

North Carolina HISTORIC SITES

News Release

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“CONSTITUTIONAL TALES” BRING N.C. CONSTITUTION TO LIFE AT STATE CAPITOL

RALEIGH (October 5, 2009)— When delegates met at the State Capitol in 1868, an unusual coalition of black freemen and freedmen, carpetbaggers and local whites courageously forged a path for North Carolina, establishing new responsibilities of the state and new rights for the people, including the guarantee of education.

On Thurs., Nov. 5 at 7:30 p.m., the stories of the leaders and events critical to the evolution of the state’s constitution will come alive in the old House Chamber of the Capitol during a special presentation of *Constitutional Tales* by author and presenter Ann McColl. Actors directed by local playwright Ian Finley will portray historical figures during the multimedia presentation. *Tales* will revisit the enticing stories of conflict, controversy and courage that led to a progressive state constitution, based on convention debates, letters and photographs from the State Archives.

“North Carolina has one of the best constitutions for education in the country,” said McColl, an attorney and associate professor at UNC Charlotte. “Our current constitution is based on this reconstruction-era constitution, and yet the people and the events that shaped it have largely been forgotten or intentionally erased from our history. These tales capture the incredible stories of valor and perseverance that brought about North Carolina’s progressive constitution.”

Constitutional Tales provides the historical context for educational issues that are still timely, including the relationship between public schools and universities and the roles of the state board of education and the state superintendent. “The tales help the audience recognize the relevance of the 1868 constitution to current times to raise critical questions about how, as a state, we continue to seek change,” said McColl. Much of the presentation’s action focuses on the 1868 Constitutional Convention, which was held in the House of Representatives Chamber in the State Capitol. The audience can occupy the

seats held by the delegates of the convention for a unique opportunity to experience the important issues that were debated and resolved in that very place more than 140 years ago.

The event is free and open to the public. For more information or to reserve a delegate seat, call the Capitol at 919-733-4994 or e-mail state.capitol@ncdcr.gov.

A National Historic Landmark, the N.C. State Capitol is one of the finest and best-preserved examples of the Greek Revival style of architecture in the U.S. It features a domed rotunda and state senate and house chambers, meticulously restored to their 1840 appearance. Until 1888, its granite walls housed all of state government and the legislature met here until 1961. Today, the governor and her staff still occupy offices in the Capitol.

The State Capitol's mission is to preserve and interpret the architecture, history, and functions of the 1840 Capitol building and Union Square where it is located. In downtown Raleigh, the State Capitol is bounded by Edenton, Salisbury, Morgan and Wilmington Streets. Free parking is available in state lots near the Capitol. For more information on the State Capitol call 919-733-4994 or go to <http://www.nchistoricsites.org/capitol>.

Administered by the Division of State Historic Sites, the State Capitol is part of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, a state agency dedicated to the promotion and protection of North Carolina's arts, history and culture. Join the Cultural Resources 2009 theme observance of "Treasure N.C. Culture. For more information, visit www.ncculture.com.