



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities

OFFICE OF CHALLENGE GRANTS

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 Challenge Grants application guidelines at <http://www.neh.gov/grants/challenge/challenge-grants> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Office of Challenge Grants 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: *Historic Dyess Colony: A New Deal Farm Experiment*

Institution: Arkansas State University, State University, AR

Project Directors: Dr. Ruth A. Hawkins

Grant Program: Challenge Grants

**National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant
Historic Dyess Colony
A New Deal Farm Experiment**

Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Grant Budget	2
Institutional Fact Summary	4
Institutional Financial Summary	5
Project Narrative	
A. Introduction	7
B. Arkansas State University's Place in the Delta	8
C. Agricultural Heritage	9
D. The Lakeport Plantation	11
E. Southern Tenant Farmers Museum	12
F. Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center	13
G. The Historic Dyess Colony	14
H. Administration Building	18
I. Dyess Theater	19
J. Johnny Cash Boyhood Home	20
K. Additional Humanities Activities	21
L. Proposed Challenge Grant Activities	23
M. Integration with Heritage Studies Ph.D. Program and Other Humanities Programming	25
N. Marketing Plan	27
O. Evaluation	28
P. Fund-Raising	29
Q. Other University Commitments in the Delta	29
R. Impact of an NEH Challenge Grant	31
ASU Board of Trustees	32
University Administration and Project Staff	34
Key Project Staff Resumes	36

Appendices

I.	University Commitment and Support Letters	44
II.	External Support Letters	51
III.	Mississippi River Delta Region Map	62
IV.	Arkansas State University Heritage Sites Map	63
V.	1936 Dyess Colony Map	64
VI.	Administration Building Façade Easement Letter	65
VII.	Dyess Colony Administration Building Photos	66
VIII.	Dyess Colony Theater Photos	67
VIX.	Johnny Cash Boyhood Home Photos	68
X.	Heritage Studies Ph. D. Program Dissertations	69
XI.	Heritage Studies Ph.D. Program Ten-Year Highlights.	72

Historic Dyess Colony: A New Deal Farm Experiment
Budget

Challenge Grant Funds

Total NEH Funds Requested		\$500,000
NEH Year 1:	\$250,000	
NEH Year 2:	\$125,000	
NEH Year 3:	\$125,000	
Total Non-Federal Contributions		\$1,500,000
Total Grant Funds (NEH plus Match)		\$2,000,000

Planned Expenditures

Dyess Administration Building (Interior)		\$723,663
Wall Paneling	\$30,000	
Elevator Equipment	\$80,000	
Electrical completion (power & lighting)	\$50,000	
Mechanical completion (hvac units)	\$81,000	
Plumbing	\$14,000	
Walls	\$16,000	
Drywall	\$6,000	
Interior doors and frames	\$12,000	
Trim	\$30,000	
Drywall	\$6,000	
Ceilings	\$15,000	
Stairs & Millwork	\$25,000	
Kitchenette	\$32,000	
Painting	\$30,000	
ADA ramp & landscape	\$25,000	
General Conditions	\$55,000	
General Contractor's OH&P	\$25,000	
Architect's Fees (9%) and Expenses	\$51,663	
Furnishings and Equipment	\$60,000	
Exhibits, Lighting and Signage	\$80,000	
Dyess Theater		\$770,061
Demolition of existing foundations	\$4,008	
Site Work, including grading sidewalks, ADA, etc.	\$32,530	
Foundations	\$30,236	
Windows and Doors	\$66,543	
Framing	\$61,159	
Thermal and Moisture	\$56,457	
Flooring	\$54,113	
Finishes	\$51,026	
Millwork	\$9,878	
Mechanical	\$43,768	
Electrical	\$59,502	
Plumbing	\$18,601	
Security	\$13,899	

Marquee Restoration	\$54,244	
General Conditions	\$55,387	
General Contractor's OH&P	\$29,991	
Arcitect's Fees(9%) and Expenses	\$59,012	
AV Equipment	\$34,707	
Furnishings	\$35,000	
Johnny Cash Boyhood Home (Remaining Expenses)		\$94,526
Windows and Doors	\$23,676	
Finishes	\$17,950	
Millwork	\$2,900	
Furnishings	\$50,000	
Colony Farmstead Buildings		\$171,750
Barn	\$75,000	
Privy	\$15,000	
Chicken Coop	\$31,750	
Smokehouse	\$50,000	
Visitor Services (Restrooms, Security and Parking)		\$190,000
Historic Signage/Markers		\$50,000
Total Planned Expenditures		\$2,000,000

Historic Dyess Colony: A New Deal Farm Experiment

A. Introduction

The Mississippi River Delta is a region with some of the richest land and some of the poorest people in the nation. The fertile soil is a gift from the river, which for centuries has deposited alluvium drained from 31 states, providing a livelihood for those willing to clear the trees, drain the swamps, and convert the land to agricultural production.

The same river that gave such gifts to the region also could be a curse. Crops could be wiped out by flooding, changes in the river channel, and other natural disasters such as hail, drought and plant disease. The ability to live with nature and to survive its give and take has led to a special resilience in the people of the Delta. The geography and the natural environment of the region have influenced its history and culture in such a manner that a distinct bond has been created between the land and the people.

Nowhere has this special bond with the land been more clearly demonstrated than at the historic Dyess Colony, an agricultural resettlement community created in Arkansas as part of the New Deal to aid in recovery from the Great Depression. The colony experiment was created to provide a new start in life for out-of-work farm families who had been through the disastrous Flood of 1927, followed in 1930-31 by the worst drought in the state's history. Even after the colony was established in 1934, the stamina and determination of its inhabitants were severely tested when the Flood of 1937 washed away an entire season of work, just as colonists were gaining a foothold.

