



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the NEH Division of Preservation and Access application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/program/cultural-and-community-resilience> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Preserving the History of At-Risk Groups in Harrison County, Mississippi

Institution: Harrison County Library System

Project Director: Mandy Lawrence Hornsby

Grant Program: Cultural and Community Resilience

Project Goals and Humanities Content

The Local History and Genealogy Department of the Harrison County Library System serves the approximately 208,000 residents of Harrison County, Mississippi, situated in the center of the state's 30-mile coastline along the Gulf of Mexico. In addition, we serve numerous patrons from the adjacent five coastal counties. Like many public library systems, we primarily preserve and disseminate collections donated by members of the public. Though some recent acquisitions are helping us expand our coverage of coastal communities, we have significant gaps in resources from minority and marginalized communities. Such resources are especially vulnerable to loss because of long-standing neglect of the significance of such communities and because of their geographical locations in areas most susceptible to destruction from weather disasters.

This project would allow us to proactively seek out material to remedy gaps in our collection and to ensure that such cultural resources can be preserved in redundant formats to withstand future weather events. In addition, the project would strengthen our relationship with marginalized communities, allowing us to maintain a more complete record of our community going forward. When contacting and discussing this grant with the target communities, they expressed a desire for this project and an enthusiasm for preserving their unique histories.

The following are the overall goals for the Cultural and Community Resilience Grant:

- Preserve the culture and history of communities in Harrison County at risk of losing history due to flooding from tropical storms and hurricanes.
- Create a community archive with scanned items and oral histories through the Local History and Genealogy Department of the Harrison County Library System and their online platforms.
- Encourage the communities most at risk to preserve their history through community outreach.

We know from records of Spanish explorers in the 16th century and French colonials in the following century that the residents of this area have dealt with tropical storms, floodings, and hurricanes.¹ However, the escalation of catastrophic storms in the last 60 years due to global climate change renders the task of preserving community cultural resources urgent. Climate change has accelerated the intensity and frequency of hurricanes, culminating in both physical, fiscal, and historical loss. Mississippi ranks in the top 10 for the number of hurricanes and is in the top 4 for the number of severe hurricanes.² In 1969, residents of Harrison County experienced Hurricane Camille, a category 5 “once in a lifetime” weather event that left Mississippi with 135 dead, 3,881 homes destroyed, and 569 small businesses damaged.³ When Hurricane Katrina made landfall August 29, 2005, residents along the Mississippi Gulf Coast lost

¹ Charles L. Sullivan, *Hurricanes of the Mississippi Gulf Coast: Three Centuries of Destruction* (Perkinston: Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College Foundation, 2011), 2-3.

² Richard Laycock & Catherine Choi, “Which US States Are Hit Most Often by Hurricanes?” Finder, Last modified July 19, 2021, <https://www.finder.com/states-with-the-most-hurricanes>

³ Committee on Public Works United States Senate. *Federal Response to Hurricane Camille (Part I): Hearings Before the Special Subcommittee on Disaster Relief, Ninety-First Congress, 2nd Session, January 7, 1970* (Biloxi, Mississippi: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970): 4.

65,000 homes and were left with \$100 billion in damage.⁴ Hurricanes like Katrina and Camille are no longer isolated events. Many scientists agree that a possible consequence of climate change is more frequent and intense hurricanes.⁵

After Katrina, flood and evacuation maps for the Mississippi Gulf Coast were updated and show the expanding areas for potential destruction. Many of these high-risk areas include historically minority communities. These communities are our preservation priorities for this project. Past hurricanes have been devastating and have already endangered the cultural identity of these communities. We used three primary criteria to select groups for the project. The first is that the community be at high risk for adverse by climate change affects according to the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool and/or be in a designated Harrison County flood zone. The second is that the community be made up of minority populations and/or have a lower socioeconomic status than the rest of Harrison County. The third is that the Local History and Genealogy Department have a limited physical and digital collections representing the history of those communities. Using those criteria, we identified six communities that meet a minimum of two of these criteria, with all having experienced Hurricane Katrina flooding.

