

HBCU ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT (FY 2006)

Title of Project: *Historical and Archival Research of Early African American Resources on the Wayne National Forest*

Unit: *Wayne National Forest*

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Project Overview/Background: For the last twelve years, the Wayne National Forest has been studying and preserving the vestiges of early African American history it harbors on its Lands in southeastern Ohio. The work grew out of public demand and has been largely accomplished by various partnerships, most notably the colleges within the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Comprehensive Program (HBCU). Research has focused on the early nineteenth century African American settlements now on Forest Lands - Paynes Crossing on the Athens Ranger District, and Pokepatch on the Ironton Ranger District.



The massive collection of data on Paynes Crossing and Pokepatch has created a constant need to develop innovative techniques to organize this data. The students have been an integral part of both collecting and organizing this data, by gleaning pertinent information from libraries and courthouses in the region and entering it into databases and a Forest web site.

Through a Participating Agreement with Ohio University's Department of African American Studies (OU) and the Multicultural Genealogical Center (MGC), records pertaining to the two Forest sites and the African American and Underground Railroad history of southeastern Ohio are being organized. MGC is a diverse rural community whose members have been conducting their family research for years. They not only have knowledge about this history, but they also hold a vast collection of primary source documents. Their research has a bearing on the story of Paynes Crossing.



The inventory and organization of pertinent portions of their records will enhance our knowledge of the history of Paynes Crossing and Pokepatch and their involvement in the Underground Railroad Movement. OU is overseeing the work and is providing college students to perform the bulk of the research and archival tasks

FY2006 Accomplishments: Last winter (2005 - 2006), Ohio University held a series of three workshops to train students and MGC community members how to conduct effective academic oral history interviews. Between 14 and 28 people participated in these sessions. This past summer (July through September), OU and the trainees traveled to nine African American family reunions of Paynes Crossing and Pokepatch descendants. They also attended the Emancipation Day Celebration in Gallipolis, Ohio which claims to be the oldest continuous such celebration in the country. It has been held here every year since the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in September of 1863. They conducted a total of 58 oral history interviews that are currently being reproduced and transcribed.



This past spring and summer (2006) five OU students were hired to continue the painstaking inventory of the Forest's and relevant MGC archival collections. Hundreds of historic documents were digitized and some of the data was entered into a searchable database. The information includes cemetery records, property deeds, land abstracts, obituaries, and birth, death, and marriage records. In addition, the students conducted further research of Gallia County land records pertaining to Pokepatch and digitized many documents within the Wilbur Siebert collection. Siebert was a 19th century professor at Ohio State University who collected a wealth of information on the Underground. Most of his research involved

interviewing former slaves or slave descendants. His work is the earliest definitive research of its kind and contains invaluable information on the movement in this region.

The Underground Railroad research that the students have participated in not only benefits the Forest Heritage Resource Program but has also enhanced the academic program at Ohio University's Department of African American Studies. The work fits perfectly with their current research initiative that focuses on the African American Experience in the Ohio River Valley. This project is designed to encourage and provide educational opportunities for students not traditionally included, or involved in Forest Service programs. The diversity of heritage resources activities on the Wayne National Forest offers excellent opportunities to provide students with exciting work and research experience while interjecting new ideas and insights into Heritage Resource Management from those with non-traditional Forest Service backgrounds. This employment opportunity has provided the students with unique on-the-job training that should challenge them in their field of study. The students have learned about significant cultural properties and associated histories, specifically the Pokepatch and Paynes Crossing communities and the Underground Railroad movement in southeastern Ohio. This research program has not only offered minority students educational opportunities and class credit while earning a salary,





but has provided experience to those seeking a career with the Forest Service. It also exposes urban students to rural African American culture and history.

Another major goal of this project is to expand the dissemination of African American historical information to the public and researchers. As information is collected and organized, it will be placed in archival repositories maintained by project partners.

Over the years, the work that the HBCU Program has contributed to the study of the Wayne National Forest's early African American resources has helped establish it as a historic preservation leader. The work has reached out to our under-served publics in countless ways, has resulted in many new partnerships, and made a lasting contribution to a relatively untold story of American history.

**REPORT SUBMITTED BY OHIO UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES
(Déanda Johnson)**

FY2006 Accomplishments for Wayne National Forest

Project Goals:

The purpose of the project is to research the African American presence of two communities, Poke Patch and Payne's Crossing, that now reside on Wayne National Forest lands.

Under the terms of the agreement, Ohio University's Department of African American Studies was to complete the following deliverables by September 2006:

1. Train interviewers through three oral history workshops.
2. IRB review and approval
3. Enter collected data into a searchable database.
4. Conduct interviews
5. Reproduction of video/tape recordings and transcription of interviews

Project Activities:

In fulfillment of the deliverables above, the Department of African American Studies in conjunction with the Multicultural Genealogical Center engaged in the activities outlined below.