For those who persevered, the experience had a phenomenal impact on family values, sense of community and cooperation, and forging a strong work ethic. This history of this colony, the lives of the people who brought it to life, and their successes and failures are at the core of Arkansas State University's efforts to restore remaining significant buildings associated with Dyess. This project includes the restoration of the colony Administration Building for humanities programming and interpretive exhibits; re-construction of the colony Theater for visitor orientation, exhibits, and

documentaries of the era; and restoration of the boyhood home of the colony's most famous inhabitant, Johnny Cash. The Cash home, along with its re-created outbuildings, will tell the story of the typical colonist family, along with exploring the impact that growing up in Dyess had on Johnny Cash and his music.

B. Arkansas State University's Place in the Delta

Arkansas State University is located in the heart of the seven-state Mississippi River Delta. (*See Map, Appendix III*) Since its founding in 1909 as an agricultural school, the university has included service to the people of the Arkansas Delta as part of its mission. Arkansas State University is dedicated to teaching, research and service, and provides students with broad educational foundations that help develop critical thinking, decision-making capabilities, and communication skills.

Today Arkansas State University has 67,015 alumni, with a record enrollment of 13,900 on the main campus in Jonesboro and its associated degree centers and regional programs. In addition, ASU has three branch campuses, for a combined system enrollment of 22,065. (All figures based on Fall 2011 reports.)

Enrollment on the main campus includes 72.8 percent undergraduates, 61.3 percent women, and 27.9 percent non-Caucasian, including 15.3 percent African Americans. While the university attracts students from all 75 Arkansas counties, 48 states and 59 countries, about three-fourths of its enrollment comes from the Arkansas Delta. Average per capita income in this area for 2009 was \$29,482, with only 16 percent holding any kind of college degree. Many of these students are the first generation in their families to attend college, and many have never been outside the region.

ASU provides regular access to cultural, fine arts and humanities programming for the people of this region through such venues as a public radio station, educational television station, a public lecture-concert series, a visual and performing arts center, an ASU Museum, a Convocation Center, and other special events programming.

The university offers six programs at the doctoral level, including the Ph.D. in Heritage Studies, Environmental Sciences, Molecular Biosciences, Physical Therapy, and Educational Leadership, and an

Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. Programs at the specialist's, master's, bachelor's and associate's levels are available through the various colleges: Agriculture, Business, Communications, Education, Engineering, Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Nursing and Health Professions, Sciences and Mathematics, and University College. During the 2011 fiscal year, the Jonesboro campus awarded 14 doctoral degrees, 52 specialist's degrees, 1,297 master's degrees, 1,582 bachelor's degrees, and 601 associate's degrees.

Arkansas State University's commitment to higher education is demonstrated by its accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, as well as 20 specialized accrediting organizations. In addition, each major division of the university holds membership in national organizations that support the highest educational standards.

C. Agricultural Heritage

More than 20 years ago, a Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission report to Congress likened the region to a Third World country, and things have not changed much in the intervening years. The economic distress is due, in part, to the failure of the Delta to diversify beyond its agricultural base. Built first on the backs of enslaved labor, and then the tenant farming and sharecropping system, the agricultural economy historically has consisted of the landed and the landless, with the landless being the large majority. Thus, when mechanized agriculture reduced the need for field hands and tenant farmers, beginning in the 1950s, thousands were out of work with no place to go, unless they could get to factories in the north. Today, even small- to mid-sized Delta farming operations have yielded to large-scale farmers and multi-national corporations.

Fifteen years ago, Arkansas State University committed to working with Arkansas Delta communities to discover, preserve and promote their agricultural heritage, including developing the region's rural heritage tourism potential and enhancing the humanities content of programs offered to visitors. The university's purpose in making this commitment was twofold: (1) to utilize the entire region as an educational laboratory, thus providing enriched experiences for Arkansas State University students, and (2) to serve as an economic catalyst in these distressed rural communities.

To begin to accomplish these goals, the university worked with community leaders and volunteers to create two National Scenic Byways that traverse the Arkansas Delta region from north to south—the Arkansas Great River Road and the Crowley’s Ridge Parkway. These byways serve as a spine, linking heritage sites and creating the critical mass necessary for attracting visitors to the region. Since 1998, nearly \$8 million in grant funds have been received from the Federal Highway Administration for projects to enhance the visitor appeal of these two routes, and an additional \$8 million has been leveraged for projects along the routes.

Although many of Arkansas State University’s heritage efforts are directed toward assisting communities along the route, the university has accepted outright ownership of four historic sites, including the Dyess Colony buildings. Other sites include the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center in Piggott, the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum in Tyronza, and the Lakeport Plantation in Lake Village. (*See Heritage Sites Map, Appendix IV*) In each of these cases, the decision was made to acquire the property because the university community believed there were nationally significant stories to be told, as well as extensive opportunities for humanities programming. Restoration at two of these sites, Lakeport Plantation and the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, was completed through a \$1 million National Endowment for the Humanities “We the People” Challenge Grant received in 2005. The additional \$3 million required by the Challenge Grant was raised in two years.

These four ASU heritage properties together tell a comprehensive 19th and 20th century story of people and their relationship with the land in the Mississippi River Delta: (1) the transition from slavery to tenant farming at the Lake Village site, (2) the evolution of the tenant farming system and its subsequent abuses, leading to formation of a union at the Tyronza site, (3) a more positive example of a tenant farming system leading to land ownership at the Piggott site, and (4) the role of the federal government in assisting depression-era farmers in resettlement and land ownership at the Dyess Colony. These stories transcend the Arkansas Delta, presenting a national saga of the quest for land and life on the land. Visitors can move forward or backward in time, depending on whether they travel south to north, or north to south.

The effectiveness of these sites is evident through the numerous awards that they have received collectively, including a Preservation Award through the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Diamond Award through the Arkansas Historical Association, the Cultural Heritage Award through the Governor's Conference on Tourism, the Distinguished Service Award through the Arkansas Museum Association, and the Preservation Education Award through the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas.

D. The Lakeport Plantation

The Lakeport Plantation house, one of Arkansas' premiere historic structures, is representative of the western expansion of the antebellum, slave-based cotton economy. Lakeport Plantation has remained in continuous cotton production since the 1830s when slaves carved it from the heavily forested Arkansas frontier. Thus, it provides complete documentation of agricultural development in the region and the accompanying changes in the African American experience.

