

Africa to Carolina Memorial
Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site
8884 St. Philip's Road SE
Winnabow, NC 28479

Project Director: Adrienne Nirde, Director African American Heritage Commission
Adrienne.nirde@dn-cr.nc.gov

Site Manager: Jim McKee jim.mckee@ncdcr.gov

SHPO Liaison: Charles LeCount Charles.lecount@ncdcr.gov

The location proposed for the *Africa to Carolina* public art installation (GS 23-0522) is within the site's National Register Historic District boundary. Consideration was given to choosing this location in addition to the earlier proposed Scottish Immigration Memorial because it was outside the known boundaries of the 18th century town and Civil War era fortification, but within visual contact with the riverfront. Furthermore, the area has experienced previous considerable disturbance, clearance work and the construction of the present pavilion. While the river is visible from the location the tree growth in the town site and the presence of the wooden pavilion should largely screen the prospect of both installations from most of the town site and fort. The proposed installation will occupy a space roughly 33' by 33' with elements no taller than 7' 2" high. In comparison, the proposed Scottish Immigration memorial featuring a stone cairn will occupy a footprint roughly 16' x 16' and be no taller than 6' high.

The general topography of the location is flat. The soil around the pavilion is a sandy loam approximately 4-6 inches deep. This is beneath the grass mat layer that is about 2-3 inches thick. Beneath the initial loam the soil turns sandy for approximately 2-3 feet until it hits a clay layer several inches thick. The clay is a mix of orange-sand colored with veins and patches of blue clay. Although generally level and within 300 yards of the Cape Fear River, the whole area is approximately 26' above sea level and is well drained. Consequently, the site of the installations is above threat of flood and standing water. Storm damage in this

area of the site has been limited to that caused by wind resulting in damaged trees.

Finally, it is understood that after further discussions and reviews the design submitted herein may reduce in size and modestly change in appearance. Although changes to the appearance of the artistic elements of the installation may occur as a result of community and professional review, the basic footprint of the art installation is not anticipated to change significantly to what has been allocated. Any alterations/reductions to the proposed footprint would result in a smaller impact site.

The State Historic Preservation Office's preliminary reaction to this this proposal is included in an appendix at the end of this report "Africa to Carolina sculpture, Brunswick Town State Historic Site, Brunswick County, GS 23-0522" dated May 18, 2023 from Ramona Bartos to Adrienne Nirde. An intra-divisional virtual meeting regarding this proposal was held on October 9, 2023 which resulted in revisions to this proposal. Attending the meeting was Dr. Darin Waters, Dr. Tamara Brothers, Adrienne Nirde, Ramona Bartos, Michelle Lanier, Jeff Bockert, Jim McKee, and Charles LeCount.

Charles LeCount, Deputy Director, Historic Sites

In 2018, an "Africa to Carolina" stakeholder advisory board was formed. They investigated and confirmed disembarkation sites, including the Town of Brunswick, and cultivated connections with communities and descendant groups. To deepen relationships, in 2018 and 2019 the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission (NCAAHC) collaborated with Janeen Bryant of Facilitate Movement to implement listening sessions in disembarkation communities, where 160 stakeholders identified historical research, museum exhibits, a website, and public art as priorities. Participants also shared rough concepts for public art. In response, federal grant funding was secured for NCAAHC research fellow Amber Pelham, the advisory board, and local historians to advance three of the four community-identified priorities: research (2019-2020), community-based exhibitions (2021-2022), and a website (2022).

In 2022, with the support of a ZSR-IPA semi-finalist planning grant, the NCAAHC moved towards the fourth community-identified priority: commemorative public

art. A collaboration with the North Carolina Museum of Art yielded a community-engaged artist selection process, resulting in Stephen Hayes and David Wilson being identified as the “Africa to Carolina” artist team. Graduate student Miranda Clinton was also hired to coordinate a second set of convenings in disembarkation communities, which drew over 100 stakeholders. A Black emerging artist was identified to document the sessions, as well. During sessions, co-facilitated by Janeen Bryant, stakeholders met the artists, and shared community engagement parameters for them; came to a consensus on the art’s location, and shared more design concepts; and identified other needs for the project—chiefly, educational resources. Stakeholders’ design concepts suggested that the public art piece should be a sculpture with abstract elements, featuring water and the likenesses of descendants. Engagement parameters required that the artists center care and integrity and prioritize multigenerational audiences. An initial set of sculpture renderings were developed, informed by session feedback. These renderings were later shared with the advisory board for further refinement.

