

# African American Historic Places in South Carolina

The following properties in South Carolina were listed in the National Register of Historic Places or recognized by the South Carolina Historical Marker program from July 2023 - June 2024 and have important associations with African American history

State Historic Preservation Office  
South Carolina Department of Archives and History

HM = Historical Marker

NR = National Register of Historic Places

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## Aiken

### McGhee Block/Johnson's Drug Store

HM

*Richland Ave. SW and Newberrrt St. SW, Aiken*

This seven-storefront brick building was built in 1920 by African American contractors and cousins William M. McGhee and Albert B. McGhee. Known as the McGhee Block, it housed such businesses as stores, dry cleaners, restaurants, and the McGhee & McGhee company office. Among the firm's notable projects were the Aiken Hospital (1917), the Aiken Prep and Fermata School gyms (1926, 1929), and the Hopelands Gardens serpentine wall (1930). Both McGhees died in 1938. One of the McGhee Block's first tenants was Johnson's Drug Store. It was owned by African American physician Dr. Charles C. Johnson, a civic leader who came to Aiken around 1905. Johnson's store sold medications, toiletries, stationery, and other goods and included a soda fountain. The store employed Black pharmacists and served Black and white customers. It remained open after Johnson's 1928 death and relocated in 1940. **Sponsored by Aiken County Historical Society, Historic Aiken Foundation, City of Aiken.**

### McGhee Block

NR

*201-209 Richland Avenue W, Aiken*

The McGhee Block is located on the southwest corner of Richland Avenue W and Newberry Street SW in the center of downtown Aiken. The one-story, painted brick commercial building was constructed in 1920 by the African American-owned McGhee & McGhee, Contractors and Builders. The building's corner lot gives it frontage on two streets, with an angled entrance at the intersection. Constructed with three primary structural bays divided by masonry firewalls, the building was designed to provide flexible commercial space and to house multiple businesses, most notably Dr. C.C. Johnson's Drugstore, as well as the offices of McGhee & McGhee. The interior and storefront configurations have been fluid over time as various commercial businesses and restaurants have occupied the spaces. The McGhee Block is locally significant as an intact Jim Crow-era Black-owned commercial building, where local African Americans established professional and commercial spaces for Black employment while providing services to the Black and white communities alike. It is also important for its associations with William McGhee (1876-1938), Albert McGhee (1872-1938) and Dr. Charles Catlett Johnson (1860-1928). The McGhees, who built the McGhee Block in 1920, were two of Aiken's earliest and most prominent Black contractors and built a number of local residences

and public buildings for both the Black and white communities. The McGhee Block is the best representation of their impact on Aiken's built environment, having served as their professional headquarters and itself being a product of their own labor. Dr. Johnson was an African American who established a medical practice in Aiken about 1905 and became a leader and mentor in the Black medical community for the next two decades. He also owned and operated a drugstore that included a soda fountain that served both Black and white citizens, the only such establishment in Aiken known to have done so during that period. The McGhee Block housed Johnson's third drugstore location. All three men made important contributions to Aiken not only in their professional capacities but also in advancing the political, social, and educational status of the local Black community during the early twentieth century, despite the strictures of Jim Crow. The Johnson Drugstore, the anchor business of the McGhee Block, moved to another location in 1940, by which time Dr. Johnson and both of the McGhees had passed away. **Listed in the National Register January 30, 2024.**

