



2020 Annual Meeting

The 2020 Friends of Sierra Leone Annual Meeting will be held at Sapelo Island, GA beginning Saturday, June 27th and ending Wednesday, July 1st. For those who haven't joined us for a meeting on Sapelo, you won't want to miss this event. Sapelo has a very strong connection to West Africa and there are still descendants of enslaved people who were brought there from West Africa, including Sierra Leone. These descendants are the only people allowed to own land on Sapelo as the State of Georgia owns the rest.

Sapelo is one of twelve barrier islands along the Georgia coast. It is eleven miles long and four miles wide at its widest. It is a little over 21,000 acres of mostly land but also salt marsh. There is a gorgeous stretch of beach that in the past we have had mostly to ourselves. (On our last trip, sea turtles were hatching, but we didn't have the proper light to try to watch.) You can find some shells and lots of sand dollars as you walk along this lovely beach.

No cars are allowed on the island, except for park vehicles, the University of Georgia research vehicles, and the vehicles belonging to the residents of Hog Hammock. We will have to walk, or bikes and golf carts are available for rent. However, there isn't much need of transportation because there aren't

places to go. Absolutely no convenience stores, Dollar stores, or fast food can be found anywhere on Sapelo. We will take a tour of the island, but the operator will supply the vehicle.

The cost of the 4 night event is \$750 plus 7% tax. However, that cost also includes 3 meals a day. There is a kitchen staff that comes in daily to cook for us and the food is heavenly! Additionally, we will



be in the beautiful Reynolds Mansion for our accommodation. The Mansion is a mixture of quirky and elegant. Our meetings are held in the Circus Room and, once you see it, you will immediately know why it is named that.

Because we are a group, we have to arrive at the same time. As mentioned previously, there are no private vehicles allowed and there is no bridge. We have



to take a ferry there and back. We have been assigned the 3:30 pm ferry on June 27th. Attendees must be at the ferry landing in Meridian, GA a minimum of 30 minutes prior to the ferry departure in order to pay. The fee is \$15 which you will pay. I can personally attest to the fact that the ferry waits on no one. We also have to submit the names of those with our group 30 days prior to our arrival for ferry reservations.

We are limited to 25 people for this meeting. That has not been a problem in the past. The first 25 people to commit will be the ones who go. For singles, if space is available you will have your own room. However, if we need to double singles up to accommodate everyone, we will. Again, this has not been a problem in the past.

Those that are ready to commit need to contact Peggy at info@fosalone.org. You

will need to send a deposit of \$225 to her but the check should be made out to FoSL. You may pay as much as you like beyond the \$225 up to the full amount. After that, we request a minimum of \$175 per person be sent monthly with the \$52.50 tax due with the last payment. She will send you the address to mail the check once you contact her.

We hope to see you there!

Suggested reading:

<https://psmag.com/magazine/letter-from-sapelo-island-georgia-the-last-surviving-gullah-community>

God, Dr. Buzzard, and the Bolito Man: A Saltwater Geechee Talks About Life on Sapelo Island, Georgia

https://www.amazon.com/dp/0385493770/ref=cm_sw_r_cp_tai_0nY4Db1GHY9ZE

Concerns about OIG Actions in Freetown

The FoSL Board of Directors is communicating with Peace Corps Headquarters, the National Peace Corps Association, and the appropriate members and committees in the U.S. Congress about the actions of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in Freetown in March 2019. While the FoSL Board of Directors understands and supports the needs to enforce U.S. government regulations, it is deeply concerned that some OIG actions themselves both

violated longstanding Peace Corps safety rules thus potentially putting volunteers in danger. The Board is also concerned by the deep negative effect of the OIG actions on the Peace Corps program in Sierra Leone. Any persons who were affected by the OIG activity are encouraged to contact FoSL President Peggy Murrah at president@fosalone.org. Your identity will be kept confidential if you so desire.

Projects Report 2019

by Jim Hanson

The FoSL Board of Directors selected four projects for funding in June of this year. We are operating on a tighter budget this year, but we are making the most of our limited resources. Two of the funded projects have already submitted follow-up reports on their work.

The Dandabu Project is an initiative to aid students in rural Pujehun District in taking the BECE exams, which are required for entrance into secondary school. Our \$756 covered transportation and lodging expenses for the twenty-five students from the area during the two-week exam period. This project yielded great results, with 23 of 25 students passing the exam.

The Kagbungbor Youth Project in Kamakwie was granted \$2217 to rehabilitate a primary school. In their report, they stated that strong community support and strict budgeting allowed them to stretch these funds to include the refurbishing of another small primary school in the area.

Follow-up reports are due next month from two other projects. The Women in Action group in Port Loko is remodeling a former Red Cross centre to provide space for adult literacy and job training classes. Their grant was for \$2419. A potable water system was funded for \$2639 to install holding tanks and standpipes, insuring a reliable source of clean water to the Fullah Town community in Freetown.

Our committee is currently making selections for our next round of projects to be funded in mid-December. Our current budget stands at about \$7400. We hope to select three or four good community projects for funding from the 13 applications we received.

