

Descendants of Berry & Caroline McKenzie Return to Hagood Mill in Pickens County

AMERICAN FAMILY DISCOVERS AND CELEBRATES THEIR ROOTS AND MEMORY OF THEIR ANCESTORS WHO WERE SLAVES AT HAGOOD MILL.

PICKENS, S.C. – Saturday, August 12th at 12:00pm, the descendants of Berry and Caroline McKenzie will gather at Hagood Mill (138 Hagood Mill Rd, Pickens, SC 29671) for the first time in 151 years to celebrate their exodus from slavery at the mill to freedom in their community of Golden Grove in Travelers Rest, South Carolina. The McKenzie family will visit the Hagood Mill site where generations of their ancestors toiled and built the wealth of one of Pickens County's prosperous families. The history of Hagood Mill cannot be completely told without the narrative of enslaved families who made it thrive.

After a tour of the Hagood Mill site, the McKenzie family will travel to Cold Springs Church and to the Hagood family cemetery to pray and lay flowers on the graves of slaves in honor of Berry and Caroline McKenzie who are believed to be buried in one of these plots. As an integral part of Pickens County's culture and heritage, the McKenzie Family seeks to celebrate the efforts of South Carolina churches, Pickens County leaders, and local historical societies efforts and mission of helping the region to become more welcoming, inclusive and diverse. Join the McKenzie family, County leaders, and local historians for this moment of reconnection and reflection on both the progress made and the immense amount of work remaining to reconnect families to their heritage. Shortly after the Civil War, the McKenzie family made their exodus east, crossing the Saluda River and settled in their "new Jerusalem" community of Golden Grove in Travelers Rest, South Carolina. The McKenzie, Green, and Cox families pooled their resources, farms, and land to set up a school, church, grist and lumber mill. Over time, the family lost all memories and connections to their ancestral origins at Hagood Mill. Thanks to the research of the McKenzie family historian, Aaron Mair and the rich archival records staff in Spartanburg, Greenville & Pickens counties, the family was able to locate the will of Colonel Benjamin Hagood after a 35 year search.

The initial tip of the McKenzie family's connection to the area came after a review of a 2007 "Old Pendleton District Newsletter" story on an 1872 Habeas Corpus case in which Zion McKenzie (family Moses & founder of the Golden Grove community) was interviewed. Zion McKenzie married Mary Edens who was the sister of Samuel and Absalom Edens who were suspects in that case. The significance of the case is that it gave the specific Pumpkintown location that allowed McKenzie family genealogist to focus his research on that general geographic area of adjoining properties. A search of Pickens County probate records led to the 1865 will of Colonel Benjamin Hagood and the recovery of the family's deep connection to one of Pickens County's most celebrated families. According to Mair, who is a New York State public health professional & former national president of the Sierra Club, "this is a blessed find of a lifetime & one that allows all to come to grips with our legacy, reflect, heal, and build a new future from this tragic past." Mair further states, "Reconnecting families can be a powerful ecotourism boon for families seeking to find their heritage and preserving the lands of their ancestors. We are extremely fortunate that Pickens County & local historians have preserved this site." For more information contact Aaron Mair, McKenzie Family Historian (AaronMair@gmail.com) or call the Hagood Mill Historic Site at (864)898-2936

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