The plantation house, vacant since 1972, remains largely unchanged since the day it was built (ca. 1858) and is the only remaining Arkansas plantation on the Mississippi River that has escaped being remodeled, redecorated or extensively modernized. It was built for the Lycurgus Johnson family, part of a political dynasty that extended from Virginia to Kentucky to Arkansas.

The plantation remained in the Johnson family until 1927, when it was sold to the Epstein-Angel family (Jewish immigrants to the Delta). The Sam Angel family of Lake Village gifted the plantation house to Arkansas State University in 2001. The university opened the house in 2007 as a museum and educational center, with the house itself as a primary artifact. Rather than create another "pretty house," the restoration and interpretation focus on the lifestyles and relationships between the people who lived and worked at Lakeport—as slaves and masters, as tenant farmers and land owners, and as craftsmen and artisans.

The on-site director at Lakeport holds a Ph.D. in history and works with Heritage Studies Ph.D. students at Arkansas State University to design programs in line with state curriculum standards for elementary and secondary students, as well as offering professional development workshops for teachers.

In addition, Lakeport's stories are conveyed to approximately 3,000 visitors and scholars annually through interpretive exhibits, workshops and special seminars, guest lectures, book signings, and a variety of special events. For example, a weekend African-American Heritage Reunion was conducted at the plantation, featuring food folkways, old time health remedies, elders' storytelling, quilting, a jump the broom wedding ceremony, African-American music, and other traditions. Professional development programs for teachers have consistently received high evaluations, with teachers appreciating the unique stories that can be incorporated into their lesson plans, and the introduction to numerous additional resources.

E. Southern Tenant Farmers Museum

Unlike the Lakeport Plantation area, agricultural development in the northern region of the Arkansas Delta did not begin until the early 20th century, after timber companies and railroad corporations harvested the vast forests to feed hungry lumber mills in the north. Once the land was cleared, both whites and blacks intent on improving their lot came to work the land as tenant farmers and sharecroppers. As the agricultural depression of the 1920s deepened with the Great Depression of the 1930s, things became worse for everyone, including the landowners. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, meant to alleviate some of the suffering, resulted in numerous abuses and unfair practices that further impacted tenant farmers. In Tyronza, Arkansas, the mass eviction of sharecroppers from one of the area plantations triggered the movement to begin a union.

Sharecroppers enlisted the aid of two Tyronza businessmen who were sympathetic to the sharecroppers' plight--H. L. Mitchell, who owned a dry cleaner, and Clay East, who operated a gas station in the shared building space. With their leadership, the union was established July 13, 1934, by 11 whites and seven African Americans at Sunnyside School (also known as Fairview School) near Tyronza, and the Mitchell-East building became the unofficial headquarters where most of the union business was conducted. It was the first agricultural union to include both black and white farmers, as well as involving women in leadership positions.

The union, a forerunner of later civil rights movements, grew into a national movement and

ultimately merged into the American Federation of Labor (AFL). While it experienced some successes in the 1930s and 1940s, it ultimately collapsed due to a number of factors, including conflict from within and the mechanization of agriculture in the early 1950s, resulting in less need for laborers. Perhaps its greatest significance, however, is the mere fact that such a union could develop in a small Arkansas town in the 1930s. The building that served as its headquarters has now been restored by Arkansas State University and opened to the public in 2006. Like Lakeport, it offers special programming for school and community groups and professional development for teachers, along with tours for the general public. The director holds a master's degree in business administration and is assisted by students in the ASU Heritage Studies Ph.D. program. Teachers who participate in programs at the museum consistently express surprise at finding that this resource exists, especially since few people are aware of the union ties to Northeast Arkansas.

F. Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center

This site was the family home of Paul and Mary Pfeiffer of Piggott, Arkansas, whose daughter Pauline was married to Ernest Hemingway from 1927-1940. During their marriage the Hemingways made frequent trips to Piggott, and Pauline's family converted the barn to a studio to give Hemingway privacy for writing. It was in this most unlikely setting that he wrote portions of *A Farewell to Arms* and segments of other books and short stories.

In addition to having a famous son-in-law, Paul Pfeiffer was important in his own right to the agricultural development of the Northeast Arkansas Delta region. He began acquiring swamp land and converting it to agricultural production in 1902, and by 1930 he had amassed 63,000 acres. This land was divided into 40- and 80-acre farmsteads, each with appropriate outbuildings, enabling him to attract some of the best tenant farmers from throughout the country. During the 1930s, he began selling off this land to his tenants, often arranging attractive, flexible payment terms. Thus, many farmers were able to fulfill the American dream of becoming landowners.

The university restored the Pfeiffer home and barn studio to their 1930s appearance (the era when Hemingway was a frequent visitor, as well as the era of significant agricultural development in the

region) and opened the property in 1999 as the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center. Humanities programming includes a house and barn tour that interprets the Pfeiffers' 1930s lifestyle, literature courses at the graduate and undergraduate level taught by Arkansas State University faculty, workshops for teachers, after-school and summer creative writing programs for grades four through six, an adult writers' retreat, and development of a Pfeiffer Farmstead tour. Due to the popularity of the writers' retreat, it has grown from one week-long retreat in the summer to three week-long retreats held in the fall, spring and summer. Educational programs are developed by the museum director, who holds a Ph.D. in American Literature.

G. The Historic Dyess Colony

Since 2010, Arkansas State University has accessed state funds and private donations to secure, stabilize, and begin restoration of the Dyess Colony Administration Building, Dyess Theater, and the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home. This National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant is sought to assist the university in completing the authentic restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of Dyess Colony structures that will house programming and humanities activities.

The addition of the Historic Dyess Colony to ASU's Heritage Sites Program strengthens the university's academic reach further into the Delta and presents a new and complementary site at which to explore humanities programming to serve students, faculty, visitors, locals, children, and adults. Existing humanities activities such as teacher workshops and curriculum development, interpretation and preservation, and hands-on continuing education opportunities will be leveraged at Historic Dyess Colony sites. The Historic Dyess Colony expands upon the agricultural themes explored at the other sites by introducing a unique agricultural experiment conducted through the federal government.

