

## Constructing Historical Narrative and Preserving Black Culture in Grambling, Louisiana

Grambling has been designated by the Historic Black Towns and Settlements Alliance as an early and longstanding African American community of significance.

Established in 1875 (only a decade after the Civil War ended), Grambling became the first all-black municipality in Louisiana to be officially incorporated in 1953.

City leaders have launched an effort to have Grambling authorized as a Certified Local Government with the power to create an Historic Preservation District and protect irreplaceable landmark properties from destruction and excessive modification.



### KEY THEMES

- Importance of historical narrative in establishing the cultural "value" of property
- Complexities of verifying and assembling such a cohesive narrative in historically and continuously marginalized communities
- Crucial role of churches as functioning municipal structures in historically Black communities prior to incorporation

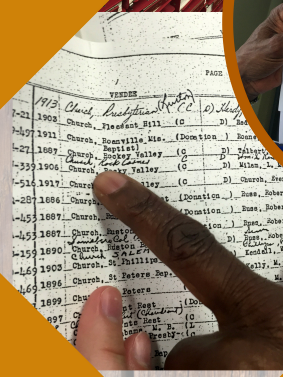


Land Provenance Research at the Lincoln Parish Clerk of Court's Office



New Rocky Valley Baptist Church, est. 1876

Adjacent to New Rocky Valley Baptist Church, a cemetery has been falling slowly into disrepair. Maintained over many decades by an alliance of local churches of various denominations, the cemetery contains the graves of many prominent Grambling leaders (including Grambling State University Founding President Charles P. Adams). The research that I conducted over the summer alongside Ms. Phyllis Miller, Special Properties Coordinator for the City of Grambling, surveys the headstones and details the chain of land purchases which led to designation of the property as an African American cemetery.



Due to a dearth of early community records and the marginalization of Black culture in historical accounts of the larger Lincoln Parish area, the history of landmark properties in Grambling must be assembled into a coherent and compelling (by State Historic Preservation Offices standards) narrative through extensive research that traces bills of property sale.

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