

Final Report
from the
Junaluska Heritage Association
to the
Human Hurt and Hope Fund
Episcopal Diocese

of Western North Carolina

February 4, 2015

Ms. Ellen Clark, Chair

Human Hurt and Hope Fund Committee

Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina

900B Centre Park Drive

Asheville, NC 28805

February 4, 2015

Dear Ms. Clark:

As we come to the end of the three-year, outstandingly productive partnership between the Junaluska Heritage Association (JHA) and the Human Hurt and Hope Fund, we would like to express our deepest thanks to the Fund and the Diocese for their valued support. We are also grateful for the ongoing help of The Rev. Cyndi Banks and members of the congregation of St. Luke's Episcopal Church of Boone for their gracious support and assistance.

Boone's Junaluska neighborhood is one of Western North Carolina's oldest continuously occupied African-American communities, but one of its least known. Located near downtown Boone and anchored by the nearly 100-year-old Boone Mennonite Brethren Church, Junaluska is believed to have originated during the mid-to-late 1800s.

The Junaluska Heritage Association (JHA), a community-based organization, was formed in February 2011 to help preserve Junaluska's rapidly vanishing cultural heritage and to assist in preserving and growing the community itself. With the help of the Human Hurt and Hope Fund, JHA has made substantial progress in raising awareness of Junaluska and its long history, both in our home area and also far beyond. Current members of the JHA are Roberta Jackson, facilitator,

Dr. Maggie McFadden, member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Diane Blanks, Dr. Sue Keefe, Dr. Andrea Burns, Sandra Hagler, Pastor Mike Mathes of the Boone Mennonite Brethren Church and Dr. Kristen Baldwin Deathridge.

Junaluska was settled by fifteen original families. Extensive family histories of six of those families have been compiled through JHA's Junaluska History Project and more are in process, with transcription costs covered by JHA. In addition, an oral history project concerning Junaluska has been conducted by Dr. Sue Keefe, of the Appalachian State University Department of Anthropology, with publication of these interviews expected in the coming year.

Members of the Junaluska community, along with members of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, participated in two day-long workshops on race, racism, and community building in September 2012 (at the Mennonite Brethren Church) and September 2014 (at ASU's Belk Library). These workshops were led by the Rev. Jim Abbott and others from the Asheville area. In between these two sessions, there were also half-day workshops for the two separate communities. St. Luke's and Rev. Cyndi Banks began a "Social Justice Training Group" that used these sessions as part of their bi-weekly meetings during 2013-14.

JHA has a Web site in progress (junaluskahistory.org), has established a graphic identity for the Junaluska Heritage Association, has compiled a fact sheet on the history of the neighborhood, developed a traveling photo display for public information and created both business cards and letterhead for the organization.

Residents of the Junaluska community jointly created a community quilt, with individual blocks commemorating memorable events in the lives of residents. This beautiful and meaningful quilt now hangs in the Boone Mennonite Brethren Church, in the heart of the community.

A large banner with a brief history of Junaluska and photographs of many residents from days gone by now hangs on permanent display in the Watauga County Library. The library has also provided a permanent JHA file drawer where we are compiling information about the community and our organization to be available to the public.

In March, 2013, the Junaluska Heritage Association was part of the program of the Appalachian Studies Association annual conference at Appalachian State University in Boone. The title of the panel presentation was: "The Junaluska Heritage Association: A Black Appalachian Community Studies Its History." Panel participants included: Dr. Susan Keefe (moderator) of the ASU Department of Anthropology and Junaluska residents Lynn Patterson, Roberta Jackson, Carolyn Grimes and Sandra Hagler.

With financial assistance from the Human Hurt and Hope Fund and other friends, we have held three community-wide Junaluska Jubilees--celebrations of Junaluska and some of its historic

leaders. The Jubilees included entertainment and a group "come-one-come-all" meal. More than 100 people have attended each event. The Jubilees also fall in line with "Juneteenth" celebrations by African-American communities across the country. Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States. The Junaluska Jubilees and the historic black community leaders they salute have been featured in the local media, which has also helped to raise awareness of Junaluska and the work of the Junaluska Heritage Association. We look forward to the Jubilee as an ongoing project.

Junaluska has also participated twice in the popular and well-attended Boone Heritage Day event, held on a yearly basis in September.