Federal Emergency Relief Agency "Colonization Project No. 1", better known as Dyess Colony, was created under the New Deal by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934. As one of the earliest Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and Works Progress Administration undertakings in Arkansas, Dyess Colony was transferred to the Federal Resettlement Administration in 1936 and finally to the Farm Security Administration in 1937. As "an experiment in permanent reestablishment of the

independent farmer,” Dyess Colony was to be replicated across the country as part of Roosevelt’s New Deal programming.

Arkansas’ agricultural economy was devastated by a series of events in the late 1920s. The Flood of 1927, a drought the following summer, the stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing bank failures had significant impacts on farmers across the state. By the beginning of the next decade, almost two-thirds of Arkansas’ farmers had lost their land and fallen into the tenancy system. It was under these conditions that Arkansas’ first WPA Administrator, William Reynolds Dyess, recommended to President Roosevelt’s special advisor, Harry Hopkins, a plan in which qualified farmers would have a second chance at land ownership and successful farming operations. The plan fit well with Roosevelt’s New Deal programming and FERA soon purchased 16,000 acres of bottomland swamp in Mississippi County, Arkansas, to be developed as a “resettlement colony.”

FERA put more than 1,300 Arkansans to work clearing the bottomland swamp and building the colony, named for William Reynolds Dyess. Five hundred farmsteads spanned out from the center of the colony where the community’s administration and shared services were housed, including the cooperative store, school, cotton gin, post office, hospital, and cannery. Farmsteads consisted of a house, barn, privy and chicken coop, with an adjacent 20 or 40 acres of land to be cleared and prepped for cultivation by the occupying farm families. Potential colony families were screened and interviewed by government representatives who travelled to each county in Arkansas in search of those with a “good moral background” who had run successful farming operations prior to the Flood of 1927 and subsequent disasters. Once selected, colony farmers were advanced the farmstead, a mule, a cow and supplies for one year. When the first crop was harvested, farmers were expected to begin paying back the advance, essentially “buying” their land and improvements on it.

In the winter of 1935, the Cash family moved from Cleveland County, Arkansas to their first new house in Dyess Colony. Ray and Carrie Rivers Cash raised their expanding brood, including young J.R., on one of the 500 farmsteads. J.R. and his siblings worked the fields, fished the Tyronza River, attended school and church, and led a typical childhood in the rural farming community. He attended Dyess High

School, graduating in 1950 as class vice president, before beginning his path to international fame as music legend Johnny Cash. Cash often spoke of Dyess Colony and the Arkansas Delta as inspiration for his early music, with hits such as “Five Feet High and Rising” and “Pickin’ Time” plucked from the fields surrounding his boyhood home. The Cash family, with their few belongings and hope for a new beginning, were representative of Arkansas farm families who relocated to Dyess Colony.

Because of its size, cooperative nature, and impetus from the federal government, Dyess attracted the attention of the national news media. On June 9, 1936, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt paid a visit, made a speech at the Administration Building, dined at the Dyess Café, and shook hands with locals for several hours. Letters landed on President Roosevelt’s desk from around the globe inquiring about the agricultural experiment at Dyess and the potential for replication in other hard hit states. Dyess Colony operated as a successful government undertaking until the mid-1940s when the federal government sold its assets to a group of Arkansas investors and land owners who maintained the community until 1964 when the town of Dyess officially incorporated as a municipality within the state of Arkansas. (*See Appendix V for a 1936 map showing the colony center and the Cash home*)

In 2009, the Arkansas General Assembly directed Arkansas State University to study the feasibility of developing a heritage site in Dyess Colony. With funds appropriated by the legislature, ASU engaged a cultural resources management firm to undertake the study, which resulted in the Dyess Colony Redevelopment Master Plan. The master plan lays out a comprehensive and detailed approach to preserving historic resources, interpreting the significant agricultural heritage and public works endeavor, and revitalizing the economy of Dyess and Mississippi County based on these assets. Specifically defined, the plan of action calls for four key areas of development: (1) Recognizing the extended Dyess Community through documentation and celebration; (2) Establishing and rehabilitating the Dyess Farms Cultural Landscape to recreate a sense of the historic rural surroundings; (3) Redeveloping the Dyess Town Circle as the heart and hub of the city; and (4) Supporting the city in its efforts to maintain and enhance the Dyess Center Historic District.

Arkansas State University acquired the Dyess Colony Administration Building and Dyess Theater from the City of Dyess in 2010. Under an agreement with the city, ASU's Heritage Sites Program will restore and rehabilitate the properties and use both as interpretive vehicles to tell the story of the New Deal agricultural resettlement colony. ASU has invested \$650,000 to date in the stabilization and restoration of the Administration Building (exterior) and Theater (façade). Pending funding requests include \$723,633 for the completion of the interior rehabilitation of the Administration Building and \$625,410 toward restoration and reconstruction of Dyess Theater. Our restoration is in line with Secretary of Interior Standards, and our work is competitively bid and in compliance with Davis-Bacon wage rates and other federal acts and regulations. In addition, we work closely with the State Historic Preservation Officer and the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, which holds a façade easement on the Dyess Administration Building. (*See Appendix VI*)

In the spring of 2011, ASU purchased the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home and has begun restoration of the house and landscape. The Cash house serves as a representative example of a Dyess Colony farmstead. Once complete, the house and landscape will meet the second key area of development as defined by the master plan. Working with members of the Cash family and graduate students in ASU's Heritage Studies Ph.D. Program and at Savannah College of Art and Design, ASU is undertaking a sensitive and authentic restoration of an original colony house. To date, private funds invested in the purchase and restoration total \$300,000, with multiple fundraising events planned in 2012 to benefit the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home project.

