



GIVING VOICE

SSAAM's Annual Report

A community engaged in a broader understanding of American history

MAY 2022 ISSUE #2

100-Year-Old Love Story Uncovered in a Central Jersey Attic

By Isabela Morales

When Somerset County resident Bill Miller climbed up into his attic last summer, he had no idea that, 100 years before, a young woman named Emeline Gillette had been sitting in that same room, reading a love letter.

At the time, the house that Bill Miller would come to call home in the 1990s was owned by a local African American man named William Gillette. In 1921, Emeline – William’s eldest daughter – was around

In June, Garland’s heady feelings turned to anxiety when his car broke down while he was on the road to visit Emeline in person. “I suppose you think I have forsaken you, but I haven’t,” he swore. “I thought surely I would see you yesterday but it was impossible for me to get there.” Garland was forced to leave his car in Hopewell for repairs and take the trolley back home – though, he added, “I thought of you every moment.” Garland missed Emeline dearly, his thoughts turning to days when they’d been able to spend more time together: the way he teased and distracted her while she was busy knitting, or how he “used to beg her for a kiss, and she making out she didn’t want to kiss me because she was tired.” Garland hoped she would save a kiss for him when they finally saw each other again. Then the letter ends – with Garland hoping he could visit Emeline soon, and no conclusion to their story.

After Bill Miller found the letters in his attic, he showed them to his sister Stephanie Hawtof. Stephanie emailed the Stoutsbury Sourland African American Museum, wondering if SSAAM could provide any historical information on the Gillette family or the house, which had been a 19th-century schoolhouse before it became the Gillette residence. The email reached Beverly Mills and Elaine Buck, the museum’s co-founders and prominent local historians, who replied that

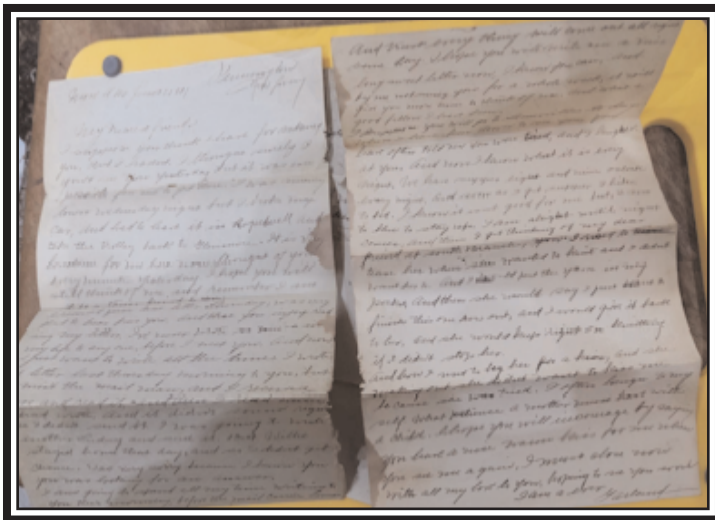


Photo courtesy of Stephanie Hawtof

Garland H. Fields Sr.’s 1921 letters to Emeline Gillette.

18 years old and living there with her parents and siblings. Today Bill uses the attic for storage, but back then it may have been a living space, perhaps Emeline’s bedroom, warmed by a coal or wood stove. One day in early spring, Emeline received a letter from her beau, a Pennington man named Garland H. Fields. In June, she received another. And then, at some point, she placed them under the floorboards for safekeeping – where Bill would spot them while he was up in the attic checking for rodents 100 years later.

The aged, fragile letters reveal a piece of Emeline and Garland’s century-old love story. “You can never know with what trepidation I opened that last little missive from you, or in what a rush of feeling I read those dear lines,” Garland wrote Emeline in March 1921. “My joy is indescribable. The little letter has been perused so many times that it is becoming actually worn out.” Garland lamented that he lived at a distance from Emeline, though, he noted, “if I lived any closer, you may get tired of looking at me, because I would be at your side always.”



Photo courtesy of Beverly Mills

Bill Miller delivers the letters to Garland H. Fields Jr. in February 2022.

Continued on page 5

SSAAM BOARD AND STAFF



SSAAM Board, staff, and supporters at SSAAM's 2021 holiday party in Princeton, NJ.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In 2021 the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum (SSAAM) began with many new challenges due to COVID and catastrophic weather related events that, thankfully, caused no damage to our property. We have progressed into a year of victories. Today, we are not only surviving but we are thriving.

