



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

October 17, 2018

Contact: Daryn P. Glassbrook, Ph.D., Executive Director

(251) 415-1109

admin@mobilemedicalmuseum.org

Mobile, Alabama – On Friday, October 19th, the Mobile Medical Museum will unveil the second of three commissioned sculptures by local artist April Livingston, *Portrait of Bessie McGhee*. This work commemorates the life and work of an early 20th century midwife from the Poarch Creek tribal community who was renowned for her healing skills and extensive knowledge about traditional herbal medicine. Mrs. McGhee’s services were in great demand during her lifetime, when tribal members were denied access to segregated hospitals and clinics in the Atmore area.

“The Mobile Medical Museum is proud to honor the legacy of Bessie McGhee with this sculpture, the first public monument of a Poarch Creek Tribal Member in the state of Alabama,” says Dr. Daryn Glassbrook, Executive Director of the Mobile Medical Museum. “Though she lacked a credential from the medical establishment of her time, Mrs. McGhee earned the respect of her community through her rare expertise and dedicated service. Today’s health professionals and students can learn a great deal from her example.”

The cast-iron sculpture will be permanently installed in the Museum’s Robert Thrower Medicinal Garden, Mobile’s only public medicinal garden. The unveiling of the sculpture will take place during the formal dedication of the Garden, which was named in memory of Robert Glenn Thrower Jr., a distinguished Poarch Creek ethnobotanist who died in July 2017.

“It is gratifying that Bessie McGhee and Robert Thrower are being recognized for their contributions by the two communities to which they gave so much; our Poarch Creek Tribe and the extended medical community. As Poarch people, we will be forever grateful to “Mrs. Bessie”, who found a way to care for and sustain our people at a time when modern medicine was neither available nor affordable to us. Robert’s extensive knowledge of traditional medicine and his keen personal interest in sharing what he knew ensured that next generations will understand its value and place in our Tribe’s history,” remarked Stephanie A. Bryan, Tribal Chair and CEO, Poarch Band of Creek Indians.

MOBILE MEDICAL MUSEUM 1664 SPRINGHILL AVENUE MOBILE, AL 36604
ph 251.415.1109 mobilemedicalmuseum.org

In modern day Poarch there are many descendants of Bessie McGhee, including Tribal leaders: Stephanie A. Bryan, Tribal Chair and CEO, Charlotte McGhee Meckel, Tribal Secretary, and Tribal Council Members Dewitt Carter, Keith Martin and Garvis Sells.

Two other Livingston sculptures will be added to the garden in the coming year: *Portrait of Dr. James A. Franklin, Sr.* (now on view in the Mary Elizabeth and Charles Bernard Rodning Gallery as part of the Museum's special exhibit *Dreaming at Dawn: African Americans and Health Care, 1865-1945*); and *Motherwork*, a piece commemorating the history of Alabama's midwives. The three sculptures have been designated a bicentennial project by the Alabama Bicentennial Commission. The Mobile Medical Museum will be offering curriculum-based tours and other public programs throughout the year so that visitors of all ages can engage with the presented historical themes on many levels.

This project has been made possible through the generous support of the Poarch Creek Indian Endowment Committee, the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment of the Arts.

About the Mobile Medical Museum

Founded in 1962, by Dr. Samuel Eichold, II, the Mobile Medical Museum preserves and exhibits medical artifacts and archives to commemorate Mobile's prominent place in the history of medical education and public health within the state of Alabama and the Gulf Coast. The Museum's collections and exhibitions provide the public with a broad understanding of the evolution of the art and science of health care.

Since 2004, the Museum has been located at the Vincent-Doan-Walsh House, Mobile's oldest extant private residence, which is located on the midtown campus of the University of South Alabama Children's and Women's Hospital. Included on the National Register of Historic Places of the National Park Service, the house was built in 1827 by Captain Benjamin Vincent, who commanded several cargo vessels that sailed between New Orleans and Mobile.

The Museum's collections include thousands of medical artifacts, photographs, and documents from the past 300 years. The Museum also houses the J.L. Bedsole Archives and Ben May Library, which together contain over 50 cubic feet of letters, doctor's registers, photographs, and rare books.

The Mobile Medical Museum is a locally supported 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and does not receive any funding from federal, state, county, or city taxes.

About the Poarch Band of Creek Indians

The Poarch Creek Indians are descendants of a segment of the original Creek Nation, which once covered almost all of Alabama and Georgia. Unlike many eastern Indian tribes, the Poarch Creeks were not removed from their tribal lands and have lived together for almost 200 years

in and around the reservation in Poarch, Alabama. The reservation is located eight miles northwest of Atmore, Alabama in rural Escambia County, and 57 miles east of Mobile.

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians is the only federally recognized Indian Tribe in the state of Alabama, operating as a sovereign nation with its own system of government and bylaws. The Tribe operates a variety of economic enterprises, which employ hundreds of area residents. The Poarch Band of Creek Indians is an active partner in the state of Alabama, contributing to economic, educational, social and cultural projects benefiting both Tribal Members and residents of these local communities and neighboring towns.

The Tribe's Planned Giving Campaign includes significant donations to local schools, education scholarships, senior centers, youth athletics, and charitable organizations.