**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO HONOR THE REVEREND JOHN GRIMKÉ DRAYTON, RECTOR OF ST. ANDREW’S PARISH CHURCH FROM 1851 TO 1891, WHO TRANSFORMED HIS FAMILY ESTATE, MAGNOLIA PLANTATION, INTO ONE OF THE WORLD’S MOST BEAUTIFUL GARDENS, FOR HIS LASTING LEGACY OF FAITH, COMPASSION, AND BEAUTY AND TO DECLARE MAY 1, 2013, JOHN GRIMKÉ DRAYTON DAY IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, born on May 1, 1816, John Drayton Grimké was the son of Thomas Smith Grimké and Sarah Daniel Drayton and the nephew of noted abolitionists Sarah and Angelina Grimké; and

Whereas, young Grimké’s early education included graduation from Southworth School in Charleston and then graduation from the College of Charleston in 1833; and

Whereas, John’s father, Thomas Smith Grimké, who had hoped to become a minister but instead followed his own father’s desire for him to become a lawyer, succumbed to cholera in 1834 and did not live to see John’s pursuit of the ministry; but it is certain that his devout faith and unfaltering adherence to Christian principles strongly influenced John’s life; and

Whereas, the Drayton family estate, Magnolia‑on‑the‑Ashley, was first left to John’s uncle, William Henry Drayton and upon his death to John’s older brother, Thomas, with the stipulation that he, or any heir, change his surname to Drayton, which he did; but Thomas’s untimely death in 1836 catapulted John, only twenty years old, into the role of head of the family and heir to Magnolia Plantation as John Grimké Drayton; and

Whereas, despite the heavy responsibility incumbent upon a young plantation owner, he followed his calling to the ministry moving to New York in 1838 to attend General Theological Seminary, and en route, was introduced by Philadelphia cousins to his future wife, Julia Ewing. He left seminary in 1839 and continued his preparation for the ministry at home under Reverend Stuart Hanckel of St. Andrew’s Parish Church and Bishop Nathaniel Bowen; and

Whereas, in 1840, he married and returned to Magnolia with his bride but shortly thereafter contracted tuberculosis. Tutored in gardening by slaves, John Drayton turned to the soil for therapy, importing camellias from England and France and rare Indian azaleas from Southeast Asia, the first to be planted outdoors in the United States, transforming Magnolia Plantation into the horticultural masterpiece that survives today; and

Whereas, coping with his illness and driven by his work at Magnolia, Drayton was not ordained to the Episcopal priesthood until 1851, becoming the twelfth rector of St. Andrew’s Parish Church, a position he held for forty years until his death in April of 1891; and

Whereas, Reverend Drayton, who often composed his sermons on a bench along the Ashley River at Magnolia Plantation, continued his predecessor’s work of ministering to the black slaves in the parish with unparalleled energy and dedication, with slaves accounting for more than eighty percent of communicants and baptisms in the parish. He also instructed his flock in the tenets of Christianity, providing ten white Sunday school teachers for sixty to eighty black students at Magnolia Chapel, where school was held during winter and spring; and

Whereas, 1861 was the last year he conducted regular services in the parish and although St. Andrew’s Parish Church was relegated to use as a polling place after the Civil War, not reopening for worship until 1876, Reverend Drayton, in the interim, reestablished three of the outlying chapels where he held worship services, provided instruction, baptized parishioners, and assisted the bishop in confirmations to congregations that continued to be overwhelmingly black; and

Whereas, thrice laboring to erase the ill effects of man and nature on St. Andrew’s Parish Church, Reverend Drayton turned his steadfast determination to restore the beautiful structure into a continuing resolution to restore the lives of the people who had been abused through the depredation of slavery and displaced by the ravages of war; and

Whereas, in a life of privilege that spanned the loss of father and brother, the pangs of dreaded tuberculosis, and the devastating conditions of the Civil War, Reconstruction, phosphate mining along the Ashley River, and the Great Earthquake of 1886, the faith and Christian ministry of John Grimké Drayton to the poor had the palpable aura of reality during a surreal era for many who desperately needed such an anchor; and

Whereas, serving as rector of St. Andrew’s Parish Church longer than any other rector in the church’s three hundred seven‑year history, John Grimké Drayton “not only planted seed in the earth to form what has been called the most beautiful garden in the world (Magnolia), but he planted a seed of the Word which we doubt not will flower into all eternity.” Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the House of Representatives of the State of South Carolina, by this resolution, honor the Reverend John Grimké Drayton, Rector of St. Andrew’s Parish Church from 1851 to 1891, who transformed his family estate, Magnolia Plantation, into one of the world’s most beautiful gardens, for his lasting legacy of faith, compassion, and beauty and declare May 1, 2013, John Grimké Drayton Day in South Carolina.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to Tom Johnson, Executive Director of Magnolia Plantation and Gardens and the Reverend Marshall Huey, Rector of St. Andrew’s Parish Church.

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