I would like to thank the members of the projects committee for their work in making the project selections. There are so many needy projects to choose from, it is a tough job to choose only a few. And, as always, I would like to thank our generous donors for their continued support. Please keep the Friends of Sierra Leone in mind as you donate to your favorite charities in this holiday season. We will strive to find the best projects possible to aid our friends in Sierra Leone.

Jim Hanson, Projects Committee Chair



<https://fosalone.org/donate.php>



Response from Dandabu Project

Thanks again for your and FOSL's support of our Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) Success Program.

We learned a lot from this pilot phase and are happy to report that this year all but two students passed the exam, 23 out of 25 students. For reference, in 2018, only one student passed the exam. One of our goals of the BECE Success Program is not only to improve scores, but consistently improve them every year so all students pass the exam and move onto senior secondary school every single year.

The BECE Success Program is intended to ensure all students attending Junior Secondary School in Dandabu (10 villages feed into this school) take and pass the BECE, the national exam to pass junior secondary school. By passing the exam they can advance in their education and move onto senior secondary school. The BECE Success Program aligns with our vision and approach of doing community-driven and locally-led work. We do this mainly through the BECE Committee. The BECE Committee is comprised of parents, teachers, school Principal, village chiefs, pupils, community members (men and women). The committee is intended to be an inclusive, diverse community-led committee that drives and shapes the program. The BECE Committee will eventually be the main driver of the program, with the teachers and principal. We did have a few learning moments in this pilot phase that we will adapt and incorporate into following years. For instance, we will create more clear and consistent lines of communication weeks prior to the study sessions and

preparation, and will initially need to help direct the BECE Committee meetings (suggesting/collaboratively deciding when or how often to meet, messages, agenda items). Because the committee is a key component of the program, we need to ensure it operates smoothly and can continue to drive the program for years to come. On this note, we did receive very positive feedback from the community and the community was very supportive of the initiative.

For this program, we assigned one teacher to take the lead, as this was driven and initiated by the teachers themselves. After the students took the exam, we asked this teacher to provide feedback and report back (with a few guiding questions). One of the challenges that he highlighted was the difficulty traveling long distances to take the exam and arranging for food for two weeks. He suggested bringing a cook with for the two weeks to accommodate for food. We also suggest that he communicate this clearly with the committee so they can weigh in on these matters. Additionally, we are working to get the school an examination number so students can take the exam in Dandabu rather than travel long distances, but we have no sense of how long this will take the Sierra Leonean government.

So, we are incredibly happy with the results of the exam, and happy with the feedback we received that will can incorporate into future years. Let us know if you have any questions at all. Thanks again!

Kristen

Response from Kagbungbor Youth Project - Kamakwie

Hello Friends of Sierra Leone, we have seen your message and thank you so much for a job well done.

In summary form, we are almost done with the implementation of the project, due to the high cooperation of the community people as they voluntarily provided sand and forest sticks as their contribution to the project and those sticks

were ripped into boards. Due to such development and our desire for greater result, transparency, and accountability, we are implementing the project in two schools instead of one school. A detailed analysis of the project will be sent to you later on but for your kind attention, will send some pictures showing how the schools were before rehabilitation and how they are after rehabilitation.



Before



After

Kagbungbor Youth Project - Kamakwie



Before



After

***Your Generous
Donations
Have Fundned Numerous
FoSL Small Grant Projects***

Past Projects Funded:
fosalone.org/projFunded.php

Donate:
fosalone.org/donate.php

Memory Photos Project

by Sam Hill

Last year I went back to my bush village and that of a Peace Corps friend in Salone. We'd been volunteers there in the seventies. I brought along some old black and white pics Guy'd taken. I had no idea the impact they'd have. When I pulled them from my pack, it created a gentle mob scene, with people crowding around, pointing and carefully passing the photos around. Some cried. What I hadn't realized was that when rebels attacked villages during the war and people ran into the bush, the rebels torched the roofs. Once the roofs were gone, the houses simply melted. People lost everything, including their pictures.. Those pictures I brought them showed parents and grandparents they hadn't seen in twenty years. When I left the second village, the chief thanked me for bringing back their memories.

I'd like to start a Memory Project. The idea is simple. If you have pictures from your Peace Corps service before the war (pre-1994) please contact me. People were particularly interested in those pictures which showed people, rather than cultural events, artifacts or landscapes. Villages and small towns are likely more doable than large towns, since so much has changed. (Kenema is ten times as large as it was.) You and I will arrange for me to get copies (hard and electronic.) I will then arrange to get those back to the relevant villages. I'm

not quite sure how I'll do that yet. I may take them back myself or I may get my friend and the interpreter on my recent trip to take them. Either way, I'll foot the bill at least for the pilot program.

I'd like to start with a dozen or so villages, just for proof of concept. Ideally, I'd like to hear from you in the next thirty days, with an eye toward sending some back with Peggy when she goes at the end of the year.

Thoughts? Suggestions? Photos?

Please share this through your informal networks.

We gave years of our lives to help the people of Sierra Leone, which was very hard. Now we have an easy way to make another difference in people's lives.