With each restoration project, ASU is meeting the first key development area as noted in the master plan. A Historic Structures Report was completed for the Administration Building and Theater to document the current conditions and reveal original materials and design prior to any demolition and construction at both sites. Similarly, a Historic American Buildings Survey is in the works to record the architectural integrity of the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home and historic farmstead. This documentation is critical not only to the restoration and interpretation of the sites, but also serves as the basis for a Dyess archives and future field work.

Project director for the Historic Dyess Colony Project is Dr. Ruth Hawkins, director of Arkansas Heritage Sites at Arkansas State University. Dr. Hawkins led the acquisition, restoration, and program development at all of the university's heritage sites, along with providing leadership for establishment of two National Scenic Byways to link heritage attractions in the region. Co-Director for the project is Dr. Clyde Milner, who directs the Heritage Studies Ph.D. program and works closely with the Heritage Sites Office to provide meaningful research and field experience opportunities for students in the Ph.D. program. Dr. Milner will provide support in development of humanities programming at the Historic Dyess Colony, along with involving all faculty in the Heritage Studies Ph.D. program. Aaron Ruby of Ruby Architects, Inc., in Little Rock is serving as project architect. Ruby served as an architect for the Lakeport Plantation restoration and is currently working on adaptation of a two-story historic building in Lake Village, Arkansas to serve as municipal offices. The restoration efforts at Dyess are supported by Beth Wiedower of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She provides field services for Arkansas Heritage Sites projects through a Rural Heritage Development Initiative partnership between Arkansas State University and the National Trust. Paula Miles, Assistant Director of Arkansas Heritage Sites, has worked with Dr. Hawkins on all heritage projects and will provide project management support.

(Resumes of all are attached.)

H. Administration Building

The Dyess Colony Administration Building served as the center of activity and business for the farm families of Dyess Colony. As a cooperative project, rather than a communal project, each farm family relied on the collective services offered in the community. During the resettlement colony's peak, the Administration Building was a hub of activity, located at the heart of Dyess Colony Center. Later, the town continued to use the Administration Building for city services and as a backdrop for community activities until maintenance and repairs became too costly and forced the city to move into a smaller structure nearby.

Thirty-six years after its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in 1976, the Dyess Colony Administration Building is one of the few remaining structures in the Dyess Colony Center and

the best preserved building of those extant. In addition to its importance as the center of community life during the colony period, the Administration Building has remained at the center, both geographically and emotionally. The Dyess Colony Administration Building occupies a significant place in the history and architecture of the town of Dyess, Mississippi County, and the state of Arkansas; and as it represents the federal government's role in resettlement of destitute farmers, a significant place in history and architecture of the nation. (*See Photos of Administration Building in Appendix VII*)

As such, the Dyess Colony Redevelopment Master Plan calls for the Administration Building to once again occupy a place of significance in the community. Once complete, the structure will house interpretive displays and elements telling the story of the landscape (impact of the Mississippi River on the land), Dyess Colony as a New Deal agricultural experiment, colonization, and the agricultural heritage of the area. Space also will be provided to house city government and administration for the Town of Dyess, which will partner with ASU in staffing the museum. Our goal is to have the building open by June 2013, even though we may not have funding for full-time staff by that time. Until such funding is available, the museum will be operated by students in the university's Heritage Studies Ph.D. program. To ensure full coverage through normal visiting hours, the city clerk will assist with services to visitors.

I. Dyess Theater

Adjacent to the Administration Building, Dyess Theater was not an original structure in the Dyess Colony Center when the community was laid out in 1934. On the same site stood a one-story café building designed in the Greek Revival style in keeping with the stately Administration Building and the center's other architecture. Dyess Café also housed a bank, the town newspaper, *Colony Herald*, and a craft shop. The café building burned in the late 1940s and Dyess Theater was constructed on its site in 1948 with a new café, the Pop Shop, incorporated into the new construction. The existing façade of Dyess Theater is significant because it represents the growth and development of the colony, post-federal involvement, and it was a site frequented by a young Johnny Cash and the other youth in Dyess. Locals today have fond memories of the theater and the Pop Shop, as both served as gathering spots in the town.

Unfortunately, the shell of the theater building had deteriorated significantly and project architects and engineers deemed it unsalvageable, along with the Pop Shop portion of the building. ASU has stabilized and shored up the façade of the theater, however, and plans to incorporate it into a reconstruction of the Dyess Theater. (*See Appendix VIII Photos*) This new structure will serve as the visitor destination for travelers along the Arkansas section of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway and as the starting point for visitors to Historic Dyess Colony. Dyess Theater will be a functioning theater showing introductory films and films of the period (such as *Grapes of Wrath*) and hosting special programs about the agricultural heritage of the Arkansas Delta, the colonization project, its most famous resident, Johnny Cash, and other humanities-based events and offerings. It will be the first stop for student field trips, national and international motorcoach tours, and individual tourists, as well as scholars visiting Dyess.

J. Johnny Cash Boyhood Home

In private ownership until 2011, the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home is one of relatively few remaining original colony houses that has not been severely altered. The Cash house represents the typical five-room Dyess Colony farm house and is located approximately one mile from the colony center on a gravel county road. Although succeeding occupants altered and added to the house in the years since the colony's establishment, an estimated 80 percent of the original historic fabric was found to be in place and preserved by later cosmetic additions to the structure. Notably missing are the original colony house windows which were of a unique height and pane configuration.

The Cash house sits on its original foundation. Although the ancillary structures have been lost (barn, privy, chicken coop, smokehouse), it remains surrounded by cultivated fields, primarily in cotton and wheat, as was the case during the house's 1935-1950 period of significance. That the surrounding landscape and viewsheds remain undisturbed and in original use to the period of significance is astonishing and rare in cultural resource management. It is because of this that ASU is not entertaining moving the structure to locate it closer to the other two sites of interpretation in the colony center.

Instead, ASU's Heritage Sites Program is conserving the landscape through the use of agricultural and conservation easements and use agreements with private land owners adjacent to the Cash house property.