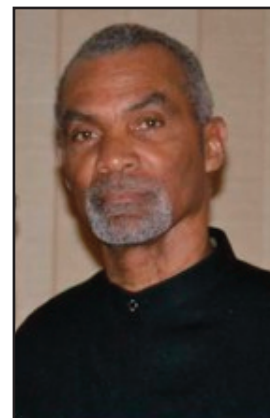
SSAAM is pleased to announce and introduce you to our new Executive Director, Donnetta Johnson, who hit the ground running planning our very successful Oxtail Fest fundraiser. We are also pleased to have a new Marketing & Digital Projects Manager, Isabela Morales. Special thanks to our former ED, Caroline Katmann, who continues to serve as our community outreach chair and grant writer. We thank our previous volunteer IT Manager and GIS Specialist Kevin Burkman, who recently produced and distributed a regional African American history map for classroom and museum use.

In other news, we are pleased to announce that in June 2021 the Mt. Zion AME Church was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Archaeologist and Board member Ian Burrows held an archaeological dig on the site with the assistance of the Archaeological Society of New Jersey. Mills + Schnoering Architects and contractor Al Whitman of Lewis Graham, Inc., have begun restoration work on the historic Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, funded by the Somerset County NJ Cultural and Heritage Commission.

Together, SSAAM and our partner organization the Sourland Conservancy continue with our plans to build the new museum and conservancy center.

As President, I am grateful for the Sankofa Collaborative as they co-host symposiums interpreting African American history. To all our volunteers, loyal donors, grantors and the many organizations who have made it possible for us to move forward with all of our projects, we are grateful and look forward to welcoming visitors, school and community groups back to SSAAM in the spring of 2022.

John B. Buck, President



John B. Buck
SSAAM Board President

We all Understand That Stories Are Important

Life is serendipitous.

I met Elaine Buck and Beverly Mills at a 2019 Hillsborough Library event called *Turning the Pages of Hillsborough, Where Do We Come from?* where they were giving a presentation based on the research for their book *If These Stones Could Talk*. I was stunned to find out about the African American roots in my own community, the Sourland Mountain region. Like many of my neighbors, I was appalled at the depth of the legacy of slavery in my own hometown, in Central New Jersey, in New Jersey as a whole, and indeed in the entire Northeast. Like many others, I of course knew that there was slavery in the North, but I must admit that I bought into the Hollywood version in which enslaved people embarked upon harrowing journeys to make it to the promised land of freedom in the North. I had not really processed



Donnetta Johnson
Executive Director

the fact that at the dawn of the 19th century, there were nearly 12,000 enslaved people in New Jersey, more than all of New England combined, and that New Jersey was the last of the Northern states to abolish slavery. In fact, slavery in New Jersey continued right up to the passage of the 13th Amendment; an amendment that New Jersey initially rejected. I found it hard to absorb that there was slavery literally in my backyard which was essential to building the commerce and foundational wealth of the early European settlers of this area.

From my Hillsborough home, I look out of my window and can't help but imagine time travel that would land me four hundred years back in

Continued on page 3

Education, Collections and Exhibition Committee

In the early fall of 2021, members of the Education, Collections and Exhibition Committee volunteered to inventory, categorize, and store artifacts and exhibition pieces in preparation for restoration work at the Mt. Zion AME Church. Removing all objects from the building, volunteers carefully wrapped, packed, and safely stored SSAAM artifacts at an off-site location until restoration is completed. Restoration work has now entered its final phase and the target date for completion is late spring 2022.

While the museum has been closed to the public, SSAAM provided a series of virtual events every week in February celebrating Black History Month. SSAAM Board member Catherine Fulmer-Hogan kicked off the series by contextualizing the role of spirituals and gospel music in American society in a recorded lecture, exploring the history of these musical genres and their connection to social change in American culture. Cat, who has done extensive research on this subject, ended her presentation with a recommended YouTube playlist of gospel music which was curated along with SSAAM co-founders



Anita Williams Galiano, of Hopewell Valley Together and the Hopewell Valley Regional School District School Board, shares her recipe for cornbread as part of SSAAM's Soulfood Sunday video series.