### **Ocean Grove School                      NR**

*Southeast of 12 Ocean Grove Rd., near intersection with Shaw's Fork Rd., Aiken*

Ocean Grove School is a vernacular wood frame building constructed around 1907 and is locally significant under Education and Ethnic Heritage: Black as a rare intact early twentieth-century rural schoolhouse for African Americans. The school was built to serve Black children of Aiken County's unincorporated Ocean Grove community and was during its years of operation the only public school available for local residents. It closed in 1953 when local students began attending a new facility constructed through the state equalization program, at which time the building became a community center. Ocean Grove School is also locally significant under Agriculture, Entertainment/Recreation, and Ethnic Heritage: Black for being the site of a Black Community Fair hosted by local farmers almost every year from 1936 to at least 1943. The fair served as both a promotional and educational event for local farmers and offered organized recreational opportunities for local African Americans. The property is also locally significant under Architecture as a locally rare intact example of an early 1900s rural school that reflects broad trends in educational architecture of the period, aimed at improving and standardizing school design. The period of significance is from c.1907 to 1953, which corresponds with the school's probable construction date and the last known year of its operation, and encompasses the period in which the fair ran. **Listed in the National Register May 15, 2024.**

## **Beaufort**

### **First Zion Baptist Church                      HM**

*10 Robertson St., Bluffton*

This congregation organized around the time of the Civil War to serve formerly enslaved African Americans living in the Bluffton area. It was originally known as First African Baptist Church and was later renamed First Zion. It was founded by Rev. Abraham Murchison, a native of Savannah, Ga. who began preaching along the Sea Islands during the Civil War. Eight trustees secured ownership of this site for the church in 1888. The 1888 deed states that "the First African Baptist Church building" was already located on the property at that time. The congregation was an early member of the Mount Carmel Baptist Association, organized in the late 19th century. The wooden church was replaced in 1959 by a concrete block building that was expanded and brick-veneered in the 1960s. It was also later remodeled and still serves the congregation today. **Sponsored by First Zion Missionary Baptist Church.**

## **Calhoun**

**St. Peter AME Church and School****HM***7892 Old State Rd., Cameron*

This African Methodist Episcopal (AME) congregation organized in 1880 when five trustees acquired one acre of land at this site. The first church was a simple wood frame building. It was replaced in 1906 by a more substantial wood structure, which had a large belfry and small tower at opposite corners. It was later brick-veneered and renovated. The 1906 church stood until a new building was constructed to its north in 2021. St. Peter AME was also the site of an early school for Black residents of the Cameron area. Classes first took place inside the church before moving to a nearby wooden schoolhouse. More than 100 students in grades 1-6 attended in 1912-13. It was then part of Calhoun Co. School District No. 14. The school was closed and consolidated with St. John School in 1955. Around 50 pupils attended in its final years. It no longer stands. **Sponsored by Calhoun County Museum and Cultural Center and Calhoun County Historical Commission.**

**Charleston****Beefield Community****HM***Old Folly Beach Rd. and Folly Rd., James Island*

Beefield is one of a number of James Island communities founded after the Civil War by formerly enslaved African Americans. It was originally known as the Bee Tract, an approx. 150-acre lot of high land with an eastern edge that roughly followed what became Folly Road. It was owned by the family of Horace and Sarah Rivers who in 1872 sold it to eight Black families for \$1,951. Beefield's founders included members of the Green, Richardson, Prioleau, Hazard, Bryan, Brown, Fraser, and Bachman families. They established it as a rural farming community with land being passed down and subdivided over the generations. Children from Beefield attended Society Corner School. Descendants of Beefield's founders continue to be among local property owners and residents. **Sponsored by Historic Charleston Foundation.**

**C.A. Brown High School****HM***25 Blake St., Charleston*

This campus was built in 1962 as a high school for African American residents of Charleston's East Side. Initially known as East Side High School, it was named for longtime school board chairman Charles A. Brown soon after opening. The 57-classroom brick facility originally fronted Blake St. and included a cafetorium, gymnasium, and industrial shop. About 1,400 students in grades 8-12 attended the school in its first year. The first principal was Nathaniel L. Manigault. C.A. Brown High School's mascot was the Panthers. The school colors were black and gold. The school remained predominantly Black after countywide integration in 1970. C.A. Brown's last senior class graduated in 1982, when it and Charleston High School were merged into Burke High School. Burke briefly held 9th and 10th grade classes at this site. Trident Technical College acquired the C.A. Brown property in 1984 and moved its downtown Palmer Campus here in 1986. **Sponsored by C.A. Brown High School Alumni Association.**

