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'Truly an honor'

A. Quinn Jones home a historic site

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The house that educator A. Quinn Jones Sr. lived in for nearly seven decades now has a bronze plaque in front of it marking it as a historic site by the state of Florida.

"I think it is wonderful for the city of Gainesville and Negroes to remember what dad did for the school and this community," said Dr. Oliver Jones, 88, the second oldest of four children born to A. Quinn Jones Sr. and Agnes Marion Jones. "This is truly an honor."

Close to 100 elected officials, former colleagues and students, fraternity brothers, pastors and people from the community joined members of the Jones family at a marker dedication ceremony last Thursday morning at the house at 1013 NW 7th Ave.

Anthony Lyons, director of the Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency, said the project will be the "anchor" of a heritage trail that will preserve the rich cultural history of the NW 5th Avenue community.

"It is very important for us to recognize the cultural significance of this house, and we are going to try to do the same thing for other buildings in the area that are culturally significant," Lyons said. "We need to figure out how to tell this



ERICA BROUGH/Special to the Guardian
City Commissioner Scherwin Henry, left, removes the veil that draped the marker designating the home of educator A. Quinn Jones a historic site.

neighborhood's story."

Greg Bradley, who is managing the project for the CRA, said the agency hired an architect to do a feasibility study that led to the house getting a new roof and being stabilized.

Bradley, a CRA financial manager, said the project will be completed in three stages. He said the first stage will be restoring the exterior, the second stage will be to work with the community to decide how the building will be used and the final stage will be restoring the interior.

Bradley also said the beginning of the \$60,000 project by the agency and the Gainesville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department should begin by the end of the year. He said \$25,000 already has been invested in a feasibility study, new roof, stabilization and design surveys.

Oliver Jones said his father moved the family into the yellow and white one-story bungalow in 1927 after living in several homes in the historic NW 5th Avenue area. He said his father was born in Quincy and graduated from Florida A&M University in Tallahassee in 1915 before moving to Gainesville in 1921 after learning about a new school being built for blacks. He said his father served as principal of all-black Union Academy from 1921-1923.

Union was located on a parcel of land just south of where the Rosa B. Williams Center is located at 524 NW 1st Ave, according to Joel Buchanan, a University of Florida historian who has helped spearhead the restoration of the house as well as the preservation of black history in Alachua County.

A. Quinn Jones Sr. then became principal of all-black Lincoln High School from 1923-1957. When the new Lincoln was built in southeast Gainesville, old Lincoln, which is across the street from the historic house, was named the A. Quinn Jones Center.

A. Quinn Jones Sr. died in 1997 at the age of 104, and the house was donated to the city of Gainesville in 2007. Oliver Jones encouraged city officials to consider naming a portion of NW 7th Avenue in honor of his father.

"My father was not only helpful to the students at the school, he was helpful to the community," said Oliver Jone, adding that his father served as a superintendent for many years at Greater Bethel AME Church when it was located on the corner of NW 7th Avenue and 6th Street. The church is now located on SE 43rd Street near Eastside High School.

Oliver Jones said efforts by his father resulted in Lincoln being able to award 12th-grade high school diplomas when an overwhelming majority of black schools in the south were only awarding diplomas for completion of the 10th-grade. He also said his father used to remind people all the time that Lincoln was the second black high school to receive accreditation in the state of Florida.

City Commissioner Scherwin Henry, whose district includes the NW 5th Avenue area, said it is important not to forget the people who have made so much possible.

"Preserving our history is important in that it is the mirror which reflects our past, but also directs us toward our future," Henry said.