We all Understand That Stories Are Important *Continued from page 2*

time, where I would not just encounter the hard-working Dutch and English settlers that my childhood American history books instilled in my brain as industrious founding settlers of this land, but also hundreds of enslaved people and their children that worked the farms, mills, and quarries that were essential to daily life and the economic growth of this very area. Not only did the early African Americans provide coerced and unpaid labor for agriculture, industry, and domestic service, many also fought in the Revolutionary and Civil wars. These enslaved people believed so intensely in what would later become known as the American Dream that they served multiple terms as soldiers in order to secure the promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the quintessential yet elusive American ideal that we have fought for since our founding.

Elaine and Beverly demonstrated with the research that went into *If These Stones Could Talk*, that while it was true that these enslaved and freed black communities were not allowed the opportunity to reap the benefits of a financially stable existence—and the generational wealth that typically results from such dedicated hard work, perseverance, and resilience—they did indeed survive, thrive, and build a strong community in the Sourlands with its own unique cultural identity that contributed substantially to life in Central New Jersey, lasting well into the 20th century.

While there are still a few descendants of the Sourland African American community that live on the mountain and in the surrounding valleys; they have largely disappeared and were facing almost certain erasure of their contributions, their ancestral legacies, and their stories. That is why the ongoing work of SSAAM is so important.

We all understand that stories are important. This is why, from the time

Elaine Buck and Beverly Mills.

SSAAM's second virtual event was an exciting evening as we traveled back in time to meet Sojourner Truth, as portrayed by American Historical Theatre's Dr. Daisy Century. In a commanding, one-time-only performance, Dr. Century's interpretation of this renowned abolitionist and women's rights activist was one of SSAAM's most highly attended events. We hope to bring Dr. Century back with interpretations of other historic female figures such as Harriet Tubman and African American aviator Bessie Coleman.

Our third event was Soulfood Sunday, a series of YouTube cooking demonstrations led by SSAAM Board members and community leaders. These local chefs came together to share their culinary secrets and film the preparation of a soulfood dinner; ingredients and recipes were posted on the SSAAM website in advance so viewers could "cook along" with the videos. The menu featured crispy fried chicken, baked macaroni & cheese, collard greens, black-eyed peas, and cornbread. Hopewell proprietors Heidi Winienius of *Dandelion Wishes* and Ellyn Ito of *Seeds to Sew* composed ethnic inspired tablescapes featuring items available in their stores. A bonus cooking demonstration was provided by Joanne Canady-Brown (the owner of the Gingered Peach in Lawrenceville, NJ) who rounded our cooking segment with her recipe for an elevated Purple Sweet Potato Pie—it was an absolute thing of beauty! We hope everyone has had a chance to make some of these delicious, mouth-watering recipes. All of the videos will remain online at our YouTube channel.

Last, but certainly not least, was SSAAM's fourth event: an interview and oral history with long-time Sourland Mountain resident Evelyn Brooks (or "Nana Brooks") who turned 101 in February 2022. Nana Brooks shared stories about her life as a Black woman raising children, finding true love and marriage, longevity, and life on the Sourland Mountain over the past century. It was an honor to bring the public the story of this amazing woman who, at 101, remains dedicated to her family, community, and church.

of drawings on cave walls, humanity has worked so hard to share and preserve our stories for future generations. Today we record our stories

"The African Americans of the Sourland Mountain region deserve to be remembered and have their stories preserved."

in books, movies, documentaries, music, blogs, social media posts, and podcasts. These stories inform us of who we are, where we have been, and what mattered most. To the descendants of the Trueharts, Grovers, Hugheses, Harrisons, Neviuses, Stiveses, Brokaws, Bergens, Hubbards, Hagemans, Brookses, Waldrons, Robinsons and so many others who bear the names of their European enslavers, we at SSAAM vow to create the space to tell our ancestral stories and to use these stories to create healing in our community. I am deeply gratified to have this opportunity to join with our community and find the resources to create the spaces and institutions where we will gather to unearth, share, and honor long-buried stories. These stories of the farmers and lovers, cooks and basket weavers, bakers and entrepreneurs, soldiers and entertainers, stone carvers and hunters—all of the ordinary and extraordinary African American men, women, and children of the Sourland region—bring into the light the people who helped to build our community. They prioritized God, family, industriousness, and survival so that future generations could live and tell their stories.

My new family, the SSAAM organization, is no less than a real family. Together we bring our diverse ancestries, multi-generational perspectives, and our passion for our shared humanity. Together we work every day to uncover truths, face our difficult past, and shake up our long-held beliefs. We build new friendships and strong alliances that position us to shape a future that is deserving of our outstanding community and its incredible history.