1. Trained interviewers through three oral history workshops.

Workshop 1 (December 10, 2005)
Topic: Informed Consent and Background Research
Workshop Leader: Dr. Joan Weston
Attendance: 14

Workshop 2 (January 28, 2006)
Topic: The Interview Process
Workshop Leader: Déanda Johnson
Attendance: 28

Workshop 3 (February 25, 2006)
Topic: Videotaping the Oral History Interview
Workshop Leader: Professor Rick Shriver
Attendance: 15

As agreed upon, workshop agendas, attendance rosters, and participants' evaluations were sent to Ann Cramer.

2. Obtained IRB approval April 2006.

3. Entered collected data into a searchable database.

- Creation of Database:

For the project a Microsoft Access database was created. Eventually this will be a searchable relational database allowing for the easy retrieval of project data. The database contains separate tables for the different types of data that was collected (i.e. cemetery records, property deeds, land abstracts, obituaries, birth records, death records, marriage records, census etc.) Each entry contains a unique identification based on the location from Summer 2005 Report. The names of the individuals associated with each entry will be used to build the relational database.

- Data Entry and Collection

This summer four students were hired to collect and enter data:

Erica Allen, Graduate Student, School of Interdisciplinary Arts

Erica Butcher, Graduate Student, Telecommunications

Adele M-Da Graduate Student, Telecommunications

Anthony Mayle Graduate Student, School of Education

James Stennies, Undergraduate

Data entry focused on the collections surveyed during Summer 2005 and included both MGC and Wayne National Forest Collections. It is the goal of the project to impute the data from the collections as it relates to the families of Poke Patch and Payne's Crossing into the database.

Data entry of these collections revealed that much of the data contained in these collections lacked provenance, was incomplete, or needed verification. In order to be able to cross-reference the data, we began collecting new data or recollecting data to make sure that the data entered into the database was as complete and correct as possible. The collection of new data included obtaining digitized copies of the actual land deeds, census data, and the Wilbur Siebert Papers.

- MGC Collection

The MGC collection includes the Alvin and Ada Adams Collection and contains the Bernard Mayhle Collection (BMC), the Chesterhill Friends Meeting House Collection and the Chesterhill Library Collection.

This summer data entry of the MGC collection focused on the Bernard Mahyle Collection (BMC) and the Alvin and Ada Adams Collection (AAA). From these two collections the cemetery records, obituaries, death records, marriage records, birth records, and AAA Book Collection were entered into a project database. In

order to preserve the integrity of the database, only information that had corroborated provenance was entered. It is believed that approximately 30-40% of MGC Collection was entered into the database.

Data Entered	Entries (#)
Cemetery Records	1390
Obituaries (AAA)	44
Obituaries (BMC)	331
Death Records	46
Marriage Records	32
Birth Records	47
Book Collection (AAA)	25

- Wayne National Forest Collection

Using the survey done on the collection from Summer 2005, birth records, cemetery records, death records, land records, and land abstracts were isolated and input into a project database.

It also became clear that since this project emerged because of the discovery of the Poke Patch and Payne’s Crossing on Wayne National Forest lands, an understanding of the land, especially land ownership, was crucial. This would not only help to establish the geography of the communities, but would also help to identify those people who resided in these communities and give a picture of both space and time.

- Gallia County Land Records

In order to begin understanding the land, we began with Gallia County, particularly Greenfield Twp., which seemed to be the main area that the community of Poke Patch occupied. This summer approximately 300 land records from Gallia County were digitized. We were also able to obtain microfilm of deeds we did not have time to digitize with the understanding that we would give digitized copies of the deeds to Gallia County.

Various methods were used to isolate those land deeds that dealt with Poke Patch. These methods included:

1. Accessing indexed list of Gallia County land records compiled from previous years of research. However, there were limitations to the usefulness of these lists. Some entries were incomplete or did not correspond to the actual deed books.
2. Collecting deeds based on known surnames of those who resided in Poke Patch. Surnames were compiled from previous research and census records. However, because we were not able to access complete census record to after we

started collecting land deeds and relied on recognizable surnames that may or may not relate to the Poke Patch, it is necessary to go back through the deeds and verify that they actually do bear a relationship.

In addition to verifying the records that were collected to complete Poke Patch, it is also necessary that we also look at land deeds from Lawrence and Jackson counties. For Payne's Crossing, we need to look at the land deeds for Perry and surrounding counties.

- Census Records

As mentioned above, in order to grasp the population of Poke Patch and also to be able to cross-reference the land records collected from Gallia County, census data was crucial. This summer the census data from 1840-1860 for Gallia County, Greenfield Twp., was collected and input into the database. This should be done for all the counties that make up Poke Patch and Payne's Crossing. Knowing the names of the inhabitants will facilitate further data collection and genealogy. The collection of census data will also be necessary for the remaining counties that are related to the project areas.

