



JOHN GILMORE RILEY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The John G. Riley Center/Museum receives support from Knight Foundation to preserve Frenchtown's history

Tallahassee, FL (May 14, 2018) – The John G. Riley Center/Museum is pleased to announce it has received \$50,000 from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Fund at the Community Foundation of North Florida. These funds will support the “Soul Voices Lead the Way” initiative to create historical markers in Frenchtown over the next year.

This public education and engagement project will use recorded oral histories of deceased members from the once thriving Black Frenchtown, conducted by the Riley Museum during 1977 to 2005, to create a heritage trail. The partnership of residents, private and public entities will use the historical marker project to help revitalize a place of pride, inhabitability, business, and tourism.

The oral histories were by African Americans, ages 75 to 90, who lived in Frenchtown when it was a thriving community of schools, churches, businesses, and families. Currently on VHS tapes, the oral histories will be digitized and presented initially to a Historical Group that will help guide the project, followed by a public viewing to build awareness and stimulate citywide interest and support.

The Project will be conducted in three Phases, with the first funded by Knight Foundation. Simultaneously, research will be conducted into other funding sources to support Phases II and III – fabrication and installation.

“As new technologies supersede older ones, it is urgent that recordings such as these are preserved. This hopefully will be a first step in a progression to accomplish the digitizing of the entire Riley oral history collection, while memorializing a historic community,” said Althemese Barnes, Executive Director of the Riley Museum.

Knight Foundation invests in projects that help cities attract and keep talented people, expand economic opportunity and create a culture of civic engagement. Knight Foundation believes that successful communities are equitable, inclusive and participatory.

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