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Spartanburg foundation leads \$3M push to rebuild historic house

BY CHRIS LAVENDER CLAVENDER@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

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Walnut Grove Manor House at 1200 Otts Shoals Road in Roebuck was included in a history trail tour May 25 hosted by the Spartanburg County Foundation. The foundation announced a \$3 million fundraising campaign to reconstruct the house. Chris Lavender/staff

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SPARTANBURG COUNTY — A \$3 million fundraising campaign has been launched by the Spartanburg County Foundation to reconstruct the Walnut Grove Manor House.

The house on Otts Shoals Road in Roebuck was built in 1765 and last restored in 1961. It's been a popular destination for decades for visitors to experience living history in southern Spartanburg County. When it was constructed, green timbers were used for the house's foundation. Since then the timbers have dried, causing the foundation to settle. The house once used to provide tours to school groups is no longer safe to explore.

On May 25, the house was among several stops on a history trail tour hosted by the Spartanburg County Foundation. Troy Hanna, Spartanburg County Foundation CEO, said the tour's purpose was to highlight the county's history and raise awareness to preserve and protect sites, including the manor house.

Hanna said the campaign's goal is to raise \$3 million, of which \$1.5 million would be used to reconstruct the house. Another \$1.5 million would be placed in an endowment for future needs to maintain the house. McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture provided consultation on the project.

"The foundation timber is compromised and the manor house is bowing on both sides," Hanna said. "The Spartanburg County Historical Association had begun repairs on the house and discovered more issues. We want to see an accurate reconstruction with it taken down and brought back using period material. We want this to be a living history experience and don't want children standing behind ropes at a house that is falling in."



SPARTANBURG NEWS

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Hanna said the reconstruction project would be done in the same manner as the recent Anderson Mill reconstruction project.

Anderson Mill along the North Tyger River near Fairmont in Spartanburg County was disassembled in March 2018 and reconstructed. The mill's machinery will be restored, making it a working water-powered gristmill once again. Julian

Hankinson, Tyger River Foundation president, said plans for reconstructing the mill began in early 2017. The site will include a park and event space for social gatherings.

“We built a new building on it using the old wood and purchased other old wood (from Union),” Hankinson said. “The foundation from the 1700s was repaired and a new roof was installed. It will be grinding corn again sometime in the future.”

During the mill’s excavation, a foundation of a saw mill was discovered at the site. Hankinson said pieces of metal including gears and tools were also found in the dirt near the former saw mill’s foundation. A new observation deck will be built at the former saw mill site along the river with plans to build a replica saw mill at the site, he said. The overall cost to reconstruct the Anderson Mill site is about \$2 million.

Hankinson said landscaping is scheduled to be completed at the site by late 2022 with development of the park before the mill’s machinery is reinstalled. Anderson Mill is the oldest standing mill in South Carolina.



Anderson Mill in Moore has been reconstructed and will become a working gristmill again. Tyger River Foundation President Julian Hankinson provided an update on the project May 25 during a history trail tour hosted by the Spartanburg County Foundation. Chris Lavender/staff

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SPARTANBURG POLITICS

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SPARTANBURG NEWS

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In 1903, a flood damaged the mill. Flood waters got into the mill's basement, blowing out a back wall. Hankinson said the mill didn't wash away in the river so when it was rebuilt after the flood much of the original wood was reused. In June 1785, the site was where the county's first sheriff and coroner were appointed by justices during a meeting to establish local government.

"The grounds right here are considered the beginning of Spartanburg County government," Hankinson said. "The next meeting (in 1785) moved to where Morgan Square is now."

During the history trail tour, stops were also made at the Price House at Oakview Farms Road in Woodruff and the Nesbitt Farm at Walnut Grove Road in Roebuck. Hanna noted as residential and commercial development continues, it's important to continue to preserve the area's history.



Spartanburg County Foundation hosted a history trail tour on May 25. One of the sites included the Price House at 1200 Oakview Farms Road in Woodruff. The house was built in 1795. Chris Lavender/staff

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