

Report for Meeting of the North Carolina Historical Commission, Fall 2021

Prepared by Angela M. Thorpe, Director, NC African American Heritage Commission

ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

- Former Assistant Secretary Tracey Burns was appointed to the role of Deputy Secretary for Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion. The AAHC now falls under her purview.
- Kimberly "Kyma" Lassiter was formally promoted to the role of Program Coordinator within the AAHC. We look forward to the work that she will do to grow arts engagement and community outreach for the division.

COMMISSIONER APPOINTMENTS

1. Lisa Matthews (Cabarrus County)
2. Tanzy B. Wallace (Cleveland County)

FISCAL, LEGISLATIVE, & ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

The 2021-2023 state budget includes items for the NCAAHC:

1. \$135,000 in recurring operational funding. The first set of state-appropriated operational dollars in the NCAAHC's history.
2. One full-time staff position, an Education and Interpretation Specialist.

These items signal another turning point for the NCAAHC, and yet another opportunity for the Commission to grow and evolve. This is also an opportunity to re-ground in what the NCAAHC is and does.

The NCAAHC holds as its mission to preserve, promote, and protect North Carolina's African American history, arts, and culture for all people. Its vision is to cultivate and maintain sustainable statewide African American culture work by building meaningful connections between African American heritage practitioners, artists, institutions, and resources.

The NCAAHC executes this work in three primary ways:

1. Providing resources, programs, and experiences for statewide audiences centered on African American history, arts, and culture.
2. Providing heritage-based technical assistance across the N.C. Department of Natural & Cultural Resources, and to constituents.
3. Providing resources, trainings, and other professional development opportunities to priority stakeholder groups.

2021-2022 NCAAHC Strategic Plan Goals:

1. Identify funding for SWOT Analysis of grassroots practitioners in North Carolina.
2. Expand NCAAHC's connection to education: collaborate with DNCR Education, DPI, and other relevant stakeholders to develop a strategy for connecting NCAAHC to public schools.
3. Create repository of technical assistance resources for constituents on NCAAHC website.

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4. Develop digital space on NCAAHC 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 NCAAHC's work.

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; to date, two have been installed:

1. New Ahoskie Baptist Church (New Ahoskie Baptist Church and Chowan Discovery Group)—Installed August 2021
2. 1951 Adkin High School Walkouts (Adkin High School Alumni and Friends, Inc.)—Installed November 2021
3. Shelby Sit-Ins (City of Shelby)

A second round of marker applications were accepted in October 2021. Sixteen applications were shared with the NC Civil Rights Trail Advisory Committee for review. The committee will select successful marker recipients in early December 2021. These applicants will receive their formal notice of an awarded marker by the end of December 2021.

An upgraded NC Civil Rights Trail [website and digital map](#) was completed in September 2021, as well.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE NETWORK TO FREEDOM GRANTS

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. Currently this work is being led by NCAAHC Trails Coordinator (contract), Ashley Adams, with support from NCAAHC Arts & Outreach Coordinator, Kyma Lassiter.

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM & LIBRARY SERVICES GRANTS

“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 has developed robust drafts of an introductory exhibit centering on the relationship between the Transatlantic Slave Trade and North Carolina. The exhibit underwent a thorough, stakeholder-centered review process in the Summer and Fall of 2021. It is currently undergoing an editing process and will receive final review by the North Carolina Historic Sites Exhibit Coordinating Committee in January 2022.

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 the Spring of 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, joined the project team to build the web portal 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.

Due to pandemic-imposed travel restrictions, the project team pushed overseas travel to early 2023. In the meantime, and in alignment with the grant award, the project team is collaborating with the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* Conservation Lab to plan the third annual *LaC/QAR* research convening in February 2022.

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.

NORTH CAROLINA HUMANITIES AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN FUNDING (Awarded September 2021)

This award funds “Growing Our Griots: Strengthening North Carolina’s Black Heritage-Keepers” in alignment with the NCAAHC Strategic Plan and as a follow up grant to an NC CARES: Humanities Relief Grant the NCAAHC received last year. “Growing Our Griots” will provide a multi-part virtual professional development series to African American heritage practitioners in 2022. The series will cover these topics:

- Fundraising 101 for African American Heritage Institutions
- Grant Writing Basics: Crafting and Completing Grant Applications, Letters of Intent, and Funding Proposals
- Marketing & Digital Engagement 101 for Small Institutions & Groups
- Beginner’s Guide to African American Cemetery Preservation
- Emergency Preparedness for African American Cultural Spaces
- Preserving Historic African American Properties in NC: Pt. 1—State Resources; Pt. 2—Local Resources
- NC Heritage Practitioner Roundtable

The project will also create technical leaflets centered on common heritage-based technical assistance questions and concerns. The leaflets, detailed below, will be made available online via the NCAAHC's website in the Summer of 2022:

- How do I secure funding?
- How do I start a museum?
- How do I save my historic property?
- What do I do with this thing? Preserving artifacts and archival materials.
- How do I physically commemorate important history?
- How do I get started with preserving an African American cemetery?
- How do I find my family history?