

S.C. HISTORY

The Old Slave Mart

By Ron Chepesiuk

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.

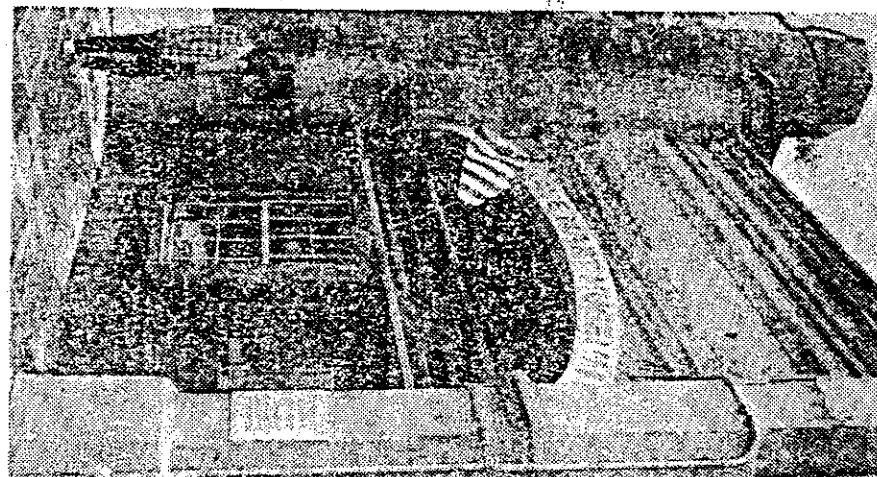
During that period, she spent much of her time roaming South Carolina and other areas of the South in search of what became her passion—slave artifacts. The more she searched and found, the more she became appreciative of the slaves' craftsmanship and artistic talents.

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.



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.

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.

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-

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JUL 10 1981

Finding a home for the Old Slave Mart Museum

By The New York Times

Charleston

With a handstitched mouth and button eyes, a mammy 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.

(Please see RESOURCE, Page 3B)



N.Y. Times

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

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

it didn't go through, said 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-

See Slave Mart, Page 9-B

Slave Mart

Continued From Page 1-B
The city's collection

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 be-

ing interested to buy the museum col-

lection. 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 collec-

tion and also decide who would oper-

ate the museum.

The News & Courier, Charleston, S.C., Wednesday, January 27, 1988—6-B

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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.

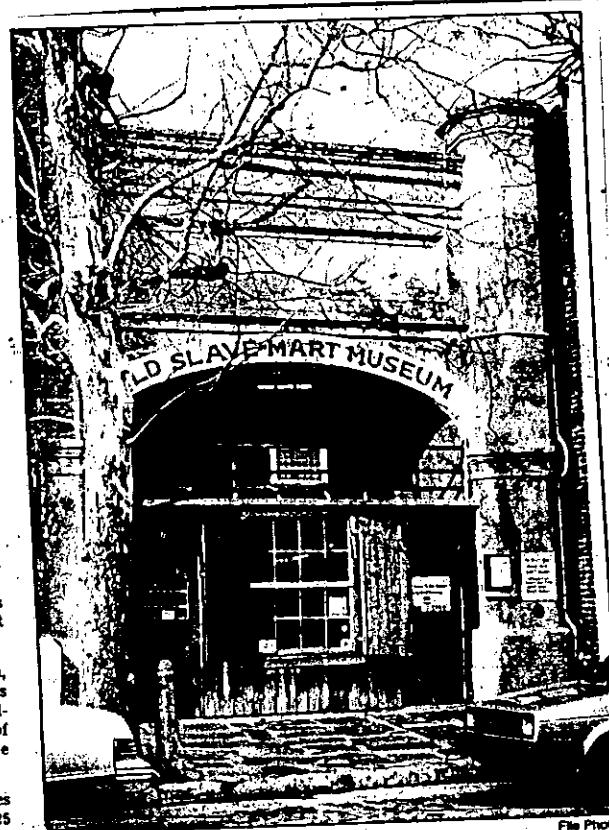
The money will come from community development funds, which can be used for historic preservation purposes.

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.

File Photo

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 artifacts from the Old Slave Mart Museum are auctioned off Saturday. Among items available are a 1938 oak roll-top desk owned by the museum's founder, Mrs. M. 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 cabinet 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 at the museum will be auctioned off at that amount or 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
Post 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
ount 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
ad a single gunshot wound
ck.