I can't wait to meet you all at our Juneteenth celebration and fundraiser on Saturday, June 18th.

Oxtail Fest at Put's Tavern Raises \$87,000 for SSAAM

by Donnetta Johnson



Photo by Laurie Cleveland

SSAAM co-founders Elaine Buck and Beverly Mills speak at Oxtail Fest.

If your family does not hail from the American South, the Caribbean, or other destinations that comprised the main concentration of the Atlantic slave trade, it is likely that you asked, “what is oxtail?” when hearing about SSAAM’s fall fundraiser, the Oxtail Fest at Put’s Tavern.

Oxtail is literally the meat from the tail of a cow. While this delicacy has been used by many cultures spanning the globe for centuries, it stands out as a distinctly African American and Caribbean culinary tradition. Oxtail epitomizes the creativity of eating low on the hog—cooking with the unwanted cast-off cuts of meat set aside for enslaved people—while the enslavers ate the choice cuts, high on the hog. What the enslavers did not understand was that this gelatin-rich meat they discarded, when prepared properly, yields some of the most flavorful and succulent delights of any beef dish. Black traditions slow cook oxtail, rendering a most tender meat, glorious on the palate, richly flavored, creating a delectable au jus. Like many staples of ordinary poor people’s food, this once inexpensive cut that was practically given away by butchers, has now undergone gentrification and the price per pound has skyrocketed, making oxtail only affordable on special occasions to many.

Donnetta Johnson, SSAAM’s new executive director, chose to kick off her first fundraiser with a celebration highlighting two takes on oxtail: an African American/Caribbean oxtail, and a Cuban-style *rabo encendido* (which literally means “tail on fire”). Guests chose between Donnetta’s Southern/Jamaican fusion oxtail preparation derived from her mother’s southern recipe and what she has picked up from her Jamaican father’s family recipe, and co-host Jackie Fay’s Afro-Cuban Oxtail prepared in a distinctive red sauce. There was some trash talking and a bit of friendly competition to see which of the women would enjoy bragging rights for the best oxtail! The feast was replete with other specialties from the African and Afro-Latin diaspora such as okra, Jollof rice, cornbread, croquetas, empanadas, sweet potato pie, bread pudding, tres leches cake, and an array of savory vegan treats for good measure. A special signature drink was created by local mixologist Megan Coiley, especially for the event called the *Peach Diaspora*—a nod to the Black-farmed peach orchards that once thrived in the acidic, rocky soil of the Sourlands.

The Antique Barn at Cashel, owned by event co-host Jen Bryson, was recast for the occasion as Put’s Tavern, a tribute to the legendary 19th-century Black-owned tavern on Zion Road. Some say that this tavern was as infamous as it was famous. In the late 1870s, it was run by the legendary Sylvia Dubois, a clever, dynamic, and fearless African

American woman who, as an enslaved woman, had turned the tables on her enslavers’ household by beating her mistress after one too many indignities. The family, intimidated or impressed by her courage, decided to emancipate her some time after. Dubois’ grandfather, Harry Put, a formerly enslaved person, had started the tavern after the Revolutionary War. The Black, white and indigenous people of the Sourlands produced an interdependent, racially mixed, and integrated community that was somewhat isolated and unusually harmonious for the day. They gathered at Put’s for great food, drink, and a raucous (and wonderful) good time. In the tradition of Put’s tavern, our community ventured out after a difficult season of lockdown and isolation to celebrate the mission of SSAAM, meet old and new friends, enjoy beloved African American food traditions, and groove to the extraordinary vocal and musical talents of Olive Joseph and PBV Music, compliments of event co-hosts, Cliff and Louise Wilson.

“Put’s Tavern was a place where the people of the Sourlands freely socialized with one another, regardless of race and color.”

“It was a wonderful opportunity to be welcomed into the SSAAM and Sourland Conservancy community,” said Johnson. A great time was had by all and with the extraordinary gift from SSAAM Advisory Board Member Pat Payne, along with so many generous supporters, the event raised over \$87,000.00 to promote the mission of SSAAM as well as create the Sourland Education and Exhibit center, a joint project of SSAAM and the Sourland Conservancy whose mission is to preserve and share African American history and protect and preserve the ecological treasures of the Sourland Mountain Region.