**New Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church****HM***3754 Old Charleston Rd., Johns Island vicinity*

New Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church organized in 1888. Tradition holds that members initially worshipped under a brush arbor. They then built at this site a two-story wood frame church that included a central tower and pedimented portico. Early members were mostly local farming families. In the 20th century, New Bethel AME Church became an important institution for the Red Top section of Charleston County. It was used as a community meeting place and hosted a county health clinic in the 1930s to 1950s, providing prenatal and other care to local Black

residents. The church was rebuilt in 1982. **Sponsored by New Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.**

**Seashore Farmers' Lodge No. 767                      HM**

*1840 Sol Legare Rd., Sol Legare Island*

In 1912 local Black farmers chartered Lodge No. 767 of the International Liberty Union. Known as the Seashore Farmers' Lodge, it was a fraternal organization that offered a variety of services to members and was an important institution for the African American communities of Sol Legare and James Islands. Members built the two-story meeting hall at this site c.1915. The lodge's services included health and life insurance programs, funerary and financial assistance, agricultural education, and community use of the meeting hall. Members took ownership of the property in 1946. It is now a museum and cultural center. **Sponsored by Town of James Island.**

**Tobin-Boyd Elementary School                      HM**

*Greenland Rd. just north of Huhes Rd., Johns Island vicinity*

Tobin-Boyd Elementary School opened at this site in 1961 to serve Black residents of the Red Top community. It was part of St. Andrew's School District and named in honor of Maree P. Tobin and Evelyn C. Boyd, two of the district's longest-serving Black teachers. Its construction was funded by the S.C. equalization program, a state effort to preserve segregation by upgrading Black schools. From 1953 to 1961 local children had attended the consolidated Wallace School (8 mi. E), which had replaced the Red Top School south of here on Old Charleston Road. In its first years Tobin-Boyd enrolled around 200 students. It remained all-Black until closing in 1970 during desegregation. Students from the Red Top area subsequently attended integrated Oakland Elementary in West Ashley. **Sponsored by Red Top Improvement Association and S.C. African American Heritage Commission.**

## **Chester**

**Finley High School                      HM**

*112 Caldwell St., Chester*

Finley High School opened in 1923. It was originally known as Chester Colored High School and located ¼ mi. N on McClure St. In 1927 the school was renamed in honor of its founding principal Samuel Louis Finley who came to Chester in 1905 to join the Loomis St. School. The 1923 two-story wood frame school as well as a brick shop building (1929) were both built with support from the Julius Rosenwald Foundation. Finley High School moved to this site in 1956. This campus was designed by architecture firm Lockwood Greene and funded by the S.C. equalization program, a state effort to preserve segregation by upgrading Black schools. Upon opening in 1956 the school enrolled more than 500 students. The last class graduated from Finley High School in 1970 after which this site became integrated Chester Jr. High School. Elliott Richardson served as the high school's principal throughout its time at this site. It later became a community center. **Sponsored by S.L. Finley Restoration Association.**

## Dillon

### Latimer High and Elementary School NR

*122 Latimer St., Latta*

Latimer High and Elementary School is locally significant in the areas of Education and Ethnic Heritage: Black as the only African American public school in the town of Latta during the period of significance (1954-1970). Opened in 1954, the school was built through the state equalization program, a massive school construction campaign aimed at staving off legal challenges to segregation by upgrading Black schools. Upon its completion the school served all Black school-age children from the town of Latta as well as outlying portions of Dillon County. The campus was gradually expanded during the period of significance with the addition of a library, larger cafeteria and kitchen, and an elementary classroom addition. Latimer is also significant under Criterion C: Architecture at the local level as a rare intact example of midcentury Modern design applied through the state equalization program. Designed by the architecture firm James and Durant, the campus reflects changing design philosophy for educational buildings in the mid twentieth century and the increased funding for African American education in the 1950s in South Carolina. Latimer's architectural style and materials are typical for equalization school architecture in the state, and it is one of the only examples (and likely the most intact) of this school form in Latta. The period of significance is from 1954 when the high school opened, to 1970 when the campus integrated. **Listed in the National Register May 20, 2024.**