The Local History and Genealogy Department plans specifically to target preservation activities by scanning items and collecting oral histories from community members of these most at-risk communities. The scanning and collection of oral histories will take place both at recurring events already established in the communities and by events hosted by Local History and Genealogy. The collected scanned items and histories will be processed (transcribed, cataloged, etc.) and archived online so that they can be accessed by these communities anywhere. The platforms will be the Local History and Genealogy Department's Montage digital archive or [Urban Archive](#). Montage has the capability to display collections in various formats without password protection. Urban Archive recreates streets and areas using GPS software linked with available archival photographs, video, and audio. This will allow families that have lost significant history already from hurricanes to retain their physical items while providing a digital backup.

This project will explore five key humanities questions related to Gulf Coast communities. How does climate and environment impact community identity? What is it like for first generation residents in these communities? What type of migrations has occurred in these areas due to climate change? What are the intersections environmental climate and race relations on the Gulf Coast? How can we catalog the unique characteristics of those communities? Focusing on these questions, we can document the unique perspectives these communities have and identify new ways of looking at Mississippi Gulf Coast history. This is all the more important since these points of view have previously been excluded and even rejected. The limited history that exists is significantly biased due to cultural norms from the past. For example, a long--referenced historical book about the Mississippi Gulf Coast titled *Along the Gulf* originally

⁴ Deanne Stephens, *The Mississippi Gulf Coast Seafood Industry: A People's History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021), 123.

⁵ Angela Colbert, "A Force of Nature: Hurricanes in a changing Climate." Global Climate Change. NASA, last modified June 1, 2022, <https://climate.nasa.gov/news/3184/a-force-of-nature-hurricanes-in-a-changing-climate/>

published in 1894-1895 has only one reference to the Black community of Biloxi labeling them “low life” under a photograph.⁶



Image scanned from promotional book *Along the Gulf*.

This photograph pictures residents of the Bayou Augusta community located from the Back Bay of Biloxi to the railroad. The discrimination towards the Black community in Mississippi is well known, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast was not immune. Due to these prejudices, the history of the community is limited to a few resources, such as limited oral histories, school yearbooks, meager photographs, displays, and art installations. Surviving items are retained primarily by individuals within the Black communities along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

However, the Black community is not the only group to face discrimination in South Mississippi. With the Vietnam War and subsequent fall of Saigon, the Mississippi Gulf Coast became a place for Vietnamese immigrants from villages along the South China Sea to pick up work in the pre-existing seafood industry. The refugees continued to come to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, purchasing shrimp boats and settling with their families through the 1970s and into the 1980s.⁷ A community of Vietnamese immigrants formed on Oak Street in Point Cadet in East Biloxi. There was such a strong Vietnamese presence, the area was nicknamed “Little Saigon.” The Vietnamese fishermen were not well received upon their arrival to Biloxi. Fishermen from the older seafood families in Biloxi were hostile, going as far as to place an explosive device on a Vietnamese owned shrimp boat.⁸ These tensions continued, and with the closed community among the Vietnamese Americans, there are no existing oral histories of these residents in the

⁶ *Along the Gulf: An Entertaining Story of an Outing Among the Beautiful Resorts on the Mississippi Sound from New Orleans, LA. to Mobile, Ala.* (Gulfport, Mississippi: The Dixie Press, 1971), [75].

⁷ Deanne Stephens, *The Mississippi Gulf Coast Seafood Industry: A People’s History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021), 110-111.

⁸ Ron Grove, “Biloxi trio charged with placing explosive devices on boat,” *Daily Herald* (Biloxi, MS), April 23, 1981.

Local History and Genealogy Department only limited photographs. This community lost significant cultural items from Hurricane Katrina's 20-foot storm surge.⁹ This makes the task of preservation more challenging in the Biloxi Vietnamese community.