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

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

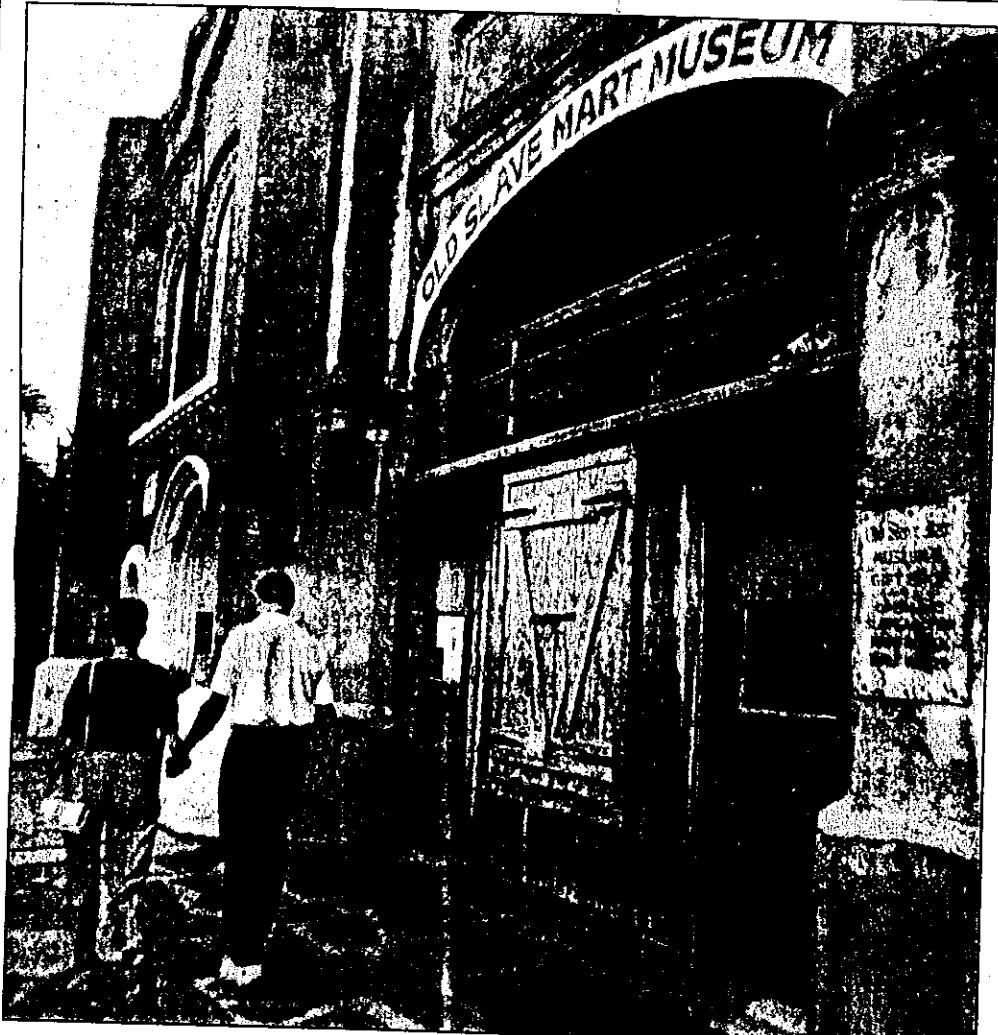
e to have him in custody
th said.

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

es would not release any
on the victim late Fri-
ng notification of his
rces said the man is in
is or early 20s and was
t once in the face.
d two cars were travel-
Vard Avenue to Eagle
Midland Park Road at
and witnesses said the
vehicle pulled alongside
victim was driving.

e 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 Comet

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 Chal-
mers 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 even-
tually 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 ex-
hibits 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, in-
cluding city staff, preservation-
ists, Avery Research Center offi-
cials and others have discussed
what to do next.

The interior of the Slave Mart
is relatively small, and consult-
ants have said it should serve to
direct visitors to other black his-
toric houses, sites, research cen-
ters and museums in the Charles-
ton area.

Turner-Maybank said the Slave
Mart could join with McLeod

See MUSEUM, Page 4-B

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mad
'87

■ **MORE TO COME:** A wo
at the time of the murde
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
death outside his Goose Creek sh
in an apparent robbery, but poli
said Friday they finally arrested
suspect.

Cristal Cheatham Nash of Go
Creek was arrested Thursday af
charged with the January 19
murder of Josefino F. Bugarin
North Charleston. She would ha
been 14 years old at the time of th
killing, police said.

Other arrests are expected th
week, said Detective Sgt. Willia
Kelley of the Goose Creek Polic
Department.

Nine mor to be over

By ARLIE PORTER
Of The Post and Courier staff

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

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

The improvements are expected
to cost more than \$3 million, fund
ed by the \$34 million bond referen
endum for park and recreation im
provements approved by
Charleston County voters in 1992.

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

■ Sol Legare, also known as Bat
tory 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

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

Stiegeltz was one of the firefighters summoned at 9:30 a.m. Thurs
day to 617 Seventh St. by an alar

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
led it in."

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

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

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

MUSEUM

from Page 1-B

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 reopened Aiken-Rhett earlier this month after it was shuttered for almost a black history museum in

Navy clinic closes this fall

BY TERRY JOYCE
Of The Post and Courier staff

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

NAVCARE 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 NAVCARE was a popular medical facility," said Lt. Cmdr. William Storey of the Navy in the prepared statement.

However, over the last three years, the number of visitors have declined by almost 50 percent, costing the government about \$1 million in unused ser-

NAVCARE 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 Tricare health management system.

Families who use NAVCARE

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

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

site to indicate how McCray died, said Florence Police Lt. Pete Beck.

Condor wins original sentence for suspect

from Page 1-B

to learn together.'

Such enthusiasm doesn't surprise Hanahan 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 p-

eriod of time. It is just a part of her commitment and enthusiasm."

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 disci-

pline, but the teachers will have

the main control of their discipline problems, especially the less ser-

ious ones," she said.

"It's going to be a little bit of the

old-fashioned way," she said. "My

Count on one thing, she said: "We

will not allow any student to dis-

obey the Constitution. They

will have to say the Pledge of Allegiance."

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

on Charleston and the Spoleto Festival.

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Old Slave Mart to be restored

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

By KERRI MORGAN WEO.
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

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MART

from Page 1-B

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.