Restoration of the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home is underway. Upon completion, the house will be opened to the public to interpret a typical farm family's existence during Dyess Colony's operation. Furnishings and decorative finishes are either original to or representative of the wares in a colony house between 1935 and 1950. ASU is working with the Cash family, including two siblings of Johnny Cash who were born and raised in the house, to ensure accuracy and authenticity. *(See Appendix IX for model of house as it originally appeared)*

In addition to the house itself, plans call for the recreation of the farmstead at the Cash house. A barn, privy, smokehouse, and chicken coop will be constructed based on existing structures and photographic evidence from the 1930s in Dyess. Humanities-focused educational and experiential activities for students and visitors will be housed in these ancillary structures within the farmstead. Ultimately, ASU plans to construct a replica colony house on nearby property to serve as a caretaker's house for the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home and to provide perspective of how far the original houses were from their neighbors.

The property will be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, with an end goal of having the site designated a National Historic Landmark for its association with both Dyess Colony and Johnny Cash. An interpretive plan for the house, as well as the colony center buildings, has been developed by ASU students in the Heritage Studies Ph.D. program. A full-time director will be employed for the house and will be assisted by students to help with programming for an audience that is expected to range from school groups to international visitors. At present, even though the house is not open, bus tours frequently drive past the house, including regular tour groups from Ireland, Germany, and Finland who are interested in the Johnny Cash legacy.

K. Additional Humanities Activities

Interpretive Signage: Sites markers will tell the stories of significant community buildings that no longer exist, such as the hospital, commissary, cotton gin, and cannery. Other key aspects of the

historic Dyess community will be included, such as the Tyronza River and the intricate system of drainage ditches.

Walking/Biking Trails: Though not included as part of this grant request, Arkansas State University's plans include development of walking/biking trails across the Dyess landscape to connect the colony center with the Cash house and introduce users to the unique landscape of the area. Signage and interpretation along the trail will include information about the Earthquakes of 1811-1812 which created the Sunken Lands footprint in which Dyess is located; the Floods of 1927 and 1937; the role of the Mississippi River and its tributaries in shaping the Delta; and the native flora and fauna.

Oral History Archives: Because many present-day residents of Dyess were born and raised in the community, ASU's Heritage Studies PhD Program is collecting oral histories from current and former colonists. These oral histories are being collected according to Oral History Association standards and will be accessible by family members, visitors, students, and scholars and are a crucial component in the documentation and preservation of Dyess Colony's story.

Second Life/Historic Dyess Colony Website: Arkansas State University is a leader among institutions in creating new and innovative education opportunities for students and faculty around the world. Beginning in 2009, ASU's Heritage Sites Program has operated its three heritage sites in the virtual world, as well as in the real world. Through Second Life, anyone around the world can access, visit, learn from, and interact with the three sites online. Designers are working now to add Historic Dyess Colony – the Administration Building, Dyess Theater and Pop Shop, and the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home – to the Second Life virtual landscape. In addition, the Second Life structures are being copied into an open sim platform to provide even greater access. Students in Japan, for example, can visit Johnny Cash's house in Dyess to learn about the agriculture of the Arkansas Delta and its influence on the famous songwriter's music. Scholars in Sweden can study records from a successful public works program. Historic Dyess Colony in Second Life makes the site and experience accessible to audiences heretofore inaccessible.

Similarly, the Historic Dyess Colony website hosted and maintained by ASU serves to introduce visitors to the story and the sites. The web -- <http://arkansasheritagesites.astate.edu/AHS/Dyess.html> --is an important tool in the dissemination of humanities information and resources.

Johnny Cash Music Festival: The annual Johnny Cash Music Festival is much more than a fundraiser for the Historic Dyess Colony project. This event highlights, educates, and preserves the rich music heritage of the Arkansas Delta. Cash's music is a product of the region – the blues from sharecroppers in the fields and juke joints, the gospel pouring out of clapboard churches rising from those same fields, and the hard times and harsh conditions of the agricultural economy in Dyess Colony. The inaugural concert introduced the audience to Dyess through backdrop slides from the colony and a monologue by Rosanne Cash, placing her father and his music within the context of the Dyess agricultural resettlement experiment. The sellout concert in 2011 will grow and support future heritage and humanities activities in Dyess, scholarships at Arkansas State University, and marketing and promotion of the significance of Historic Dyess Colony to national and international audiences.

L. Proposed Challenge Grant Activities

In order to execute the variety of humanities activities planned for Historic Dyess Colony, it is imperative that we prepare authentic and historically correct sites at which to tell the story and offer humanities programming. The following investments will create three distinct yet thematic sites at which to execute such humanities activities.

- Complete the interior restoration of the Administration Building.
- Develop and install interpretive exhibits in the Administration Building to convey major themes noted in the Dyess Colony Redevelopment Master Plan.
- Reconstruct the Dyess Theater to house a visitor center and special events venue serving heritage tourists and residents of Dyess.
- Complete restoration of the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home, including period furnishings.

- Reconstruct the barn, smokehouse, chicken coop and privy that were typical outbuildings in Dyess Colony farmsteads.
- Acquire additional adjacent property for a security building (replicating an additional colony house), along with visitor services including restrooms and parking.
- Add directional signage and historic markers at locations where significant historic buildings are now gone (i.e. Dyess hospital, cannery, cotton gin and other important sites).

Once restoration is completed and the sites are open, Arkansas State University plans to offer ongoing special humanities activities in addition to the interpretive exhibits. Programming will be developed and conducted by on-site staff (to be hired when funding is available), as well as faculty members teaching in the Heritage Studies Ph.D. program. Additionally, Heritage Studies students will have the opportunity to develop and implement programs as part of their graduate assistantships or field work experiences. In developing our programming, we are aware that many of the students in the region, and even many adults, have never traveled beyond the Delta. Thus, the Historic Dyess Colony is an opportunity for a unique cultural experience and a chance to experience a significant chapter in our nation's history. Planned activities include:

- Offer Professional Development Workshops for teachers incorporating the history of the region, including the earthquakes of 1811-1812 that created the Sunken Lands, the timber industry, development of agriculture, hard times through natural and economic disasters, and New Deal era responses such as the Dyess resettlement colony.
- Develop interdisciplinary credit and non-credit programs to be offered on site related to the artist projects of the New Deal, including the Federal Writers Project, Federal Theater Project, and Federal Art Project.
- Work with area school teachers to develop educational tours tied to the Arkansas curriculum frameworks.
- Offer regular showings of 1930s era films, such as *Grapes of Wrath* and *The Good Earth*.