Thanks.

Sam

Please email me directly, sam.hill@fticonsulting.com. Please put Memory Project in the subject line so it doesn't end up in spam. Thank you.

The Freetown Historical Portraits

by Gary Schulze

In 2013 I discovered an actual photograph on the internet of Bai Bureh, (Image 1) the hero of the 1896 Hut Tax War, which had been taken by a British officer while the warrior was under house arrest in Ascension Town in Freetown in 1898. Until then the only existing image was a pencil drawing showing a very defeated, depressed, old man sitting on a box, drawn by another British officer. It appeared in the London Gazette along with a story of how Bai Bureh had been roundly defeated and captured by British troops. Ironically the face in the newly discovered photograph resembled the face on the statue I had commissioned for the National Museum when I worked there as a Peace Corps Volunteer in 1963. That's the image which appears on the Le 1,000 banknote.



Image 1 - Bai Bureh

I purchased the photograph and presented copies to President Koroma as a gift to the people of Sierra Leone. Copies were given to Fourah Bay College and to Kasseh, Bai Bureh's village in the Port Loko District. In addition, an oversized enlargement of the picture was put on permanent display in the National Museum. Five years later I realized that after all the initial publicity in the Freetown newspapers, hardly any Sierra Leoneans had ever seen the photograph. People did not have money to pay to visit the museum.

Alusine Bangura is a famous artist in Sierra Leone. During the NPRC days he painted portraits of Sierra Leone's national heroes as well as celebrities such as President Kennedy and Thomas Sankara all over the city. In 2018 I commissioned him to do a color rendition of the Bai Bureh photograph on the





Image 2 - Bai Bureh

outside wall of the National Museum facing Siaka Stevens Street. We covered the mural in glass and illuminated it with a solar light so people would see it as they drive by the Cotton Tree at night. (Image 2). The mural was unveiled in a ceremony presided over by Madame Pratt, Minister of Tourism & Cultural Affairs. My next project was to have Mr. Bangura paint portraits of Bai Bureh, Madame Yoko, and Sengbe Pieh on the outside wall at the entrance to the Big Market (Image3). Hopefully these images will attract tourists and bring business to the



merchants inside.

Last year I commissioned the artist to do portraits of Dr. M.C.F. Easmon and Sir Milton Margai (Images 4 and 5) on the outside wall of the museum. I was particularly anxious to add Dr. Easmon's portrait since I had worked for him as a Peace Corps Volunteer in 1963. Both portraits were unveiled in a ceremony



Image 3 - Big Market

presided over by the Mayor of Freetown, the Hon. Yvette Aki-Sawyers.

Hopefully these public portraits will inspire young Sierra Leoneans to take an interest in the history of their country, a subject neglected in the curriculum of many of the schools in Freetown.

Next April I plan to add more portraits of Sierra Leone heroes.

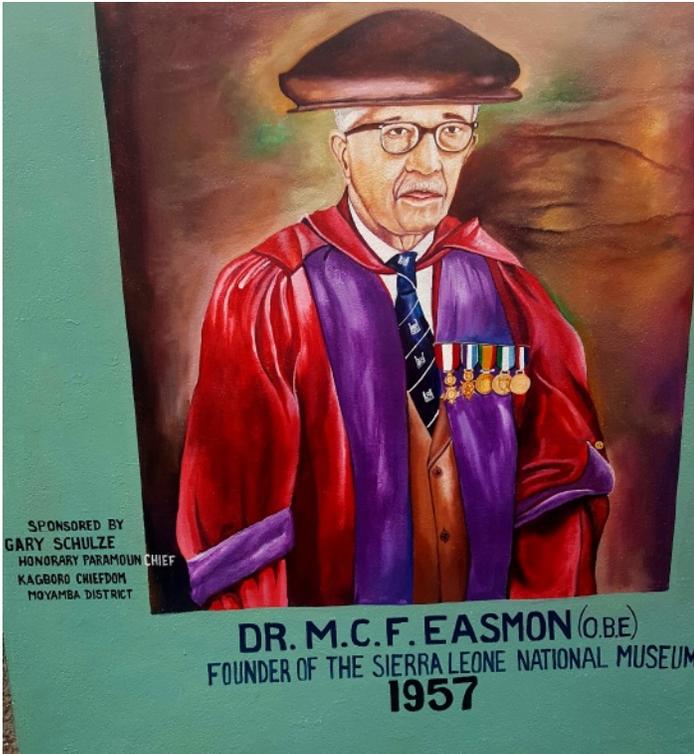


Image 4 - Dr. Easmon



Amazon Smile

As a reminder to all Friends of Sierra Leone supporters, if you choose to shop with Amazon by using their "Amazon Smile" program, a small percentage (0.5%) of your purchase will be donated to FoSL.

Simply use this address to get to Amazon: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/52-1732179>

Don't be surprised to see FoSL registered by its original name - Greater Washington FoSL

Donations directly to FoSL are also greatly appreciated:

<http://fosalone.org/donate.php>

Thanks for supporting FoSL



Image 5 - Sir Margai

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