Seeking Abraham: A Project on Slavery & Justice

MEGAN WOMBLE

FURMAN ENGAGED
Dr. Furman was admonished to abandon the institution. His reply was:

“I will nail my colors to the mast of the old ship, and if she goes down I will go with her.”
November 9, 2016

Provost Announces to Senior Administrative Team

Alongside Dr. Brandon Inabinet (’04, Communication Studies), Provost George Shields brings the idea of the Task Force to other university leaders and gains approval.

See the Letter
Seeking Abraham Project Initiated

Task Force votes to initiate student and faculty research looking into the contributions of slaves to university history.

July 12, 2017

See the Work
Seeking Abraham
A Project on Slavery & Justice

Inspired by Abraham, a former slave of James C. Fisk (the university's first president), the Abraham Slavery Project will investigate Furman University's historical connections with slavery. The University Provost George Shafirovitch appointed the Task Force of professional historians, archivists, faculty, staff, alumni, and students to conduct research on Furman's past and make recommendations that help integrate a more just acknowledgment of that past. The hope is that this project will educate students, and the world more broadly, that the work of historical remembrance, especially regarding race relations, is an opportunity for understanding and community advancement. As Furman grows to become an even more public-serving community partner, we move away from ignorance or indifference, to put truth, understanding, and repair at our preeminent values.

In our initial work, we've found that slaves were likely to have mixed the mortar for the downtown buildings, literally making the binding of the university possible.
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Welcome to Furman University.
You’re about to take an hour-long walking tour of Furman University, discovering the university’s “hidden history” that you wouldn’t currently see in our contemporary campus, built in the 1950s. Still, the landscape, ranked frequently in the top ten most beautiful colleges in the country, tells quite a few stories if you know where to look and have this map to help guide you.
You are of course welcome to jump ahead at any point if you find sites inconvenient or inaccessible. We would encourage you to read them in order, though, to better situate each site in relation to the one that came before.
The tour will start at Cherrydale Alumni House, a symbol of our antebellum start. Founded in 1826, we’re the oldest private university in South Carolina. The school is named for Richard Furman, a clergyman considered the most important Baptist leader before the Civil War.
Stand on the front porch of this beautiful antebellum home. Admire the red maples lining the drive. It's the best view on Furman's entire campus. Straight ahead is Paris Mountain, on the left is "Blue Wall" of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the escarpment with between a 1,300 to 2,000 feet drop. On the left, the athletic fields where you hear the crack of a baseball bat in spring. On the right, the football stadium where you hear the roaring crowds in the fall. This house is seeing much better days than it once did.

In the 1840s a man by the name of George Washington Green built a modest, one story home that sat on 350 acres of land. When James C. Furman, the university’s first president, and his wife Mary were looking for a place to call home, they were drawn to The Green Farm due to its prime location and beautiful landscape at the base of Paris Mountain (the house was located almost exactly where Jack-in-The-Box of Cherrydale Point sits on Poinsett Highway).

In 1857 the Furmans bought the property and an additional 100 acres. Mary, coming from her father’s immense Winnsboro slave plantation, insisted on making extensive renovations. So, the Furmans refurbished the plantation home of Mary’s childhood and added a new front porch adorned with 17 columns.
Tour Stops

› The Plantation
› The Athletic Doughboy
› The Chapel
› The Cross of Richard Furman
› Admitted . . . to Labor
› The “James C” in Furman Hall
› The Politics of Johns
› The Zoo
› The Shack
› The Old College
› The Tower’s Traditions
› Bunched Arrowhead Preserve
› Swamp Rabbit Trail: Railroad
› South Housing
› The Statues
› The Donors
› Trone Student Center
› Milestones
› Rose Garden
› Dining Hall
› James B. Duke Library

Location

› Greenville
› South Carolina
› United States
Furman University: Campus Rhetorics
Greenville, South Carolina 29617, United States
Created By: Furman University

Tour Information
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His son, James C. Furman, whose slave plantation had been converted into the alumni house, brought the institution to Greenville and ensured its continued existence past the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Both of these men have plenty of stories to tell, but we’ll also look at campus from the perspective of the native people who were here before, the enslaved and laborers, the women who pushed against the Furmans’ views, the eventual students who desegregated, the Baptists who bucked past ideas, and markers that now try to commemorate that long history. More importantly, we’ll see that much of this history is unrepresented or ‘hidden’ in the current landscape, and we raise the issue of how we might better document the salient features of the past.

Take the Tour
Download the mobile app to take this self-guided tour on your GPS-enabled mobile device.

Categories
- Campus

Tour Stops
- The Plantation
- The 4thMost Doughboy
- The Chapel
- The Cross of Richard Furman
Coming Soon...

July 28, 2018
Task Force Report
To Be Published

Historical findings, perspectives, and recommendations are published for university stakeholders to make actionable.