- Develop a literature course based on period writings to be offered on site, including such works as *Grapes of Wrath* (John Steinbeck), *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (James Agee and Walker Evans), *They Shoot Horses Don't They?* (Horace McCoy), *Come Back to Sorrento* (Dawn Powell), and *Day of the Locust* (Nathaniel West).
- Conduct all-day workshops to learn about and recreate lifestyles of the Great Depression, such as canning and preserving, which will include the opportunity for participants to take home locally grown fruits and vegetables that they have prepared. (The colony boasted a cannery, which was one of the community cooperative projects.)
- Develop seminars on the impact of the land and hard times on the music of the region, including influences on Johnny Cash.
- Continue to utilize the historic Dyess Colony as a laboratory for students in the Heritage Studies Ph.D. program, including opportunities for ongoing research, independent studies, field work and other activities.

M. Integration with the Heritage Studies Ph.D. Program and Other Humanities Programming

Arkansas State University's four heritage sites serve as major laboratories for the Heritage Studies Ph.D. program, an interdisciplinary program that is unique in the nation. Established in the fall of 2001, this program uses multiple perspectives to explore the interrelationships of history, folklore, literature, geography, culture, and environment. The program's goal is to produce heritage professionals who have the knowledge and skills needed to support the identification, assessment, preservation, interpretation, management and promotion of historic and cultural resources for non-specialist or "public" audiences. It differs from a traditional history degree in that its interdisciplinary approach involves all the humanities and social sciences. In its ten-year history, 18 Ph.D.'s have been awarded, and there are 38 students currently in the program. *(See Appendix X for information on the graduates of the program, and Appendix XI for highlights of the first ten years)*

The Heritage Studies Ph.D. is a beacon of excellence for the university. The director of the

program, Dr. Clyde Milner, will serve as a co-project director for this Challenge Grant to assure total integration of the restoration activities with humanities programming. Dr. Milner holds a Ph.D. in American Studies from Yale University with expertise in American regionalism and cultural identity. He spent 26 years on the faculty of Utah State University before coming to Arkansas State University in 2002 and is known for his research, writing, and editing on the history of the American West and Native American History.

The concept of region is central to the Heritage Studies degree. Through case study of a distinctive region--the Mississippi River Delta--students gain an understanding of cultural preservation and interpretation that is applicable in other settings. While universal in scope and method, the Heritage Studies doctoral program uses the unique heritage, attributes, resources, and interests of the Mississippi River Delta as a laboratory. Students study regional history, anthropology, archaeology, folklore, regional and ethnic literature, and the social sciences. They develop and refine traditional doctoral-level research skills, but their expertise will be applied, practical, and public dissemination of history and culture.

Where appropriate, the Ph.D. faculty members integrate case studies and issues related to the Historic Dyess Colony into core courses, including Introduction to Heritage Studies Research and Writing, Concepts of Culture, Regional Cultures: History of the Mississippi River Delta, Cultural Resource Methods, and Management Issues in the Heritage Profession. In addition, two special topics Ph.D. seminars have been developed that utilize these sites as resources: Preservation Issues for Heritage Sites and Cultural Heritage Tourism. Research to date for the Historic Dyess Colony project has been completed by two graduate assistants in the Heritage Studies Ph.D. program.

Arkansas State University also offers public history courses at the undergraduate and master's levels, including Introduction to Museum Work, The Practice of History, Museum Collections Management, Special Problems in History, Internship in Public History, and Public History Seminar. Students interested in heritage sites, museum governance, preservation issues, and interpretive methods will have the opportunity to utilize the Historic Dyess Colony, Lakeport, Tyronza, and Hemingway-

Pfeiffer sites for research and field experiences beyond the classroom. At present, an Arkansas History class is conducting virtual field trips to these heritage sites through Second Life to develop a deeper appreciation of the history of this region of the state.

N. Marketing Plan

Through a Memorandum of Agreement with Arkansas State University, the director for this Challenge Grant application also serves as the executive director for Arkansas Delta Byways, a non-profit tourism association promoting 15 counties in the Arkansas Delta. Key promotional vehicles in this region are the two National Scenic Byways, with the heritage sites included in this application as primary sites along these routes. Thus, the Historic Dyess Colony will benefit from extensive marketing through the National Scenic Byways program, the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, and the Arkansas Delta Byways association. Both of these organizations develop brochures, market extensively, and are continuously seeking opportunities for features in national news media, including magazines, newspapers, and tour guide books. Additionally Arkansas State University will produce an individual brochure on the site, as well as a comprehensive brochure linking all four sites under the agricultural theme, "Working the Land: From Slavery to Sharecropping and Beyond." We will advertise the Historic Dyess Colony in regional and state tourism guides, as well as ads in the twice annual newspaper inserts produced by our State Department of Tourism and distributed to all daily and weekly newspaper in Arkansas and to all major media markets in surrounding states. Relationships are being developed between the Historic Dyess Colony and regional heritage tourism sites such as Graceland, Sun Studios, the National Civil Rights Museum, the Delta Cultural Center, and the B. B. King Museum to add this significant site to the regional, multi-state heritage experience in the Mississippi Delta.

Associated Press and freelance writers have taken great interest in our projects, and we have had coverage in newspapers around the country, as well magazines ranging from *Southern Living* to *The Economist* to *Rolling Stone*. Additionally, we are fortunate to have the full cooperation of the local media, including newspapers, radios, and television stations, in each of the three areas where we have heritage sites. The Historic Dyess Colony also was the subject of a documentary produced during the past

year by a graduate student in our College of Communications. This documentary has been shown at various community programs, along with repeat showings on our local cable station. A forthcoming PBS documentary will highlight the project and benefit ASU's private fundraising efforts.