## Dorchester

### Four Holes Public School/Four Holes Freedom School HM

*1125 Ridge Rd., Ridgeville*

Around 1964 a segregated 3-room concrete block school was built here for Native American children of the Four Holes community. It served about 80 pupils in grades 1-8 and was part of Dorchester Co. School District No. 3. In 1969 district officials blocked Four Holes parents from transferring their children to historically white Ridgeville Elementary, citing overcrowding. In response, Native parents and Black activists in the NAACP and SCLC led a protest and boycott of Four Holes School. Native children then attended a freedom school kept in a rented white and blue house about one mile away. White students from the Univ. of S.C. and elsewhere taught classes. The boycott ended in 1970 when Four Holes School closed and Native students enrolled at Ridgeville. **Sponsored by SCOPE50.**

## Florence

### American Legion Stadium/Dr. Iola Jones Park HM

*608 E. Maxwell St., Florence*

American Legion Stadium opened at this site in 1941. The 2,500-seat facility was built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) with support from the American Legion and Florence city school system. The lighted, segregated stadium hosted white as well as Black baseball teams at the high school, minor league, and semi-pro levels. National teams from the Negro Leagues also played there. It was also used for concerts and other public events. The stadium burned down in 1970. In 1973 the City of Florence opened Dr. Iola Jones Park at this site. The 7.5-acre park was built to serve the predominantly Black Northside neighborhood. It was named for civic leader Iola Deas Jones (1892-1978), a former social worker active in a number of causes in support of local African Americans. Upon opening, the park included a baseball field, basketball courts, playground equipment, and

other amenities. It hosted local sports leagues and other community activities. **Sponsored by Francis Marion University and the City of Florence.**

## **Georgetown**

### **Holy Cross Faith Memorial School**

**NR**

*88 Baskervill Drive., Pawleys Island*

Holy Cross Faith Memorial School, also known as Miss Ruby's School, is a historic school building and parish house on the Waccamaw Neck. The school is located on the campus of Holy Cross Faith Memorial Episcopal Church. Built in 1932, Holy Cross Faith Memorial School is a two-story balloon framed clapboard building. Architect Henry S. Burden designed the Colonial Revival style building, which features two arched entry doors, six-over-six sash windows, gable metal roof, and a two-story side porch. It was built as a one-room school with living quarters above for the clergy. Although the first floor has an open plan, it was designed to be easily divided into multiple classroom areas on a temporary basis. The chapel (1952, relocated c. 1960), cemetery (established c. 1950), and Miss Ruby's Garden (1995) form the school's historic setting. Holy Cross Faith Memorial School is locally significant for its use as a one-room African American parochial school from 1932 until 2000. The school is also significant for important associations with the productive lives of renowned local educators Rev. William Essex Forsythe and Ruby Middleton Forsythe. The school persisted with mixed-age, traditional teaching methods historically associated with the one-room school house, and it continued to be an exceptionally significant educational institution for the local African American community until it closed in 2000. Ruby Forsythe, commonly known as Miss Ruby, continued to teach at the school until 1991, garnering national attention for her work as an educator. The continued importance of both the school and Ruby Forsythe to the local educational landscape is exceptionally significant, as both school and teacher offered an alternative educational experience to Black youth in the local community during the late 20th century. **Listed in the National Register May 21, 2024.**

