



PRESS RELEASE

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Institute of Museum and Library Services Funds N.C. African American Heritage Commission Project to Research Shipwreck of 18th Century Slave Trading Vessel

RALEIGH, N.C. – The North Carolina African American Heritage Commission has received a \$33,558 federal grant from the national Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for its project "A Tale of Two Ships: Developing a Research & Interpretation Plan for Revealing Hidden Histories of One Ship with Two Identities." The project will develop a collections research and interpretation plan focused on uncovering the still-hidden histories of the North Carolina shipwreck (31CR314) of an early 18th century slave trading vessel.

In March 1717, the slave ship, *La Concorde*, departed Nantes, France for its voyage to Africa and the New World. In November 1717 near the end of the Middle Passage, it was captured by the notorious pirate Blackbeard off the shores of Martinique and renamed *Queen Anne's Revenge*, becoming the flagship of Blackbeard's pirate flotilla. When the ship was taken, some of the crew and captive Africans went with the pirates (some voluntarily, some forced), and others returned to Martinique. French crew members that eventually found their way back to Nantes included the captain and his second in command. From their depositions, which are still in the archives in France, researchers learned this tale of one ship that had two names and two very different identities – a slave ship and a pirate ship.

Much of the research conducted over the past 20 years has focused on the ship's fleeting history as a pirate vessel and its infamous captain, Blackbeard. From preliminary archival research, it is known that the ship sailed as *La Concorde* between 1713 and 1717, and made three voyages from France, to Africa, the Caribbean and back to France, trafficking thousands of African men, women and children as part of the transatlantic slave trade. *La Concorde's* history was longer and had much more devastating consequences than her passing role as a pirate ship. Yet little research, or its interpretation and presentation at museums and historic sites, has focused on the ship's role from a period of history that had such lasting repercussions.

Presently, *La Concorde/Queen Anne's Revenge* is the only early 18th century slave/pirate ship in the U.S. being fully excavated, conserved, researched and curated by professional archaeologists, conservators, historians and curators.

Funding for "A Tale of Two Ships" will enable archaeological, archival and historical research of the ship. The project will also create a comprehensive interpretive plan and educational framework to shape improved interpretation of the African American experience in North Carolina. Grant funds will also be used to hire a graduate student from a historically black college or university (HBCU).

Michelle Lanier, project director, says, “We are so honored to receive support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services for this extraordinary project! Our hope is that our research will further illuminate, for learners of all ages, one of North Carolina’s African diaspora stories through this harrowing yet significant story of the transatlantic slave trade.”

For information about the project, contact Sylvia West at (919) 807-6516.

About the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

The N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNCR) is the state agency with a vision to be the leader in using the state's natural and cultural resources to build the social, cultural, educational and economic future of North Carolina. NCDNCR's mission is to improve the quality of life in our state by creating opportunities to experience excellence in the arts, history, libraries and nature in North Carolina by stimulating learning, inspiring creativity, preserving the state's history, conserving the state's natural heritage, encouraging recreation and cultural tourism, and promoting economic development.

NCDNCR includes 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, two science museums, three aquariums and Jennette's Pier, 39 state parks and recreation areas, the N.C. Zoo, the nation's first state-supported Symphony Orchestra, the State Library, the State Archives, the N.C. Arts Council, State Preservation Office and the Office of State Archaeology, along with the Division of Land and Water Stewardship. For more information, please call (919) 807-7300 or visit www.ncdcr.gov.

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