- Wilbur Siebert Papers

Another valuable source of information on Poke Patch and Payne's Crossing are the Wilbur Siebert Papers. Alden Library at Ohio University has the collection available on microform. Wilbur Siebert was responsible for collecting much of the early history about the Underground Railroad. The information he collected resulted in the publication of two books, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (1898) and *The Mysteries of Ohio's Underground Railroads* (1951). His papers include the correspondence, questionnaires, interviews, etc. he collected about those involved in Underground Railroad activity. The papers are organized according to state and county. Those papers related to Ohio are on three reels of microform (reels 10-12).

This summer the papers in the collection that pertained to areas associated with Poke Patch and Payne's Crossing were digitized in a pdf format. The student responsible for digitizing the papers, began by digitizing those papers that dealt with the counties in which Poke Patch and Payne's Crossing reside and surrounding counties. For Poke Patch, these counties included Gallia, Lawrence, and Jackson Counties. For Payne's Crossing, these counties included Perry, Muskingum, Athens, and Morgan. After completing this layer of data collection, the student then digitized those counties that from the papers seemed to have some connection with Poke Patch and Payne's Crossing (Please see the table below). This usually meant that they were on the same Underground Railroad routes. The papers still need to be analyzed to see the direct connection between the information contained in the papers and the two communities being

researched. After which, the pertinent information needs to be input into a database table.

Payne's Crossing	Pokepatch
Athens County	Belmont County
Franklin County	Gallia County
Guernsey County	Harrison County
Hocking County	Jackson County
Morgan County	Lawrence County
Muskingum County	Meigs County
Perry County	Pike County
Washington County	Ross County
Monroe County	Vinton County
Jefferson County	

Digitized Records from Wilbur Siebert Collection		
County	Reel	Frame
Franklin	10	0001 - 0033
Gallia	10	0032 – 0066
Lawrence & Gallia	10	0068 – 0075
Guernsey	10	0112-0121
Jefferson	10	0550-0551
Harrison	10	0714-0735
Harrison & Jefferson	10	0736-0738
Harrison	10	0739-0740
Harrison & Logan	10	0741-0742
Harrison	10	0743-0764 (0762 Harr/Bel)
Ross	10	0790-0794
Jefferson	10	0817-0903
Pike	11	0061-0073
Meigs	11	0126-0130
Morgan	11	0148-0166
Washington	11	0167-0321
Muskingum	11	0535 – 0598 (*0552 Bad)
Perry	11	0599 – 0601
Ross	11	0611-0614
Monroe	11	1207-1294
Belmont	12	0621 – 0632
Muskingum	12	0665 – 0675
Washington	12	0682 – 0693 (*0682 bad)

Belmont	12	0702 – 0707
Franklin	12	0890 – 0938
Gallia	12	0939 - 0944
Harrison	12	0617-0618
Morgan	12	0661-0664
Guernsey	12	0948-0962
Harrison	12	1004-1009
Perry	12	1013-1113
Jefferson	12	1028-1033
Lawrene	12	1038-1039
Meigs	12	1071-1079
Monroe	12	1080-1080
Morgan	12	1081-1083
Muskingum	12	1088-1097
Muskingum	12	1098-1112
Franklin	12	1114-1124
Washington	12	1156-1170

4. Conducted Oral History Interviews

Oral History Interviews were conducted with descendants of those families that resided in Poke Patch and Payne’s Crossing. Family Reunions were used as moments to collect the oral histories. In order to accomplish this, we hired four undergraduate students from the School of Telecommunications and four graduate students from the School of Film as part of the film production team for collecting oral history interviews. From July to August we attended nine family reunions. In addition, we also attended Emancipation Day in Gallia County. A total of 58 people were interviewed. While limited historical memory resides about the families’ lives in Poke Patch or Payne’s Crossing, the interviews will prove very useful in discovering what happened to these families after they left the communities in question.

Event	Date(s)	Interviews (#)
Lett Settlement Families Reunion	July 14-16, 2006	13
Hawkins-Hooper Family Reunion	August 12, 2006	6
Steven’s Family Reunion	August 12-13, 2006	11
Smith Families Reunion	August 19, 2006	3
Barnett Ridge Reunion	August 19, 2006	2
Rainbow Reunion	August 20, 2006	4
Henry Burke Interview	August 25, 2006	1
Needham Family Reunion	August 26, 2006	10

Tabler Families Reunion	August 27, 2006	0
Chandler Family Reunion	September 3, 2006	6
Emancipation Day	September 17-18, 2006	2

5. Reproduction of video/tape recordings and transcription of interviews

So far we have reproduced 12 of the interviews we completed this summer. This is a time consuming task because the interviews have to be transferred from mini DV tape to DVD in real time. This slows down the entire process of transcription, editing, and making the interviews available to interviewees and project participants.

Planned Future Activities:

- Clean up the database and digitized records.
- Make sure that all partners have digitized copies of all source documents used to compile the database.
- Continue collecting census data for the counties of Poke Patch and Payne's Crossing.
- Continue collecting land deeds for counties of Poke Patch and Payne's Crossing.
- Digitize microfilm of Gallia County land deeds.
- Send out oral history interviews to interviewees.
- Reproduce and transcribe the oral history interviews.
- Conduct more oral history interviews.