## **Greenwood**

### **Edgewood School**

**HM**

*200 Edgewood St., Ninety Six*

This brick campus opened in 1956 as Edgewood School. Part of Ninety Six School District, Edgewood served local African American students in grades 1-12. It replaced the wood frame Ninety Six Colored School on Main Street. Around 380 students attended Edgewood upon its opening. The school cost around \$400,000 and was built on a 17-acre site. It was funded by the S.C. equalization program, a state effort to preserve segregation by upgrading Black schools. Edgewood School included 16 classrooms, a gymnasium-auditorium, cafeteria, shop, library, and rooms for home economics, music, and science. It was built by Gilbert Construction Co. of Augusta, Ga. and designed by John M. Lambert Jr. of Anderson, S.C. Educator and Greenwood County-native Dr. Benjamin E. Mays spoke at its dedication. The last senior class graduated in 1970. This facility then became a middle school as part of the integration of Ninety Six School District. **Sponsored by Edgewood School Alumni Association and S.C. Rural Education Grassroots Group.**

## Marion

### Bethel-Britton's Neck School

HM

*Bethel AME Church, 7113 S.C. Hwy. 908, Gresham vicinity*

Along the nearby stretch of Gresham Road is the site of Bethel or Britton's Neck School for African Americans. In 1902-21 the Julius Rosenwald Foundation helped fund construction of a 3-teacher school on the grounds of Bethel A.M.E. Church. It was later expanded. A high school building was constructed nearby in the 1930s. At that time about 200 students attended for a 7-month term. Bethel-Britton's Neck School was organized by longtime principal Dock Travis Taylor. It moved across the road when new elementary and high school buildings were opened in 1954-55 and 1960-61. They were funded by the state equalization program, an effort to preserve segregation. In 1970-71 the school became Bethel Elementary as part of integration. It was later Britton's Neck High School. **Sponsored by Bethel-Britton's Neck Alumni Association and S.C. African American Heritage Commission.**

## Orangeburg

### Railroad Corner

HM

*Russell St. and Boulevard St., Orangeburg*

For decades this was the site of an African American business district known as Railroad Corner. The Corner extended northwest from the intersection of Russell and Boulevard Sts. and was known by that name as early as the 1870s, when it was a white commercial area. Black-owned businesses began opening in the 1900s and predominated within a few years. It was sometimes referred to as Maxwell's Corner after early Black entrepreneur John Moreau Maxwell who opened a grocery store in 1904. Railroad Corner became an important commercial and cultural hub for the Black community of Orangeburg. Among the businesses that operated over the years were a movie theater, law office, hotel, photography studio, auto dealership, pharmacies, restaurants, bars, barber shops, grocery stores, and shoe shops. Some had Black as well as white clientele. Activity at Railroad Corner peaked in the mid-20th century and declined in the years after desegregation. **Sponsored by The Cecil Williams Civil Rights Museum and S.C. African American Heritage Commission.**

## Richland

### Bethel School/Bethel-Hanberry School

HM

*125 Boney Rd., Blythewood*

As early as 1908, Bethel School, also known as Blythewood Colored School, opened on land tradition says belonged to Bethel Baptist Church. In c.1920, the school moved into a two-teacher building built on this site with support from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. It was later replaced by a six-room frame elementary school and a six-room concrete block building for high school grades. In the 1950s, new elementary and high school campuses and a gymnasium were built through the S.C. equalization program. Bethel High School was accredited in 1956 and renamed for longtime teacher and principal Annie Hanberry in 1967. After district desegregation in 1970, the two campuses merged and became Bethel-Hanberry Junior High School. It became an elementary school in 1991. **Sponsored by Blythewood Historical Society and Museum.**

