St. Margaret's Episcopal Church and the Hibernia Cemetery, Fleming Island, FL

By Bree McGhee

The Sophia Fleming Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), has been hard at work at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Fleming Island, Florida. St. Margaret's, a carpenter gothic chapel constructed between 1875 and 1878, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places but no longer has an active congregation. Fortunately, the Sophia Fleming Chapter's Historic Preservation committee has volunteered their time and energy to this historic site's preservation by hosting regular cleanups of the cemetery, as well as spearheading several important restoration projects, such as:

- Replacing the old flagpole and American flag with new ones
- Coordinating professional repair and cleaning of the memorial wall
- Repairing the information kiosk next to the church's entry and updating the info board
- Overseeing DAR approval and installation of a gravesite plaque honoring a former DAR Florida state regent
- Scheduling and overseeing repair, installation, and cleaning of a broken headstone

For many years, the broken headstone of Phelix Frazier (1905-1929) has been stored inside St. Margaret's, while a simple wooden cross engraved only with his name marked Phelix's grave in the Hibernia Cemetery. But recently, the Sophia Fleming Chapter consulted with Bob and Kathy Kass, Heritage Monitoring Scouts with the Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN), regarding a repair process for the marble stone. Bob and Kathy volunteered their time to not only repair the headstone, but also installed it back in its proper location in the cemetery under the guidance of Sophia Fleming Chapter's Historic Preservation committee chair Lee DiGiovanni and Hibernia historian Bree McGhee. Following the installation, the headstone was cleaned with an FPAN-approved biological solution, completing the restoration process. This was the first of several damaged headstones that will be repaired in the upcoming months.

The Sophia Fleming Chapter is also in the early planning stages of some important repair projects related to the historic chapel itself, the first of which being replacement of the front and back staircases going into the chapel. This will be carried out using the chapter's own funds and donations from the public for labor and materials. Repairs will be done only by qualified contractors and will be executed through consultation with the Diocese and local historians to ensure historical accuracy and maintain the integrity of the carpenter gothic structure.

For anyone interested in touring St. Margaret's Episcopal Church and the Hibernia Cemetery, there are several events during the year when the public can do this. The Sophia Fleming

Chapter holds three annual volunteer cleanups to prepare for the three annual services that the chapter hosts, which are a Memorial Day service in May, a Veterans Day service in November, and Wreaths Across America in December. In addition to these three services, the Sophia Fleming Chapter is also bringing back the annual "Tour & Tea," which was previously hosted by the St. Margaret's congregation. This new Tour & Tea, scheduled for April 24th, 2027, will be free to the public and feature guided tours of the chapel and cemetery led by chapter members in historic period clothing. There will also be light refreshments and a Hibernia-themed museum display presented by Hibernia historian Bree McGhee.

The Sophia Fleming Chapter of the DAR is honored to continue working with the Episcopal Diocese and Hibernia's local historians to restore and maintain this important part of Florida's history. For anyone interested in more information about St. Margaret's, DAR-sponsored events, or to make a donation for the above-mentioned repairs, you can contact Lee DiGiovanni at 904-553-3870 by phone or text.