Gulf Coast fishing conflict: There's more to it than meets the eye

Viet shrimper: 'We don't want trouble'

By JON FRANK
SUN STAFF WRITER

Nguyen-Van-Chien appears quiet and unassuming. He is 25, single and speaks a halting but understandable English. He was born in Phan Thiet, Vietnam and has been in Mississippi since 1977. He borrowed enough money from relatives and friends several years ago to buy a 40-foot shrimp boat, and he drives an all-American 1978 Ford pickup.

Chien gives the impression that somewhere along the line he learned to keep a low profile. He is hesitant to talk about anything in detail.

"We know that this is not our country," Chien says, expressing one of the hard truths that must catch in the throats of refugees everywhere.

Unlike most earlier immigrants to this country, the United States is the home of second choice for the

Gulf Coast fisherman: Americans got raw deal

By JON FRANK
SUN STAFF WRITER

Maxwell Troclair says he thinks American fishermen have been given a raw deal. Troclair, who serves as president of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Fishermen's Organization, believes that ever since the first Vietnamese refugees began arriving on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in 1975, public opinion has been against the native fisherman and in favor of the foreign one.

In light of recent events, his appraisal of the relationship in 1981 is pregnant with meaning.

"Right now, it's an explosive situation," Troclair said, his sandpaper voice bouncing around the small meeting room as if amplified by several public address systems. "I don't know how much more of this we can take. You follow me?"

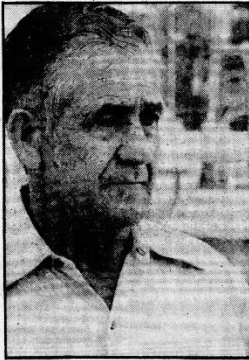
Students of this relationship are aware that last month a faulty fuse kept a Vietnamese shrimp boat from turning Troclair's figurative use of the word "explosive" into accurate reporting. A Biloxi policeman said that if the Molotov cocktail-like device placed aboard a

Vietnamese. Horror stories about Communist torture tactics, new economic zones, refugee boats boarded by South China Sea pirates and family separations are commonplace among the Vietnamese. It is a significantly different heritage than pilgrim Massachusetts, Jamestown or Pierre Le Moyne Sieur d'Iberville. And yet, according to the history texts, fleeing persecution is as an American beginning as there is.


According to official sources, Chien has about 1,400 fellow Vietnamese refugees in Mississippi, 1,200 of whom have settled in Jackson, Harrison, and Hancock counties. About 15 percent of these Gulf Coast Vietnamese are involved in some way with the fishing industry.

These numbers are minute compared to some other states. California has almost 150,000 Indochinese refugees, Louisiana has 11,000 and Texas nearly 40,000. Even the cold, landlocked state of Nebraska has more refugees than

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Maxwell Troclair



Nguyen Van Chien

Clipping from *The Daily Herald* on May 3, 1981.

There are few projects related to these communities around Harrison County and related online collections. For the Black community there is the permanent display in the Local History and Genealogy Department about the beach integration known as the Wade Ins that was done in partnership with the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio with Mississippi State University. There is also a collaborative exhibit titled a "City Within a City" at the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum featuring displays about Bayou Augusta and surrounding Black community. In addition, the Local History and Genealogy Department has limited yearbooks, reunion programs, photographs, and newspaper clippings related to these communities. Local History also holds a CD copy of the oral histories completed by the University of Southern Mississippi's Department of Oral History, which are available online through the Special Collections catalog. Photographs and memories from the Black community are often requested by patrons, but unavailable at Local History beyond the few items currently archived. There has been limited research done for the Vietnamese community save a few reports, memoirs, and news articles. Other communities have only begun to preserve their history since so much was lost to hurricanes.