Stephen Hayes and David Wilson are a Durham-based team who explore themes of community, identity, and narrative in the context of public space. They possess 20 years of combined experience creating concepts for community and cultural centers, educational institutions, urban parks, greenways, and public spaces. They draw on a site's cultural landscape to generate strong narrative concepts that resonate with local meaning and transcend the familiar. Their public works create an interplay between creative expression and education, and often stems from a historical basis while remaining relevant and timeless.

Stephen’s works—including the thesis exhibition [“Cash Crop”](#) and the monument [“Boundless,”](#)—feature the artist’s life-casting process that involves the engagement of real people, who in some instances are descendants. David Wilson has engaged in lengthy, community-centered processes to develop responsive public artworks, including a [300 square foot art glass mural](#) at Raleigh’s Chavis Park. The team has partnered on previous projects, including the [Black Wall Street sculpture garden](#) in Durham. Community engagement is central to their design process; they leverage the idea that community ties foster trust, shape rich designs, and yield multiple opportunities for interpretation.

The “Africa to Carolina” sculpture will feature a plaza experience. As visitors approach the sculpture from a distance, they will see two abstract pillars that stand in the main threshold of the sculpture. Upon drawing closer, visitors will approach a 33' x 33' concrete plaza that will invite them to move through the monumental sculpture. High density polyform substrates will create a 27' (l) x 12' (h) curved, half-wall with half-relief that resembles the hull of a ship, making direct connections with the slave trading vessels that once docked nearby. The 86" (h) x 36" (w) abstract pillar forms at the center of the plaza resemble an altar and will feature a mixed media design that will be created in glass on one side, and bas-relief footprints on the other. Visitors should feel moved to touch the pillars and place their hands in the footprints in reverence. To facilitate reflection, the pillars will be flanked by curved, 27' hardscape benches on either side. At the back of the concrete plaza, visitors will encounter 63"(h) x 33" (w) block elevations finished with a bronze patina. These blocks will feature half-relief life castings of descendants, as well as interpretive text and prose. Upon exiting the sculpture plaza, visitors will look upon the Cape Fear River, 300 yards away. The sculpture will foster personal reflection and public commemoration, inviting interaction on an intimate scale. Visitors will experience different elements of the sculpture at different stages of distance—upon approaching, within the plaza, and upon exiting—ensuring various levels of engagement and sensation. Finally, signature elements of the memorial can be de-constructed and potentially reinterpreted in disembarkation communities elsewhere throughout the state.

Angela Thorpe, Former Director, NCAAHC

For More information about the *Africa to Carolina* initiative, visit the website:

[Africa to Carolina | NC AAHC](#)

Site Views



Google Earth View of Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site. The location of the installation is marked by the **X**. This place is situated in a relatively neutral area between the site's two major historical features: the 18th c. historic town site, primarily to the right (east) of the pavilion, and the Confederate fort visible in front of St. Philip's Church running to the upper left-hand corner of the image.



View of the River. The location is approximately 300 yards from the Cape Fear River which is visible through the trees.



The Pavilion. The art installation will be located on the far side of this structure.