Photo by Laurie Cleveland



Photo by Yuri Marder

100-Year-Old Love Story

Continued from page 1

they didn't know much about the old schoolhouse. When Stephanie mentioned that the letters were written by a Pennington man, however, they asked if she could share his name. Beverly, who is from Pennington, suspected that she might recognize the name of Emeline Gillette's "gentleman caller."

She did. Garland H. Fields was Beverly Mills's grandfather.

In January 2022, Bill Miller and Stephanie Hawtof joined a Zoom call with Beverly, her cousin Bonnie Stills, and their uncle Garland H. Fields Jr. (or "Gump") – the letter writer's son and namesake – to talk about the discovery and share family stories.

Although they were clearly courting when the letters were written in 1921, Garland H. Fields Sr. and Emeline Gillette never married. According to the 1930 census, Emeline was single and still living with her parents ten years later. Meanwhile, Garland married a different woman in 1925, Herma Hubbard of Stoutsburg – Beverly and Bonnie's grandmother. When Garland Sr. died in 1974, he and Herma had been married for 49 years. Though Herma "won out" in the end, Beverly said, she and her cousin believe that Emeline "might have been the one that got away."

Nana Brooks Turns 101

On February 27, 2022, longtime Hopewell resident Evelyn Brooks turned 101 years old. Known as "Nana Brooks" to friends and neighbors, Mrs. Brooks is a prominent member of her church and local Black community who has lived in the area for 80 years. This year, SSAAM celebrated her birthday with the premiere of a special video interview series available on the museum's YouTube channel.

Born in 1921, Evelyn (Dunn) Brooks grew up in Bronxville, New York. She recalls enjoying musical acts at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem,



Photo by Benoit Cortet

"Nana Brooks" at home in Hopewell, NJ

where she saw jazz legend Ella Fitzgerald perform when she was just starting out as a singer. At the age of 19, Evelyn married Ira Brooks, whose family lived in Hopewell. In 1948, the couple purchased a ten-room house on a 28-acre plot of land on the Sourland Mountain, one of only three families then living on Mountain Church Road. Evelyn and Ira Brooks raised ten children on the mountain, farming the "sour," rocky soil to support their growing family. Evelyn was known for her quick wit and intelligence, and she and her husband were known in

the neighborhood for their selflessness and generosity.

Over the course of the last century, Mrs. Brooks has lived through the Great Depression, World War II, the Civil Rights movement, and all of the change and turmoil of modern politics. As part of SSAAM's 2022 Black History Month programming, she was interviewed and filmed by Executive Director Donnetta Johnson.

The following excerpt comes from Mrs. Brooks's interview "On True Love."

Tell me a little bit about your husband. How did you meet him?

Oh, him. He was a doll. You know, I was thinking about him the other night. In fact, on the 3rd of January this year he would have been 105. He was four years older than I was, and when he met me, and we were dating and everything, and when he proposed to me, he said, "Ah,

For Beverly and Bonnie, the letters from their grandfather are a slice of life from the Sourlands, a glimpse at a love story that humanizes African Americans of the past in a way that many histories do not. The serendipitous discovery also sheds light on a previously unknown chapter of their family story.

"We thought, well, we don't really have much information for them. That's a dead end," Beverly said, referring to the initial email she received from Stephanie. "But when you mentioned there was a man from Pennington who wrote those letters, that was the whole catalyst for the conversation we're having right now. There's no such thing as a coincidence."

"Coincidences are when God winks," Stephanie said.

On the Zoom call, Garland Jr. thanked Bill for finding the letters, which had come as a surprise to the entire family. Bill agreed that they were a remarkable find.

"Mr. Fields, from the tenor of the letters, your father was quite smitten with Miss Gillette," he said. "He was quite taken with her."

"Well," Garland Jr. replied, "they may be together now."

The letters Bill found in his attic are now back with their author's family; Bill delivered them to Garland Jr. in person in February 2022. They met at Beverly's house, two days before Valentine's Day.

sweet mystery of life, at last I found you." That was it. That was it.

So he was very romantic?

He was wonderful. But he always had an inferiority complex because he never graduated from school. He was born in Maryland, and his parents were up here. And when his aunt died, who raised him, he came up here. He only went to school for like two years here. He came out when he was 16 or 18 to work, to help, to be independent.

Did you meet him in New Jersey?

No, I met him in New York, because he had a job with a person from Princeton who moved to Bronxville. He was working up there, and I was working, and together I think we were making about \$22 a week.

