

Mitchelville Times

May 2020

Newsletter

The Mitchelville Times is the official newsletter of Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park.

Mitchelville Spotlights

Janice Wesley Kelsey, Civil Rights Activist



Janice Kelsey
Civil Rights Activist

Ahmad Ward
HMFP Executive Director

DATE: JUN 1 | NOON | EXPLOREMITCHELVILLE.ORG

In the chaos following the 1963 church bombing, Janice Wesley's friends and family feared that she was the "Wesley girl" who was killed. Instead it was her friend Cynthia Wesley. More than 30 years would pass before anyone ever asked her about her feelings on that solemn Sunday and how it fueled her life long commitment to civil rights. Tune in for a conversation between Janice Wesley Kelsey and Ahmad Ward, Executive Director of Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park. Both participants will be live chatting with viewers on Facebook.

Griot's Corner at Home



Be sure to join us for 'Storytime in Griot's Corner' on Wednesday's at 10am/est at exploremitchelville.org

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Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park preserves, promotes and honors Mitchelville, the first self-governed town of formerly enslaved people in the United States. HMFP is a 501(c)3 organization. All contributions are tax deductible.

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The Gullah Oarsman's Friend: The Bateau

Hundreds of years ago, Africans on the South Carolina cotton and rice plantations built arrowhead-shaped, flat-bottomed boats, or bateaux, for subsistence fishing in the creeks around the islands and for transferring cargo from the ferryboats to the plantations.

Bateau boats were built so precisely that a skilled oarsman could spin the boat around without ever dipping the bow or the stern into the water. They are generally 16-to 24-foot-long vessels. Gullah men used the boats for traversing the sea island water ways and to fish and dig oysters to feed their families.

The Bateau is made from a 4-foot-wide plank -- the length of the boat, and cut in half lengthwise. The two resulting pieces are the sides, then the two pieces are cut and connected to tightly fit at the bow, then the boards are bent over a "stretching board" to form the distinctive arrowhead shape. The stern is left more or less wide open and filled in with another plank to form a square. The bateau is filled in with seats and a pine bottom is nailed to it and a bateau is made that will last a life time.



Traditional Gullah Bateau built by Mr. Frank Kidd, Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park, South Carolina

In Memoriam: Cynthia Sutton



Longtime volunteer and friend to Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park, Cynthia Sutton passed away on May 2, 2020. She and her husband, Bill, were always among the first to answer our call for volunteers. Whether it was the annual Juneteenth, the Lighting of the Holiday Tree, Blues and BBQ, Remembering the Days of Mitchelville play, or numerous other activities in the community.

Cynthia lead a prosperous life of service and we are grateful to have had you serve with Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park. We send our heartfelt condolences to Bill, their family & loved ones.

Click to learn more about of the life and legacy of Cynthia Sutton: www.legacy.com/obituaries/islandpacket/obituary.aspx?n=cynthia-j-sutton&pid=196177634