While the local significance of the proposed project constitutes the central focus of the work, the Gulf Coast also connects to larger regional, national, and even international historical work. The area had a bustling seafood industry through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Canneries shipped shrimp, oysters, and crabs across the country. By the 1920s Gulfport had a rail system that connected the Mississippi Gulf Coast to Chicago. Men trained and were deployed from Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi and the Gulfport Seabee Base from World War II, Vietnam, and onto present day conflicts. Events such as these brought a variety of

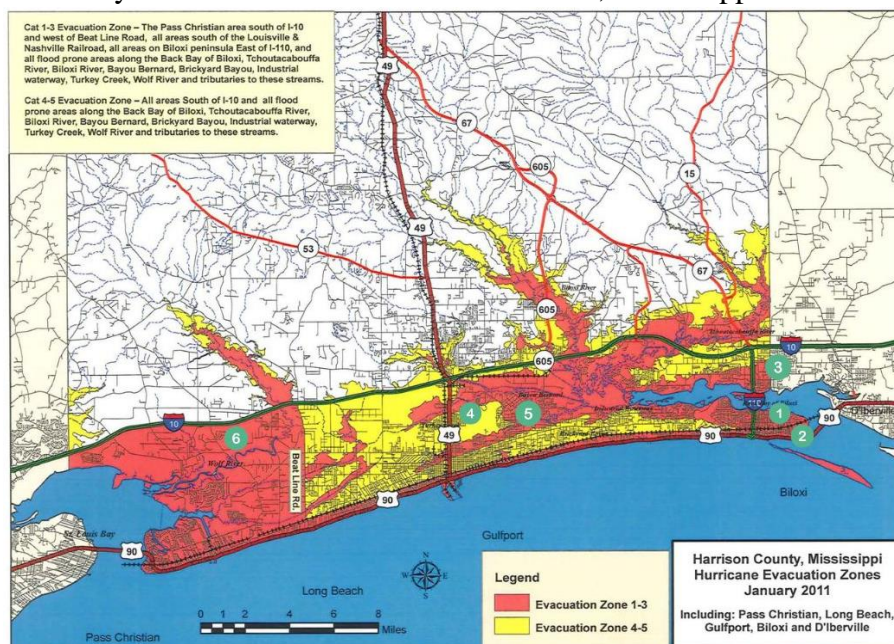
⁹ Susan Cutter, Christopher Emrich, Jerry Mitchell, Walter Piegorsch, Mark Smith, and Lynn Weber, *Hurricane Katrina and the Forgotten Coast of Mississippi* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3.

people to Harrison County and have generated research interest in the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Hurricane Katrina and the BP Oil Spill also drew national attention and researchers. Genealogical researchers with family roots in Harrison County request information through Local History and Genealogy. These connections to trade, military history, and disasters interest researchers and the local community

Program Priority

The communities selected are as follows:

1. The community of Bayou Augusta in Biloxi, Mississippi.
2. The Vietnamese communities of Point Cadet in Biloxi, Mississippi.
3. The area known as Langley Point in D'Iberville Mississippi.
4. The Turkey Creek community in Gulfport, Mississippi.
5. The community of Bayou Bernard (formally known as Handsboro) in Gulfport, Mississippi.
6. The community of DeLisle located in Pass Christian, Mississippi.



Harrison County Hurricane Evacuation Map with target communities.

All communities selected are in hurricane category 1-3 evacuation zones and marked as flood zones by the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. Hurricanes have a 1-5 rating with 3, 4, and 5 considered major hurricanes. That means that all communities are at risk during even 'minor' storms in the future.¹⁰ The communities of Bayou Augusta, Point Cadet, Bayou Bernard, and Turkey Creek are considered disadvantaged for climate change in the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool. Bayou Augusta and Turkey Creek are known for their long-

¹⁰ Vera Brusentsev and Wayne Vroman, *Disasters in the United States: Frequency, Cost, and Compensation* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2017) 79.

standing Black communities. Point Cadet has played host to a variety of immigrant groups since the founding of the seafood industry in Biloxi with the Vietnamese being the most recent. The communities of Bayou Bernard and DeLisle are racially mixed but have suffered significant historical loss through Hurricane Katrina. Langley Point, a historically significant area to the City of D'Iberville that was home to many seafood workers, also suffered great loss in Hurricane Katrina.

