become an orientation center for the multisite African-American Museum once construction is complete by the end of the year, said Bill Turner, city construction manager.

And as work begins on the building, the city is looking for items to place inside it.

Amanda Barton, the city's project manager, said a private benefactor has donated many historic pieces to the museum, but she hopes more locals will search their attics and basements for possible items to give.

A few years ago, the city began stabilizing the building for the \$723,000 renovation, \$300,000 of which will go to build and to design exhibits.

Architect Malcolm Brennan of M. Brennan Architects said the

design received final approval from the city's Board of Architectural Review without major opposition.

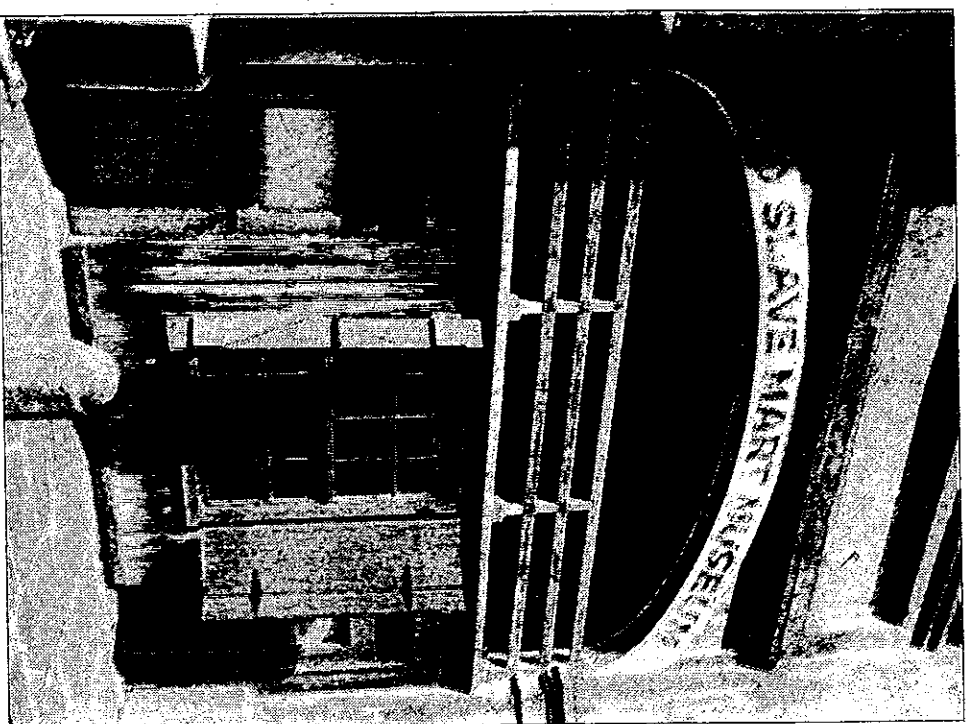
"The only problem we had was with the rear of the building. At first, the Preservation Society, which has an easement on the building, did not want any windows in the rear," he said.

The first phase — which will prepare the building for exhibits — will take about 120 days. Huss Inc. crews will remove the wood framing on its front facade.

Next, a nonreflecting tempered glass will be installed on the facade to let more light inside.

"We want to take it back to when it was an open space, but we can't leave it open — the

The Old Slave Mart on Chalmers Street will undergo renovation in the coming months to be better equipped to act as an orientation center for the multisite African-American Museum.



KATHERINE LOWRIE/STAFF

Work set to begin on the Old Slave Mart

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exhibits won't take it," Brennan said. "The idea is to make the glass disappear."

Barton said that as historic records indicate that the mart was once enclosed by a gate, so a simple wrought-iron gate will be placed on its Chalmers Street front.

The city did not want a very fancy gate because it tried to respect the structure's history as much as possible, she added.

Planned stucco patching also will keep with its historical flavor. Crews will remove loose or failing stucco under the arch and patch to match the existing finish. They also will address the pier and parapet caps.

Turner described the work as minimal.

"It is mostly crack repair — the main change will be taking out the wooden in-fill."

A new steel sign reading "Mart" will be mounted on existing brackets, but the existing painted lettering that reads "Old Slave Mart Museum" will remain.

A new brass plaque telling of the building's history will replace the current faded, wooden plaque.

Although the building's size doesn't require it, Barton said

the building will have a new lift for better handicapped accessibility.

Some foundation work also is planned.

"We're having slab cut prior to the start of construction so an archaeologist can come in and see what, if anything, can be found," Turner said.

Restrooms will be upgraded, and space set aside for a bookstore, elevator and stairs. A fire sprinkler system will also be added.

The biggest challenge, said Turner, is fitting so much into a small, simple space, while respecting the tale the building can tell.

"This is the only standing building in town where slaves were sold," he said. "Charleston was really the Ellis Island of slaves coming into the country. It's absolutely essential to the city's history, and the story needs to be told."

Turner said he is glad to see an increasing amount of recognition of the role that blacks played in building the city.

"There's a tendency for people to think of Charleston as quaint, but there was a darker side," he added.

Barton said the city struck an agreement with the French Quarter Neighborhood Associa-

tion in response to its concerns regarding noise, traffic and parking impacts. The museum won't open Sundays, and no more than 50 people will be let inside at one time.

Large groups will be booked ahead of time to ensure that there is an organized flow.

Brennan said great pains have been taken to keep the 2,400-square-foot building as historically true as possible while converting it to a museum.

He studied detailed historical documents prior to submitting his design proposal.

According to Brennan, two historians at the College of Charleston followed the paper trail of the structure way back, and found ample evidence to support its use as a slave auction locale, including accounts written by journalist Charles Coffin in 1883.

In his designs, Brennan was able to adhere closely to the historically documented proportions, size and appearance of the building.

Brennan said construction should begin within 30 days.

"This is an important part of our history — maybe not our proudest moment, but one that had a key role in how the city developed."