



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MEDIA CONTACT
Emily Morris | (512) 463-6485
Emily.Morris@TheStoryOfTexas.com

Bullock Museum's Texas Story Project highlights Texas freedom colonies with story and short documentary

FEBRUARY 5, 2020 (AUSTIN, TX) — The Bullock Texas State History Museum released this week a new addition to its Texas Story Project with an accompanying short documentary highlighting the Dabney Hill freedom colony and its historic church. *Discovering My Roots Down Home* was contributed by Gloria Lawsha Smith, whose discovery that her ancestor was a member of a freedom colony inspired her to document the stories of other freedom colony descendants.

"The story of the free women and men who founded the community of Dabney Hill and their descendants is one of inspiration and resilience," said Bullock Museum Director Margaret Koch. "Like so many freedom colony histories, it has been hidden from mainstream accounts of a collective understanding of our past, one that includes the amazing effort needed to create and sustain a safe and healthy community."

Following the Civil War, formerly enslaved African Americans created their own separate, self-sufficient communities. Freedom colonies offered African Americans a place to live, worship, and get an education away from the violence and discrimination they faced in the Jim Crow South. To date, more than 550 settlements have been identified, including Dabney Hill, located in Burleson County, Texas.

In *Discovering My Roots Down Home*, Fort Worth-raised Smith highlights memories of childhood friends who shared stories from visits "down home" to rural communities dating back to the post-Civil War era. In 2016, Smith uncovered her own ties to these communities with the discovery of her relation to George Duffy, who purchased land in the Tunis freedom colony in 1882.



The 115-year-old Dabney Hill Missionary Baptist Church in Burleson County, Texas.

The short documentary provides a glimpse into the Dabney Hill freedom colony and the importance of preserving the disappearing histories of these settlements. The video also highlights the 115-year-old Dabney Hill Missionary Baptist Church, which was deemed uninhabitable after a violent storm in 2018. It features first-person interviews with Smith, Doris Workman of Dabney Hill, who enlisted Smith's assistance finding resources that would help in restoring the church, Tyree Workman, the church's pastor, and Dr. Andrea Roberts of Texas A&M University, who started the Texas Freedom Colonies Project in 2014 to document the histories of these communities and map their locations.

-more-

“The story of Dabney Hill and Dr. Roberts’ Texas Freedom Colonies Project are critical to understanding the whole of Texas history. Knowing the relevance and need for preservation of this history by those who lived it serves as inspiration to communities everywhere,” said Koch. “We’re honored to help steward the narrative of these incredible Texans and thank the community for trusting us to bring their voices and work to the forefront of the story of Texas.”

An abridged version of the video also features prominently in a newly unveiled installation in the Bullock Museum's third-floor Texas History Gallery. The installation includes artifacts from the freedom colonies of Dabney Hill, Postoak, Camptown, and Antioch. The installation is on view through January 2021.

To read the story and view the documentary, visit <https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/texas-story-project/down-home>. For more information about the Bullock Museum, visit TheStoryofTexas.com.

#

The Bullock Texas State History Museum is a division of the Texas State Preservation Board. Additional support for educational programming provided by the Texas State History Museum Foundation.

ABOUT THE TEXAS STORY PROJECT

The Bullock Museum's Texas Story Project is a crowd-sourced online archive of original, first-person stories from across the state. These stories about Texas people, places, and objects celebrate the state's diverse history and connect its past to its present and future. Learn more and share your story online at TexasStoryProject.com.

ABOUT THE BULLOCK MUSEUM

The Bullock Texas State History Museum includes three floors of exhibitions, IMAX® and special-effects theaters, a café and museum store. The Museum collaborates with more than 700 museums, libraries, archives and individuals to display original historical artifacts and host exhibitions that illuminate and celebrate Texas history and culture. For more, visit TheStoryofTexas.com or call (512) 936-8746.