

## HISTORIC BLACK TOWNS 2016 SUMMER PROJECTS - 1 (02-01-16)

### OVERVIEW

As part of our new partnership with the **Historic Black Towns & Settlements Alliance (HBT-SA)** to address the needs of to five historically black towns in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi, CSAS welcomes summer research grant proposals that incorporate one of the Alliance's identified projects. To learn more about HBTSA, please click [here](#). You can read more detailed descriptions of summer projects identified by the Alliance in [Hobson City, AL](#); [Tuskegee, AL](#); [Eatonville, FL](#); [Grambling, LA](#); [Mound Bayou, MS](#), Princeville, NC, Navassa, NC, East Spencer, NC, Tillery Settlement, NC, Independence Heights, TX, Prairie View, TX, and San Antonio/Castroville, TX. Applicants with questions about these identified summer projects should contact **Dr. Kenneth Janken**, CSAS interim director, at [krjanken@email.unc.edu](mailto:krjanken@email.unc.edu) or **Patrick Horn**, Associate Director, at 919-962-0553.

Due to the HBTSA towns' connections to Booker T. Washington, the theme of the UNC Southern Historical Collection project is: *What Makes Your Town Go? Trades, Skills, and Self-determination*. We are seeking to scan relevant materials such as diplomas, certificates, photographs, letters, sermons, etc. In addition, we would also record mini-oral histories from willing participants. The summer work will be held concurrently with each town's flagship events in 2016 for optimal participation. Furthermore, this project is an opportunity for citizens to engage in the historical research transpiring in their locales. We are also partnering with the Southern Historical Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill to provide on-site facilitation and post-event access to the digital content. This project represents four integral elements to the success of HBTSA: maintaining momentum for historic preservation, insuring evidence from any accidental damage, demonstrating a willingness to collaborate, and developing digital content for on-going promotion.

#### 1. Hobson City, Alabama - Town founders genealogy

Hobson City was chartered in 1899, using the signatures of forty nine registered Black male voters. The town has the names of all of these incorporators. The town was named in honor of Admiral Richmond Pearson Hobson (1870-1937) of Greensboro, Hale County, Alabama. Black descendants of former slaves of the Hobson family have agreed to provide oral and personal documents history to outline their relationships to the Hobson family. Dr. Michelle Robinson (University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa) and her students have begun to research this, and the cemetery roster, Hobson City's history. Results of their research will be available to advance the findings during the summer.

Most of the town records have been lost, so there is not much information on most of the original incorporators. Some descendants of the original incorporators still reside in Hobson City. Oral history, church records research, deed and detailed census research will play an important role in this phase of the project. The town needs genealogical research on all of the incorporators in order to reconstruct its human and physical history and prepare programs and exhibits for education and cultural tourism. The second step in this process will be to cross reference the roster and genealogy of those buried in the cemetery with the list of incorporators and the Greensboro, Alabama families. One of the town residents has compiled a roster of graves in the Hobson City cemetery. Some of the town incorporators are buried in the cemetery. The cross-reference step could be done at a later date.

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2. Eatonville, Florida - Town founders genealogy  
Eatonville was chartered in 1887, using the signatures of twenty seven registered Black male voters. The town has the names of all of these incorporators. Many of these pioneers remained in the town and played major roles in its evolution and very difficult struggle for survival. Most of the town records have been lost, so there is not much information on most of the original incorporators. Some descendants of the original incorporators still reside in Eatonville. Oral history, church records, and detailed census research will play an important role in this phase of the project. The town needs genealogical research on all of the incorporators in order to reconstruct its human and physical history and prepare programs and exhibits for education and cultural tourism. Some descendants of the town incorporators are buried in the Eatonville cemetery.
3. Tuskegee, Alabama - Veterans Hospital  
The Tuskegee Veterans hospital was created in 1923, for the treatment of Negro military veterans. The federal site selection process included evaluation of Hobson City, Alabama, another all-Black incorporated town. There was great opposition in Tuskegee, and throughout Alabama, to the hospital being staffed by Negroes. Opposition protest included some violence, and marches by the Ku Klux Klan. Thorough research of the planning, implementation and service (patient volume, geographic origins of patients, etc.) history for the hospital is required in order to prepare a nomination for National Historic Site status.
4. Grambling, Louisiana - Town founders genealogy  
Grambling, Lincoln Parish, Louisiana was settled circa 1865. Many of the town records have not been inventoried. Some descendants of the original incorporators still reside in Grambling. Oral history, church records, and detailed census research will play an important role in this phase of the project. The town needs genealogical research on all of the incorporators in order to reconstruct its human and physical history and prepare programs and exhibits for education and cultural tourism. Some descendants of the town incorporators are buried in the Grambling cemetery.
5. Princeville, NC (estab. c. 1885); Navassa, NC (estab. c.1856); East Spencer, NC (estab. c. 1899); Tillery Settlement, NC (estab. c. 1935) - separate town founders genealogy for each community  
Many of the town records have been lost, so there is not much information on most of the original incorporators. Some descendants of the original incorporators still reside in the communities. Oral history, church records research, deed and detailed census research will play an important role in this phase of the project. The town needs genealogical research on all of the incorporators in order to reconstruct its human and physical history and prepare programs and exhibits for education and cultural tourism. The second step in this process will be to cross reference the roster and genealogy of those buried in the cemetery with the list of incorporators. The cross-reference step could be done at a later date.

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6. San Antonio, TX/Castroville, TX - Black settlement common genealogy  
Castroville, Medina County, Texas is known as the "little Alsace" of Texas, and is located on the Medina River and U.S. Highway 90 twenty-five miles west of San Antonio. The town was named for founder, Henri Castro, with whom the Republic of Texas negotiated an emprisario contract on January 15, 1842. Mr. Castro He arranged transport for mostly Catholic Alsatian (German speaking regions of France) farmers to the Texas coast, from where the colonists were escorted overland to San Antonio. Between the physical settlement in 1844 and the close of the Civil War, in 1865, Black slaves were brought into the region. The Black freedmen began to purchase land and establish schools, churches and cemeteries. Some Blacks reportedly learned to speak Alsatian. The origins and evolution of these Black settlements in Medina County, and their relationships to neighboring San Antonio and Bexar County has never been carefully researched and documented. The researcher assigned to this project will work with Dr. Carey Latimore and students from Trinity University (San Antonio) and local historical organizations in Castroville and Medina County to begin a database for the Black settlements.