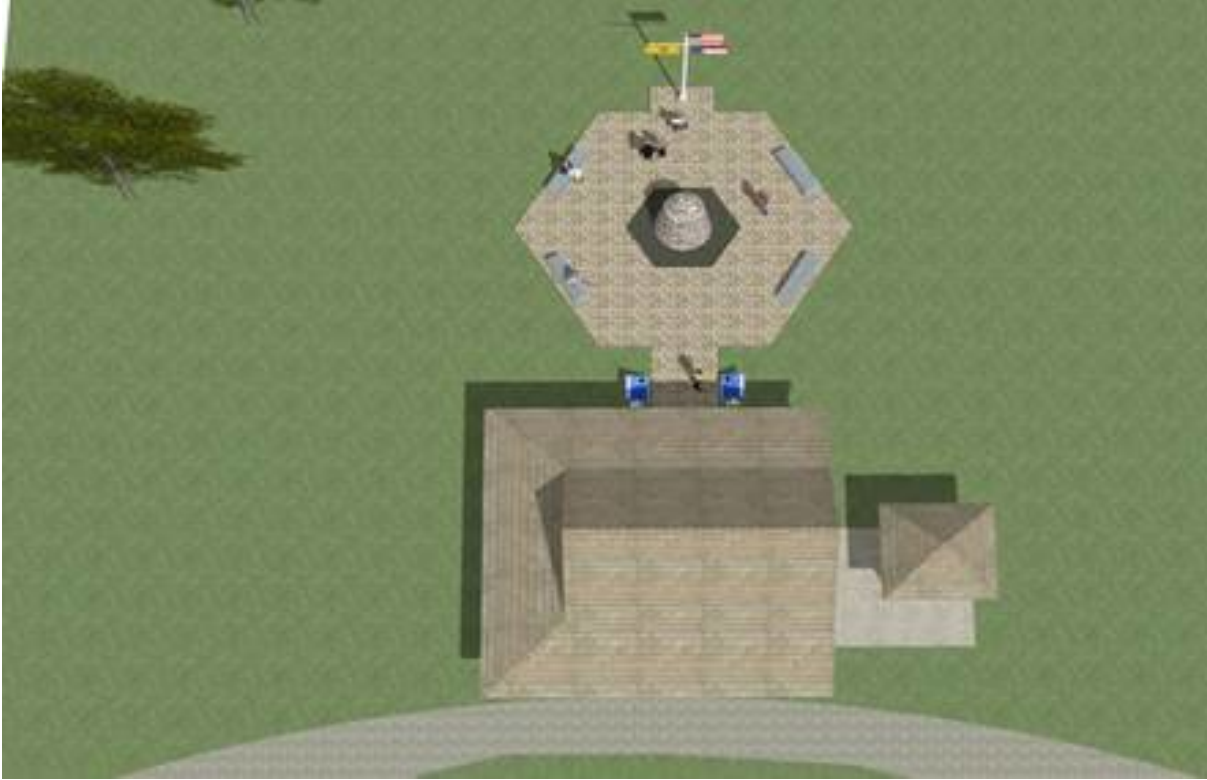
Highlighted Google Earth View of the Impacted Area at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson. The Africa To Carolina installation area will occupy the open ground below the pavilion.



Open Space. The area behind the pavilion was once occupied by an archaeological lab and storage facility.



Installation Site. The installation will occupy this area. The space is roughly 35' x 35' or 1,225 square feet. The pavilion measures 33' x 33' (1,089 sf)

