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Gullah Geechee Documentary Film Festival Comes to St. Marys

ST. MARYS, Ga (July 20, 2018) – The St. Marys Convention & Visitors Bureau is excited to announce the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Commission has brought their documentary film festival to St. Marys. The public is invited to join us at the St. Marys Welcome Center, at 400 Osborne Street, for free viewing of a series of classic documentaries that help introduce audiences around the world to the history and cultural treasures of the Gullah Geechee people. Film dates are Saturday, July 28 at 1:00 p.m. for “From Whence We Came” (2017) and “The Language You Cry In” (1998) and Saturday, August 25 at 1:00 p.m. for “From Whence We Came” and “Family Across The Sea” (1990).

The Gullah Geechee people are the descendants of Central and West Africans who came from different ethnic and social groups. They were enslaved together on the isolated sea and barrier islands that span what is now designated as the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor – a stretch of the U.S. coastline that extends from Pender County, North Carolina to St. John’s County, Florida and for 30 miles inland. The result was an intense interaction among Africans from different language groups in settings where enslaved Africans and their descendants formed the majority. Overtime, they developed the creole Gullah Geechee language as a means of communicating with each other and they were also able to preserve many African practices in their language, arts, crafts and cuisine.

The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Commission oversees the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor: a federal National Heritage Area established by the U.S. Congress to recognize the unique culture of the Gullah Geechee people. Throughout the corridor today there are vibrant and historic Gullah Geechee communities.

"FROM WHENCE WE CAME" (2017)

Learn what happens when members of Gullah Geechee communities in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida gather for a celebration that is over 150 years old: the Watch Night service commemorating the date of January 1, 1863 when enslaved people in the Low Country, the Sea Islands and throughout the United States emerged from bondage as a result of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Run time: 7 minutes.

"FAMILY ACROSS THE SEA" (1991)

In 1988, Penn Center hosted Joseph Saidu Momoh, then President of Sierra Leone. As a result of his visit, a delegation of Gullah Geechee people from South Carolina and Georgia embarked on a journey to Africa as guests of the Sierra Leonian government. Some three years later, Penn Center, in cooperation with the South Carolina Educational Television Network produced this film which chronicles that reunion visit and explores the remarkable cultural connections between the Gullah Geechee people and the people of Sierra Leone. Courtesy of South Carolina ETV Network (Columbia, SC). Run Time: 56 minutes.

"THE LANGUAGE YOU CRY IN" (1998)

The story of how an important language link between a Gullah Geechee family in Harris Neck GA and the Mende people of Sierra Leone was documented and reclaimed Run time: 53 minutes.

For more information call the St. Marys Welcome Center at 912-882-4000.

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