## **Palmetto Cemetery**

**HM**

*5105 Fairfield Rd., Columbia*

Palmetto Cemetery opened in the 1920s as a community burial ground for local African Americans. Sited on former farmland, the roughly 17-acre graveyard was developed by Black funeral director Willis C. Johnson (1892-1969) and white insurance agent David G. Ellison (1879-1960), who acquired title to the property in 1928. At that time the cemetery was located just outside the Town of Eau Claire, which was annexed by the City of Columbia in 1955. Palmetto Cemetery was later expanded to the north and today includes around 2,000 graves with a variety of funerary art. By the mid-20th century it was one of the most prominent African American graveyards in Columbia. Among those interred here are civil rights activists, educators, business figures, and other Black civic leaders. In 1979 families of those buried here formed the Palmetto Cemetery Association to manage the property. Burials continue to take place. **Sponsored by Richland County Conservation Commission.**

## **Pine Grove A.M.E. Church**

**HM**

*12420 Broad River Rd. (U.S. Hwy. 176), Peak vicinity*

This African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) congregation organized in 1868. Tradition holds that members first met under a brush arbor. Church trustees acquired one acre of land at this site in 1875. Their first house of worship was a wood frame building. The current church was built in 1910, partially of wood salvaged from the original. It was later brick-veneered and expanded. Pine Grove A.M.E. Church served African American residents of Peak and other nearby communities. The congregation had 150 members in 1938. For a number of years the church was also the site of the wood frame Pine Grove Colored School, a public school for local Black children. Pine Grove was part of the A.M.E. Church's Newberry District until 1995 when it joined the Columbia District. **Sponsored by Pine Grove A.M.E. Church and S.C. African American Heritage Commission.**

# **Sumter**

## **Community Hospital**

**HM**

*703 Broad St., Sumter*

Community Hospital opened at this site in 1949. The 40-room brick facility was built for African American residents of Sumter and outlying areas who were underserved by white-owned Tuomey Hospital, which had a segregated wing for Black patients. At the time of Community Hospital's construction, this area was outside the Sumter city limits and known as Shot Pouch after the nearby creek. An addition was later made to the front of the building. Land for the hospital was provided by Rev. Harry Bowman Brown. Brown was founder and president of the Sons and Daughters of Job, a local benevolent society that raised the \$100,000 cost to build the hospital. The facility had a full-time nursing staff who worked with visiting doctors and surgeons. The hospital became Community Nursing Home in 1964. It later housed a residential care facility. The building caught fire in 2022. It was abandoned at that time. **Sponsored by Sumter County Historical Commission.**

# **Williamsburg**

## **Mt. Seal Methodist Church**

**HM**

*5134 Hemingway Hwy (S.C. Hwy. 512), Hemingway vicinity*

This Methodist congregation was originally known as Turkey Creek Church. Tradition holds that members first worshipped under a brush arbor. They formally organized by the 1870s. At that time the church was part of the Orangeburg District of the Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) denomination. In 1887 nine church trustees acquired two acres at this site along "the public road to Indiantown Church." They constructed a wood frame church likely using trees harvested from the purchased

land. By the early 20th century, the congregation had changed its name to Mt. Seal Methodist Church. **Sponsored by Mt. Seal United Methodist Church.**

## **York**

### **Carver Theater**

**HM**

*411 W. Main St., Rock Hill*

The Carver Theater opened at this site in 1947. It was housed in a metal Quonset hut with a stuccoed brick, stepped parapet façade. Upon opening, the Carver was the only movie theater in Rock Hill primarily for African Americans. Others either barred Black residents or used segregated seating and entrances. The Carver was white-owned but staffed by African Americans. It was named for inventor George Washington Carver and had a lobby, restrooms, and seats for about 500 people. The Carver Theater was an important place for local African American entertainment during its years of operation. In addition to movies, the theater hosted stage performances, meetings, fundraisers, and other community events. Business declined in the 1960s as other local movie theaters began serving Black patrons on an equal basis. The Carver Theater closed in 1971. The building was later used as a pool hall, warehouse, and garage. **Sponsored by Legacy of African American Schools, Historic Rock Hill, and Friends of Carver Theater.**