

## Report for Meeting of the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission July 2021

Prepared by Angela M. Thorpe, Director

### ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

- The AAHC has welcomed a number of contractors, fellows, and interns to its team in recent months. A slate of these talented individuals has been provided to commissioners.
- 2021-2022 AAHC Strategic Plan Goals:
  1. Identify funding for SWOT Analysis of grassroots practitioners in North Carolina.
  2. Expand AAHC's connection to education: collaborate with DNCR Education, DPI, and other relevant stakeholders to develop a strategy for connecting AAHC to public schools.
  3. Create repository of technical assistance resources for constituents on AAHC website.
  4. Develop digital space on AAHC website for artists and creatives to connect to opportunities and resources.
  5. Make touchpoints with university and college programs and departments that have disciplines in alignment with AAHC's work.
  6. Grow relationships across DNCR and state government.
  7. AAHC staff and commissioners engage in professional development.

### FISCAL & LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Governor Roy Cooper's recommended budget (2021-2023) includes two recommendations affect the AAHC directly:

1. Funding for two positions, an Education & Outreach Coordinator and a Program Coordinator, and \$270,000 in recurring operational support for the African American Heritage Commission.
2. \$2.5 million to design and construct a new monument commemorating African American contributions to North Carolina on the State Capitol Grounds.

Additionally, [HB 754 was filed](#) and introduced this legislative session. This bipartisan bill would direct the AAHC to study civil rights monument needs in the state and appropriate \$500K to support ongoing work on the NC Civil Rights Trail. We are absolutely thrilled about this opportunity, and grateful that the value of our work is being recognized. Many kudos are due to AAHC Associate Director, Adrienne Nirdé, who has led the development and growth of the NC Civil Rights Trail since 2020.

### GRANT UPDATES

#### WILLIAM G. POMEROY FOUNDATION—NC CIVIL RIGHTS TRAIL

In the spring of 2020, the AAHC received funding from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation to develop and launch the NC Civil Rights Trail in partnership with Visit NC and the NC Office of Archives & History. The project will identify and mark (digitally and physically) North Carolina sites key to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, or critical to advancing civil rights in the state. This project has created one interactive, evergreen digital map of North Carolina civil rights sites, and will ultimately yield fifty physical, community-based markers by January of 2023.

In February of 2021, the first three NC Civil Rights Trail markers were awarded:

1. New Ahoskie Baptist Church (New Ahoskie Baptist Church and Chowan Discovery Group)
2. 1951 Adkin High School Walkouts (Adkin High School Alumni and Friends, Inc.)
3. Shelby Sit-Ins (City of Shelby)

Marker applications are now being accepted until October. For more details about the project, please visit:

<https://aahc.nc.gov/programs/civil-rights-trail>.

## **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE NETWORK TO FREEDOM GRANTS**

### **Teaching the Road to Freedom (2020-2021; completed June 2021)**

This funding enabled digital educational resources centered on freedom seeking in North Carolina to be developed in partnership with Edenton State Historic Site and Carolina K-12, a program of Carolina Public Humanities (UNC). Thirty educators from across the state also received training on how to apply these resources to the classroom.

### **An Eagle on His Button (2021-2022)**

This funding will enable digital educational resources centered on the U.S. Colored Troops to be developed in partnership with Tryon Palace and Carolina K-12. Educators from across the state will receive training on how to apply these resources to the classroom.

## **INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM & LIBRARY SERVICES GRANTS**

### **“A Tale of Two Ships: Developing a Research & Interpretation Plan for Revealing Hidden Histories of One Ship with Two Identities” (Awarded July 2018; Concluded March 2021)**

“A Tale of Two Ships: A Collections Research and Interpretation Plan for Revealing Hidden Histories of One Ship with Two Names” was completed by project PI Angela Thorpe. The Plan underwent editing by Kimberly Kenyon, Senior Conservator & Co-Principal Investigator, Queen Anne’s Revenge Conservation Lab, and multiple levels of review from colleagues and legal counsel. The AAHC is delighted that several action items in the plan have begun to take shape.

### **“Africa to Carolina: Next Steps in the Journey” (Awarded July 2020)**

Following a thorough national search, Amber Pelham, a graduate of the Public History graduate program at New York University and a Hampton University alum, was selected as the two-year Research Fellow for the AAHC’s “Africa to Carolina: Next Steps in the Journey” project. Amber began her role at the end of January 2021.

Amber performed additional research on the slave trade in the colony of North Carolina and is currently working to develop one introductory exhibit centering on the relationship between the Transatlantic Slave Trade and North Carolina.

Slightly variable versions of this exhibit will be installed at Bath State Historic Site, Brunswick Town/Ft. Anderson State Historic Site, Edenton State Historic Site, Somerset Place State Historic Site, Tryon Palace, Roanoke Island Festival Park, and the NC Maritime Museum at Beaufort in 2022.

The project will also fund the development of an “Africa to Carolina” web portal. This website will be designed to showcase information and resources that we know and have currently, with the intention of building upon it after the conclusion of the project in alignment with the larger goals of the Africa to Carolina initiative. A seasoned web contractor, Phil Bicking, has been identified to build the web portal (Phil built the NC Green Book Project Web Portal). His work will begin in July 2021.

#### **“A Tale of Two Ships: Part Deux” (Awarded June 2021)**

The AAHC recently received word that its “A Tale of Two Ships” work will grow due to another Museum Grants for African American History & Culture award from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Funding will enable the AAHC to continue doing archival research on *La Concorde* overseas in France, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. This work will yield academic scholarship, digital content, and expansive interpretation in DNCR institutions.

#### **AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL HERITAGE ACTION FUND GRANT (Awarded July 2021)**

The AAHC will lead the planning project to conceptualize development of a national marker and digital mapping program for existing Green Book sites. Working in conjunction with colleagues from the SC African American Heritage Commission, we will work to identify, develop, and build out infrastructure for the project. After piloting the project in North Carolina and South Carolina, the resulting framework for identification, research, online tool development, mapping, and marking sites could be scaled up for national implementation beyond the life of this planning project.

### **STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT**

The AAHC continues to expand the ways that it supports its broad body of stakeholders across North Carolina.

Under the leadership of Adrienne Nirde, the AAHC has expanded its messaging and digital engagement work, growing awareness about the AAHC and creating new communications channels for the division. Mrs. Nirde has led this work with a talented cohort of undergraduate student interns and emerging professional contractors.

Under the leadership of Kyma Lassiter, the AAHC has expanded its arts engagement work. Ms. Lassiter has worked diligently to develop a useful suite of resources for North Carolina artists, including professional development trainings, a digital newsletter, and physical supplies. She has also worked to provide more intentional technical assistance to Black arts institutions across North Carolina. Finally, Ms. Lassiter serves as a liaison to the NC Arts Council and the NC Museum of Art.

Angela Thorpe has worked to drive a more effective and streamlined heritage-based technical assistance strategy, with great support from Adrienne Nirde. This work has included developing streamlined communications channels for constituents, heritage-based webinar trainings, and the development of a grassroots practitioner database. This work will continue to evolve, with an eye toward developing more professional development opportunities and a resource library for constituents and performing a needs assessment across grassroots practitioners.