While not all communities selected represent minority groups, others are disadvantaged because of their social vulnerability. The Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI) created by the University of South Carolina measures a community's ability to "prepare for, respond to, and rebound from disaster events."¹¹ Although Harrison County overall falls in the 77th percentile as of 2014 in social vulnerability, there are areas that are below the average index. Those are Biloxi, certain areas of Gulfport, and Pass Christian. This is due to factors such as education levels of the area, employment in fishing industries, and race.¹² Harrison County is at a 20% poverty and 28% ALICE rate according to the ALICE Index. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income, Constrained, Employed which measures households that struggle with living costs despite being above the Federal Poverty Level.¹³

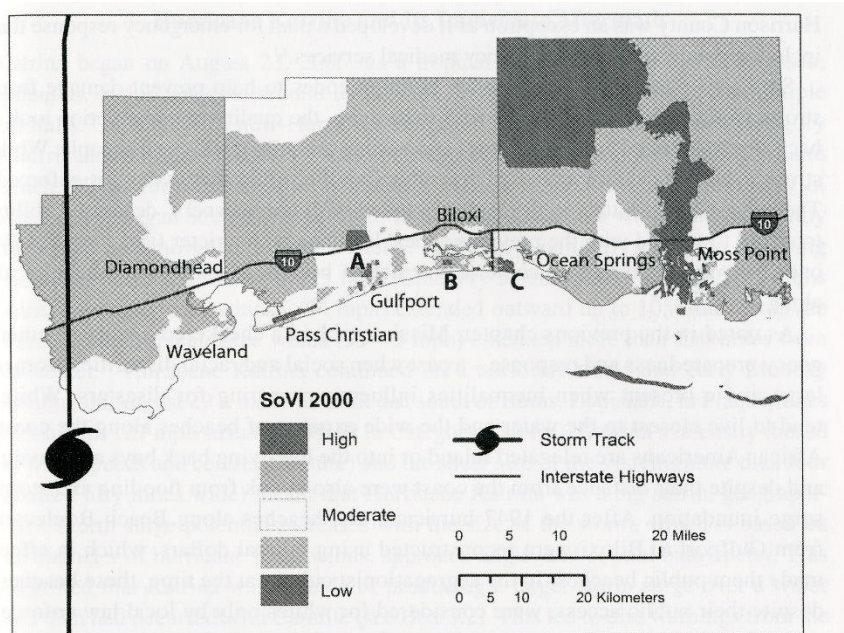


Figure 3.1 The Social Vulnerability Index. Using block group data for 2000, the geographic variability in social vulnerability is illustrated. (See plate section for color version.)

Map from *Hurricane Katrina and the Forgotten Coast of Mississippi* by Susan Cutter, et. al.

¹¹ Cutter, Emrich, Mitchell, Piegorsch, Smith, and Weber, *Hurricane Katrina and the Forgotten Coast of Mississippi*, 46.

¹² Cutter, Emrich, Mitchell, Piegorsch, Smith, and Weber, 47-49.

¹³ "Research Center: A National Overview," United for ALICE, December 3, 2022, <https://unitedforalice.org/national-overview>

Community Participation

This project will encourage the creation of community archives through the Local History and Genealogy Department. Community archives according to Andrew Finn are “the grassroots activities of documenting, recording and exploring community heritage in which community participation, control and ownership of the project is essential.”¹⁴ This project will follow a “postcustodial” model which will mean that the physical records will remain with the community with the Local History and Genealogy Department recommending preservation methods. Local History and Genealogy will retain a backup digital copy as well as digital copies of oral histories collected through the project. These items will be made available online. The goal is for community groups to work with Local History as a partner instead of creating a closed repository.¹⁵

Forging these relationships is not without challenges. Often groups that have been marginalized have a distrust in formal archives and do not want to hand over their history to such institutions.¹⁶ Despite the Harrison County having a larger population for the state of Mississippi, the cities, and communities function as small towns. They retain their own cultural identity with residents that remain there for generations. In both cases it is important to build relationships. It is also important not insist on taking these historical items out of the community when building partnerships. Our team has experience in creating relationships with marginalized communities. The Local History and Genealogy Department is a member of the Invisible Histories Project. This group has used building trusting relationships to begin to found LGBTQIA+ collections in the Southeast. We can apply a similar model of using local community engagement for this project locally to build trust in the minority communities targeted.