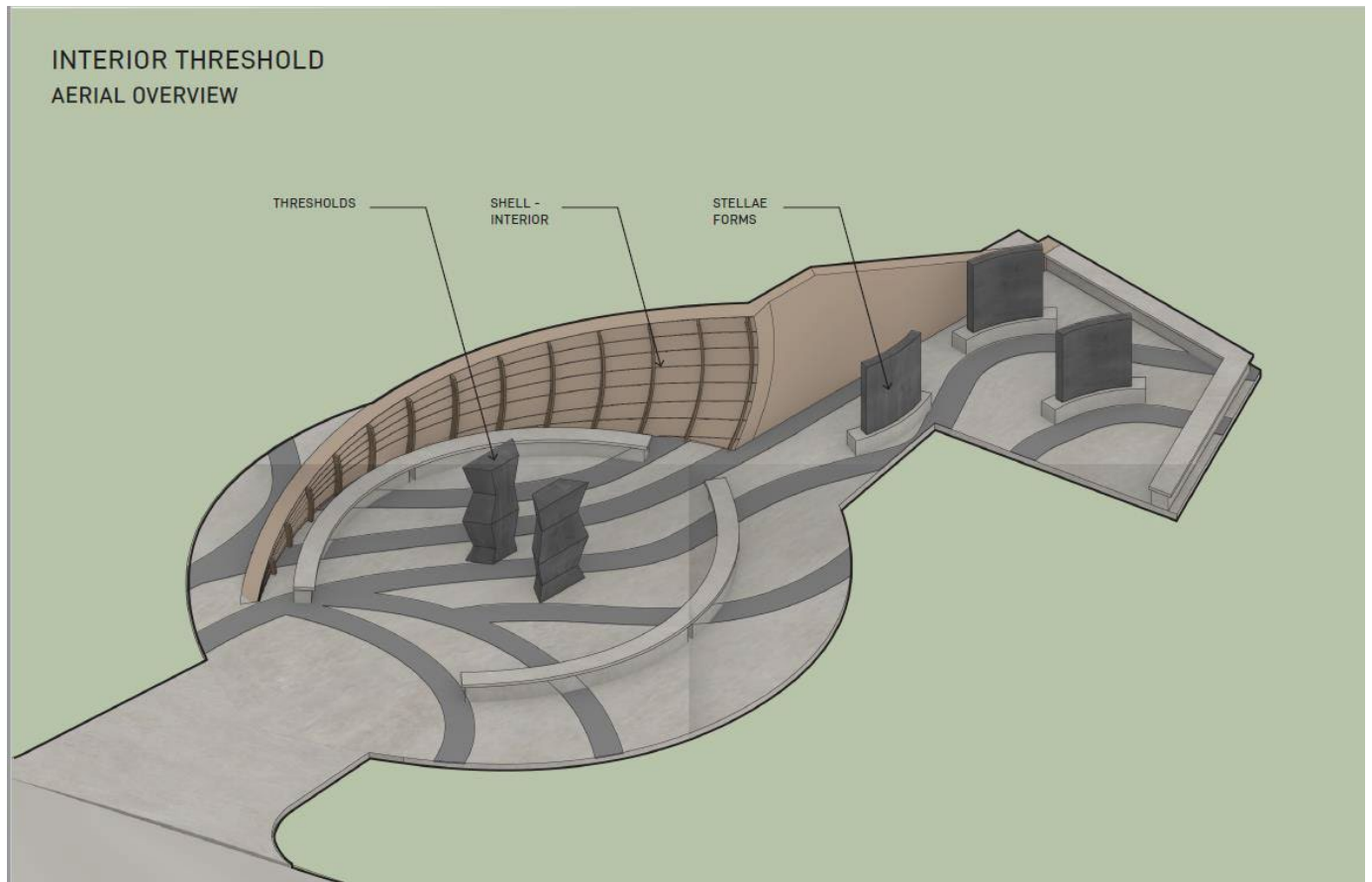


Rendering of Scottish Immigration Memorial in Relationship with Existing Pavilion. The footprint of the *Scottish Immigration Memorial* will be about 21' x 24'. (We are allocating 35' x 35' as an impact area) The *Africa to Carolina* installation would occupy the open space to the left of the pavilion, in this view. The location of the Scottish Immigration memorial has been reviewed by SHPO through an Environmental Review approved January 30, 2023 (GS 22-2964).

Construction Considerations.

To build the irregularly shaped 33' x 33' poured concrete plaza on which the installations are to be placed, significant excavation work will be required to lay a foundational base. This foundation may require the excavation of 18" or more of soil depending upon local code requirements. Additional footings may be required to provide foundational support to the pillars, stellae forms, seating, and narrative ship walls. It is likely that additional construction drawings will be required for review by the State Construction Office to ensure the installation meets construction and wind codes. Due to its proximity to the waterfront, it may also require a Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) permit.