Already, we have numerous requests for civic club presentations, as well as presentations to organizations around the region and the country. These have ranged from Rotary and Kiwanis presentations, to meetings of professional organizations, to national meetings and conferences such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation (meeting of Southwest and Western regions), the National Scenic Byway Program, the Delta Regional Authority, New Partners for Smart Growth, and Reclaiming Vacant Properties.

An interactive web site also has been developed for the Historic Dyess Colony, along with our other heritage sites. Along with providing the history of the Dyess Colony, the web site <http://arkansasheritagesites.astate.edu/AHS/Dyess.html> shows our restoration and re-construction progress.

O. Evaluation

All special events and classes offered at the Historic Dyess Colony will include participant evaluations, which will be reviewed each semester by the Heritage Studies Ph.D. Program Committee. The committee includes all graduate faculty teaching in the Ph.D. program. In addition, the Heritage Studies Ph.D. Program Committee will regularly review the research and activities carried out by students utilizing these sites to determine ways to enhance the experience for both students and visitors. Records of visitors will be maintained, along with opportunities for visitors to provide evaluations and suggestions. Both the Heritage Studies Ph.D. Program Committee and the ASU Museum Advisory Council, made up of citizens from Arkansas Delta communities, will annually review the level and quality of the humanities activities. Their reviews will assist in determining future research directions and in building on historic resources. These proposed evaluation procedures are in line with practices at our other sites, including audience evaluation, as well as staff review and review by members of the Heritage Studies Ph.D. faculty.

P. Fund-Raising

The Director of Arkansas Heritage Sites serves as the Challenge Grant project director and has raised between \$2 and \$3 million annually for Delta initiatives since assuming this position in 1999. Prior to her work with the Delta, the project director served as the university's vice president for institutional advancement and conducted a capital campaign in 1995 that resulted in \$21 million. The Development Office of the university also recognizes the restoration of these sites as an institutional priority and is committed to assisting with the fund-raising.

For the Dyess Administration Building and Theater properties, we are working closely with the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council, the legislature, and the National Scenic Byways program on funding opportunities.

The connection with Johnny Cash also gives us a national, and even international, audience that we otherwise would not be able to tap into. We have established a National Advisory Council, co-chaired by Rosanne Cash and John Carter Cash (Johnny Cash's children), to assist with these national efforts. In addition, the Cash family is committed to an annual Johnny Cash Music Festival to raise money for the project, with the intent that this will be a permanent event at Arkansas State University. The Cash family is particularly pleased that their father's legacy is being placed within the context of the Dyess Colony as a New Deal agricultural resettlement community.

We have also established an Arkansas Steering Committee to assist with fund-raising for the project in Arkansas and the region. In addition to monetary contributions, we will seek donation of additional land surrounding the Cash home in order to have sufficient space to build the outbuildings. We also will work with adjacent landowners to negotiate conservation easements to ensure that the surrounding area remains in crop production to maintain an authentic cultural landscape.

Q. Other University Commitments in the Delta

The heritage sites included in this grant request are part of a larger university-wide commitment to the Delta. Other humanities programming in the Delta includes the following highlights:

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences was formed in the Fall of 2003 through a division of the College of Arts and Sciences into two colleges. The split reflects the university's strong and growing commitment to the Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as to the now-separate College of Sciences and Mathematics.

Delta Symposium

The university began an annual Delta Blues Symposium in 1995, an interdisciplinary conference on the folklore, history, literature, and music of the Delta Blues. This three-day event addresses a special sub-theme each year, with presentations previously grounded in music, its origins in the land and cultures of the Mississippi Delta, and its wider impact on culture and history. This symposium now has been expanded beyond the blues to provide students and the general public with the opportunity to explore a wide range of Delta issues.

Arkansas Review: A Journal of Delta Studies

Arkansas Review: A Journal of Delta Studies is published three times a year on the Arkansas State University campus. Started in 1966 as the *Kansas Quarterly*, it moved to Arkansas in 1996 and continued for two years as *Kansas Quarterly/Arkansas Review*, focusing on creative writing. In 1998 the name was changed to reflect its shift to an interdisciplinary regional studies journal. The focus of the journal is the seven-state Mississippi River Delta.

Arkansas State University Archives

The library archives contain special collections related to the Delta, including an extensive Mid-South oral history collection; drainage and levee district papers related to the development of the region; and plantation and other papers from early families. ASU also holds the private papers of former First District Congressman E. C. "Took" Gathings (who served from 1939 to 1968) and the papers of his three successors who have now completed terms in Congress: U. S. Representative Bill Alexander (who served from 1969 to 1992), U. S. Representative Blanche Lincoln (who served from 1993 to 1996 and was elected to the Senate in 1998), and Marion Berry (who served from 1997 to 2010). Thus, the university is the repository for more

than 70 years of the political history of the Arkansas Delta. Several former Dyess colonists have donated their papers to the ASU Archives, and we will continue to seek donations of Dyess Colony papers.

Arkansas State University Museum

The ASU Museum is among the first of seven museums in the state to receive accreditation by the American Association of Museums. Its mission is to share knowledge of natural history and cultural heritage with people of all ages and educational levels by collecting, preserving, researching, and interpreting objects, with emphasis on the Mississippi River Delta region.

R. Impact of an NEH Challenge Grant

Currently we know of no rural heritage tourism models whereby humanities programming is totally integrated into preservation activities, along with the development of long-term educational programming. Through the combination of humanities and restoration activities, the university expects to enhance the social and economic viability of impoverished Arkansas Delta towns, as well as providing exemplary educational and research opportunities for scholars, students, and the general public. Funding received through the National Endowment for the Humanities would have a major impact in this distressed region and would assist in creating national models for the highest standards of historic preservation and humanities interpretation.

The Dyess Colony provides us with a significant opportunity to explore a period in our nation's history – the Great Depression – that is becoming a dim memory for those still living who experienced it firsthand. For the generations after them, Dyess Colony will be an authentic step back in time that will convey the trials and successes of the more than 500 colonists selected to participate in this historic farm resettlement experiment.