The Local History and Genealogy Department has already built community relationships in Harrison County. Patrons of all backgrounds use the resources to assist in genealogical and historical research. Mrs. Tomesha Davis, a resident with a lifelong connection to the Bayou Augusta community, has agreed to be a community partner and liaison. She currently works on the corporate team for Habitat for Humanity and formerly was employed locally for affordable housing. Also linked with the Bayou Augusta community; is the segregated school’s reunion group. This group hosts a yearly reunion for the students who attended the formerly-segregated schools in Biloxi (Nichols High School and Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School). The Local History and Genealogy Department has hosted this group for their planning meetings, and they have been supportive of the Local History and Genealogy Department’s efforts to preserve the yearbooks and history of their schools.

Oak Street in Biloxi is a center for Vietnamese culture with a popular bakery, Buddhist Temple, and Vietnamese Martyrs Catholic Church. These groups host events such as a large festival for Lunar New Year attended by many. To connect with these groups will give great access to the Vietnamese community living locally. The Vietnamese-American run business, Le

¹⁴ Andrew Finn, “Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28, no. 2 (2007): 153, DOI: 10.1080/00379810701611936

¹⁵ Finn, “Community Histories, Community Archives,” 168-169.

¹⁶ Finn, 163.

Bakery, provided connection advice to Local History upon connecting the community. Local History staff also have strong personal contacts within the community.

The DeLisle community through the St. Stephens Cultural and Community Center agreed to partnering with Local History and Genealogy due the shared goal of preserving their story. Ms. Pat Harvey, a local community leader in Gulfport part of the Handsboro and Mississippi City Civic Organization, assists the department in connecting with the Bayou Bernard and Turkey Creek communities located in her city. Working with genealogy has allowed us to connect with the historical societies in Harrison County including the D'Iberville and Gulfport Historical Societies. Pass Christian also has an active historical society as does Biloxi. The historical societies are networks of groups with similar interests to this project that can assist in developing oral history questions, community history, and demonstrate relevant cultural awareness in relation to the target communities. All individuals and groups mentioned have offered insight and further contacts within the targeted groups with excitement for the project.

Methodology

The Local History and Genealogy Department will collect both digital scans of photographs and print materials and oral histories at their events. Events will be planned through community partners and promoted before they take place. The Harrison County Library System has Facebook accounts for each of its libraries as well as the whole system. Local History and Genealogy posts to the Biloxi Library Facebook account to promote events. There is also a weekly systemwide newsletter used to make announcements. The Local History and Genealogy Department will also use community partners to promote the events and take their guidance on how best to reach out. The Library System also has a good relationship with local media, especially the local television stations. Collection events will occur in three possible scenarios. Local History and Genealogy will host a relevant event in the department with information on how to preserve items. Local History will host a program at a central community building such as a house of worship, community center, or related building. Local History will attend events already hosted by those communities. For example, the Lunar New Year's Festival on Oak Street.

The system for scanning items will goes as follows:

1. Conference with the owner of the item(s) and discuss the process of digitization with them.
2. Item owners fill out description of items and sign release form.
3. LHG staff member scans the item(s) assigning a unique identifier number that is written on the release form. Staff will wear gloves to avoid transferring oils from fingers to items.
4. Items scanned at 600 dpi as a jpeg.
5. Scanned items saved to an external hard drive back up.
6. LHG staff gives item owner recommendations on best preservation practices for the items and given websites where to access their items once digitized.
7. Digitized items assigned metadata and uploaded to Montage or Urban Archive where appropriate.