So tell me, how did you make your life here?

Well he did construction work first, and then he went to work for the railroad, and he ended up working for them for almost 30 years. When we moved into Hopewell Borough, he was working for the railroad, and that's when things came up. He was a baggage man, and he worked there for 28 or 29 years before he retired.

What type of work were you doing?

I was a stay-at-home mom. In those days, welfare was a bad word in our house. And what we did was, when my children got up, I would go out and do part-time days' work. In other words, if somebody wanted ironing done or cleaning done, I would do it. I'd take the baby with me while the other children were in school and do it. But I never worked the whole day. Not until all of my children were in high school.

And you had seven children?

At that particular time. But I ended up with ten. My husband and I did that, we did it together. And he could cook too. Oh man, that man could make some biscuits.

No wonder you were married for 60-some-odd years.

He made better biscuits than I did!

So he was a great partner?

He was, he was. He was very, very highly respected and thought of, because in order to take care of the family he opened up what he called his "junkyard." If you had a car you had to get rid of, you'd give it to him. He would take it apart, take the parts down to the junkyard to sell, and then he would sell the radiators, the batteries, the transmission, because that was his way of taking care of his family. He did not want welfare, and that's the way we did it. When the children were all grown up and in high school, I worked for ETS. I was in the mail-room and I would help that way, because I was taught to help.

Marketing & Social Media Committee

2021 was a productive year for the Marketing & Social Media Committee. SSAAM designed and produced a selection of fundraising merchandise for the Peach Basket Marketplace, the museum's online store, including: T-shirts, polo shirts, baseball caps, and a collection of note cards depicting noted figures in the history of the African American community in the Sourland Mountain region. Each set of sixteen notecards contains vintage photographs and descriptive text, curated and composed by SSAAM co-founders Elaine Buck and Beverly Mills.



Mapmaker Kevin Burkman and Principal Susan Lacy display Kevin's map at Village Elementary School in Skillman, NJ.

The Marketing Committee also organized and participated in community events throughout the year. In conjunction with the Sourland Conservancy, SSAAM hosted a ticketed Virtual Gospel Brunch in February 2021, featuring baritone Keith Spencer. The museum also participated in Trenton's inaugural Juneteenth Weekend Festival, which provided an opportunity for SSAAM to engage in public outreach and sell merchandise.

As part of SSAAM's educational outreach program, the museum delivered new Black history maps to more than 30 area schools, libraries, and museums. Created by Board member and expert GIS mapping analyst Kevin Burkman, the poster-sized map pinpoints 25 important Black history sites in the Sourland Mountain region, including historic churches, cemeteries, and the locations of significant events from the 18th century forward. SSAAM continues to provide the map to schools, nonprofits, and government organizations free of charge. Individuals can now purchase the map at our online store as a special fundraising item.

In October, SSAAM expanded its staff by hiring Isabela Morales as Marketing & Digital Projects Manager for the museum. Isabela is an author and historian who received her Ph.D. in history from Princeton University, and is the long-time Editor of the Princeton & Slavery Project.

Planning for proposed 2022 projects and activities are already underway, including social media campaigns, video interviews with Board members and volunteers, and the potential purchase of a SSAAM canopy for use at future in-person events.

Buildings & Grounds Committee

During 2021, we held six Building & Grounds Committee meetings covering a wide range of exciting projects. In January we appeared before the Montgomery Township Landmarks Commission and received approval for historic restoration work on the Mt. Zion AME Church, a National Historic Register-listed site and the current home of SSAAM. We worked with Mills + Schnoering Architects through the bidding process, and contracted with Lewis Graham Construction to undertake the restoration. The ongoing work is being overseen by SSAAM's Building & Grounds Committee chair Bruce Daniels.

In June we had a kick-off meeting with Mills + Schnoering for the creation of a Master Plan for the development of 191 Hollow Road, which lies immediately to the north of the Mt. Zion AME Church. This 1.26-acre property is jointly owned by SSAAM and the Sourland Conservancy. The development plan also included the Mt. Zion parcel and a triangle of land owned by SSAAM. Through a series of meetings, we developed a plan to create an Education and Exhibition Center, administrative offices for both organizations, infrastructure, parking, landscaping, and gardens on these properties. A final Master Plan was presented in December.