The community was featured in a documentary entitled *The African American Experience in the High Country*, which aired on Skybest TV and was also, in November 2014, one of the official screenings in the Eighth Annual Alexandria (VA) Film Festival. The festival presents a diverse and imaginative array of feature films, documentaries, and shorts by U.S. and foreign filmmakers.

A 16-minute DVD presentation on the Junaluska neighborhood and its history was created by Aaron Pardue, a graduate student in Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University. A copy of the program was presented to JHA for use in public information and civic club presentations.

We are also working, in conjunction with the Boone Historic Preservation Commission and other interested friends, to save and preserve the old Jordan Councill Cemetery, an almost-forgotten historic black cemetery in the center of the town of Boone. The cemetery includes early graves of slaves and three Civil War graves, along with an estimated 75+ early Junaluska community residents. Research is ongoing concerning the cemetery and its graves. As the majority of the graves are unmarked, we hope, in the future, to raise funding for a bronze group marker which will feature the names of all known individuals buried there.

In 2014:

- In January, the Junaluska Heritage Association purchased and donated three books on African-American genealogy research to the Watauga County Public Library and the Belk Library at Appalachian State University.

Both libraries received copies of James Roses' "Black Genesis: A Resource Book for

African American Genealogy" and "Black Genealogy" by Charles L. Blockson.

In addition, the Watauga Public Library received a copy of "Finding Your African American Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide" by David T. Thackery, and Belk Library received "Slave Genealogy: A Research Guide with Case Studies." JHA also purchased copies of the books to be included in its own collection. The association is in the process of establishing its own library in the basement of the Boone Mennonite Brethren Church.

- Junaluska and the Junaluska Heritage Association were the topics of a feature article in WNC Magazine's January-February 2014 edition.
- Membership in the Watauga County Historical Society for Roberta Jackson, facilitator of the Junaluska Heritage Association, was underwritten by JHA.
- In recognition of February as Black History Month and of the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Legislation, JHA co-sponsored an authors' reading and book signing with the Friends of the Watauga County Library. The event was held at Appalachian State University's Belk Library on February 8, 2014. This event reminded residents of Boone and its environs that Watauga County has always had, from its very beginning, black residents.
- Dr. Tom Whyte, of the Appalachian State University's Department of Anthropology, made three separate presentations in 2014 concerning his research, including ground penetrating radar studies, on the old Jordan Councill Cemetery. Two presentations were made at the Boone Mennonite Brethren Church for members of the community and interested friends of Junaluska and one presentation was made to the Boone Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission subsequently instructed the Boone Town Manager to call a meeting of all parties with interest in the cemetery to determine its future and hopefully ensure its preservation. This meeting is scheduled for February 10, 2015.
- On March 26, Roberta Jackson, facilitator of the Junaluska Heritage Association, and her

daughter Lynn Patterson made a presentation to the Boone Kiwanis Club about Junaluska and its history.

- On April 21, members of the Junaluska Heritage Association participated in Tea and Talk at the Jones House in Boone. This event, an effort to capture memories of Boone in the 1930's, was jointly sponsored by the Boone Historic Preservation Commission and the Boone Cultural Resources Board.
- The Third Annual Junaluska Jubilee was held on June 28, 2014, with a packed audience present in the Boone Mennonite Brethren Church.
- On December 10, 2014, an exhibit about the Junaluska community compiled by students in Dr. Andrea Burns' Introduction to Public History Class was unveiled in ASU's Belk Library. The exhibit, entitled "Finding Junaluska: Exploring Boone's African American Heritage," will be on display in the library through April 2015.
- Online 'exhibits' on various areas of Junaluska have also been created and are permanently available through www.historypin.org. These were completed during both Dr. Kristen Deathridge's Digital History class last year, and Dr. Burns' Intro to Public History class in Fall 2014. They are part of the official ASU Belk Library channel on historypin, available at: <https://www.historypin.org/channels/view/53518/#!/photos/list/>

All of the above initiatives are raising the visibility of Junaluska in our home area, strengthening community life and cultural identity and informing people of our long history here. We could never have been this productive as such a young organization without the grant funding we received from the Human Hurt and Hope Fund. Again: Our deepest gratitude for your valued support over the past three years.

Sincerely,

Roberta Jackson

Roberta Jackson

Facilitator

and the Members of the Junaluska Heritage Association

c: The Rev. Cyndi Banks, St. Luke's Episcopal Church; Episcopal Diocese of
Western North Carolina