Artists' Renderings



Title: Unknown

Dimensions: 33' x 33' (site plaza); 20' x 12' (rear connecting wall)

Medium: Concrete Flatwork (site plaza); Concrete (rear connecting wall)

INTERIOR THRESHOLD
BLOCK ELEVATIONS



Pillars

Title: Unknown

Dimensions: 86" H x 36" W (each)

Medium: High Density Polyfoam, Glass, and Concrete Shell

STELLAE FORMS
BLOCK ELEVATIONS



Title: Unknown

Dimensions: 63" H x 33" W (each)

Medium: Concrete, High Density Polyfoam, Laser Engraving, and Bronze Patina Finish



Title: Unknown

Dimensions: 27' each (seating elements)

Medium: Concrete and Metal (seating elements)

PERSPECTIVE RENDER
INTERIOR VIEW



Title: Unknown

Dimensions: 27' x 12' (narrative wall)

Medium: Aluminum, High Density Polyfoam, and Concrete (narrative wall)

Appendix

May 18, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: Adrienne M. Nirde adrienne.nirde@ncdcr.gov

NC African American Heritage Commission

FROM: Ramona M. Bartos, Deputy

State Historic Preservation Officer

SUBJECT: Africa to Carolina sculpture, Brunswick Town State Historic Site,
Brunswick County,
GS 23-0522

We are in receipt of Medley Mikayla's email of February 14, 2023, concerning the above-referenced undertaking for which the NC African American Heritage Commission (NCAAHC) applied to the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation for Inclusive Art funding. Having reviewed the information provided in the email about the nature and intent of the art installation, we offer the following comments.

As the art installation is proposed to be located on a state-owned property, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, its placement at Brunswick Town is subject to North Carolina General Statute 121-12(a) and review by the North Carolina Historical Commission (NCHC), if the undertaking will adversely affect the National Register-listed site. In anticipation of this project site being used at some time in the future, the Office of State Archaeology (OSA) examined the area in the late 1990s and determined that it has a low probability for any unknown archaeological resources being affected by construction on the site. Further, it is understood that staff of the Brunswick Town State Historic Site will monitor any ground disturbance during construction at the site to ensure that no unknown resources are accidentally disturbed.

While the archaeological work addresses the physical impact of such an installation, it does not address other possible effects to the National Register-listed site or the question of whether or not the installation may be considered legally a

memorial. Given what we understand to be the nature/purpose of the proposed installation, we wonder if it may also require review by the NCHC under NCGS Section 100-2. Thus, we suggest that the NCAAHC explore this matter with our department's legal counsel to address this question and provide guidance on next steps, if any.

We also would recommend that the several divisions/sections within our department enter into dialogue with one another about other similar, future proposals so that all parties more fully understand the process for conceptualizing and installing the art works within state-owned historic sites as well as their potential impacts. To that end, we copy Dr. Darin Waters to request his leadership and advice so that we all better understand the applicable regulations, how to operate within them, and identify potential compliance efficiencies.

These comments are made in accord with G.S. 121-12(a) and Executive Order XVI. If you have questions regarding them, please contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-814-6579 or environmental.review@ncdcr.gov.

In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above-referenced tracking number.

cc: Dr. Darin Waters, SHPO Darin.waters@ncdcr.gov
Phillip Feagan, Counsel Phil.Feagan@ncdcr.gov
Michelle Lanier, Division Director SHS michelle.lanier@ncdcr.gov
Jim McKee, Brunswick Town SHS Jim.McKee@ncdcr.gov
John Mintz, State Archaeologist John.Mintz@ncdcr.gov

Africa to Carolina Proposal for Brunswick Town

Lecount, Charles <charles.lecount@dncr.nc.gov>

Wed 10/11/2023 12:20 PM

To:DCR - Environmental_Review <Environmental.Review@dncr.nc.gov>

Cc:Nirde, Adrienne M <adrienne.nirde@dncr.nc.gov>;Lanier, Michelle <michelle.lanier@dncr.nc.gov>;Waters, Darin <darin.waters@dncr.nc.gov>;Bartos, Ramona <Ramona.Bartos@dncr.nc.gov>;Brothers, Tamara <tamara.brothers@dncr.nc.gov>;Gledhill-earley, Renee <renee.gledhill-earley@dncr.nc.gov>

📎 1 attachments (29 MB)

Africa to Carolina Installation.docx;

Please find attached a proposal for an Africa To Carolina art installation at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site.

Charles LeCount

Deputy Director, North Carolina Division of State Historic Sites & Properties

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