At the end of July we held a community oriented archeological dig at Mt. Zion. It was a very popular and educational event, and it was there that we serendipitously heard that the owners of 183 Hollow Road were going to be retiring and selling their home. This property is the historic True Farmstead, the five-acre farm from which Corinda and Spencer True donated the land for the Mt Zion AME Church in 1899. It was also the family home of SSAAM Board member Pat Payne, a descendant of the Trues, for generations. John Buck and I immediately reached out to the owners, and through several visits and discussions it was mutually decided that the farm should be re-connected to SSAAM to expand the telling of the African American story on Sourland Mountain. A price was agreed upon and a contract negotiated without the property ever going on the market. Special thanks to Patricia Payne, Jay Watson, Dante DiPirro, and three anonymous lenders, all of whom believe so wholeheartedly in our mission and our story. Closing took place in March 2022.

By the end of 2021, the Master Plan was completed, the restoration of Mt. Zion was underway, and the return of the True Farmstead was on the immediate horizon. Despite the difficulties of the pandemic, 2021 proved to be a spectacular year for the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum and its partner, the Sourland Conservancy.



Photos by Bruce Daniels

The final phase of historic preservation work at Mt. Zion AME is now under way.



SSAAM and the Sourland Conservancy partnered to purchase and save the historic True Farmstead.

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African American History at Princeton's Evergreen Forum

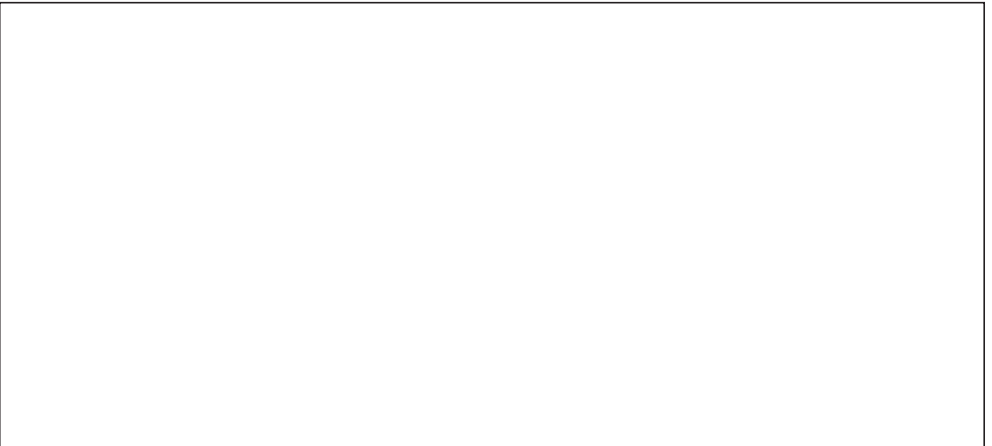
Pat Payne, Executive Committee

I was pleased to teach an 8-week class this spring at Evergreen Forum, part of the Princeton Senior Resource Center. The class was titled "African American Presence in the Sourlands."



In the context of American history, we need to make room for stories long neglected. Stories of the enslaved populations of central New Jersey have come to light through the research of Elaine Buck and Beverly Mills in their book, *If These Stones Could Talk*. Through lecture and discussion, I provided an historical overview, beginning with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery in the American colonies and introducing the slave statues of colonial New Jersey. We used primary sources and archival images to learn about federal and state laws that governed every aspect of the enslaved person's life from the colonial period to the Civil War, as well as addressing the Civil Rights movements and activism today. We concluded with an analysis of *If These Stones Could*

Talk and contrasted the treatment of the enslaved with the continued struggle of African Americans in contemporary society.



Current Grants

SSAAM thanks the following grantors, whose generous support has made it possible for us to fulfill our mission.

2022 New Jersey Historical Commission Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) Grant - \$20,000 for DEAI consulting services.

2021 Princeton Area Community Foundation Bunbury Fund - \$150,000 (plus 15% operating support) for organization capacity building.

2021 Somerset County State/County History Partnership Program (CHPP) Grant- \$20,808 for general operating expenses.

2021 New Jersey Historic Trust Preserve New Jersey Historic Preservation Grant - \$50,000 for the development of a Master Site Plan for the Sourland Education & Exhibition Center.

2021 Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission Historic Preservation Grant Program - \$28,731 to partially fund the Master Site Plan for the Sourland Education & Exhibition Center.

2019 Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission Historic Preservation Grant Program - \$326,461 for ongoing restoration work on our historic register-listed Mt. Zion AME Church.