Oral histories will be collected at these events. The Local History and Genealogy Department will create a quiet space for collection oral histories when at inside events. For outside events, such as festivals, the Harrison County Library System has a mobile outreach vehicle (LUMO) that can provide Wi-Fi and a temporary oral history recording studio. Interviewees will be given a release and biography form to fill out. Local History will use the P4 Podtrak by Zoom Corporation to record the interviews to save them digitally. The completed interviews will go through the transcription service Trint and each transcription will be edited by Local History staff. Then the interviewees will be allowed to listen to the completed interview with transcript. The interviews will then be placed online through the Local History and Genealogy Department's Montage digital platform. The staff of Local History and Genealogy Department will complete the six-hour online workshop, "Getting Started with Oral History Workshop" from the Institute of Oral History at Baylor University to prepare for collecting the interviews.

Interview questions will be tailored specifically to the community and their unique historical perspectives. Questions will be developed by working with community partners and contacts. The Local History and Genealogy Department will also use the resources available in the department such as microfilm, yearbooks, Mississippiana collection of books, and more to create a framework for the history of the six communities selected. For example: An interview with someone from the Vietnamese community on Oak Street would be, "What holidays does your family celebrate?" Allowing the opportunity for them to speak about the importance of holidays such as Lunar New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Hungry Ghost Festival. A sample question for someone from the Turtle Creek community would be, "What was it like to grow up in the Turkey Creek community?" For residents of Langley Point and DeLisle, "How were you and your family affected by Hurricane Katrina?"

Long Term Goals for Preservation

The Local History and Genealogy Department needed to be moved after the destruction of the Biloxi Library and Cultural Center during Hurricane Katrina. As a result, the Biloxi Library was built in a new location downtown to FEMA standards. The plans for the new building allowed for the department to have a secure reading room, work room, and archive room. The archive room is outfitted with the Fike HFC-125 fire prevention system that allows for powder instead of water to be dispensed in the case of fire, two dehumidifiers, and an air purifier. Collections are kept in archival grade boxes, sleeves, folders, and envelopes. The location is open six days a week for accessibility by the public even on evenings and weekends. Therefore, the Local History and Genealogy Department is a good choice for any of these communities needing a secure place to store items both digitally and physically.

Deliverables

The deliverables for this project will be digital copies of oral histories and collections made available online for the six selected communities. There will be a back-up copy on a drive in the Local History and Genealogy Department's archive room. The community members participating will sign a release for donated scanned items, oral histories, and video footage. The

forms will allow Local History to store and distribute the collected materials online and through the department. Personal information of participants will remain private (contact information, any medical history mentioned during interviews, etc.) Such information mentioned in oral histories will be left out of the transcripts and edited out of the audio before being published online. Forms filled out by patrons will be stored in the administration files of Local History away from public access materials.

NEH and other federal departments will have access to the deliverables in accordance with 2 CFR: 200.315(b). Other entities that would like a copy of images will fill out the department's "image agreement" form used for one time use projects. Community groups wishing to use grant items for display in museums and other public buildings will be able to do so by completing the loan agreement with Local History before obtaining copies. Personal use for members of the community will be accessible through Montage and/or Urban Archive of all grant collected items.

As a resource for participating communities, the Local History and Genealogy Department will develop a packet to assist members in preserving their items at home. Each packet will have tips on preserving common items such as photographs, documents, and books. There will also be a guide to digitizing and saving these items for the future. Finally, there will be a sheet that will guide patrons in conducting their own family oral history interviews. These packets will be given at events to participants. Displays about these communities will be developed in two parts. Traveling banner displays will be created based on the information and media gathered from the grant that can be placed in buildings used by these communities. The Local History and Genealogy Department will also create a display for public viewing within the facility based on the stories told from these at-risk groups.