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Visit St. Augustine Unveils New Black History App
Florida's Historic Coast witnessed the genesis of America's Black History

St. Augustine, Fla. – February 5, 2024 — Black History — which is American history — is stepping into the forefront. St. Augustine's 450+ year story gives a unique, international view into this topic.

In an effort to make the extensive history of African-descended people in the oldest city accessible to all, Visit St. Augustine has created an all-new Black History app — putting history in the palm of your hand. Created in collaboration with Florida's Historic Coast, this application is available for free on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store now.

"In our work with the team at Visit St. Augustine, we wanted to develop a new Black History app for St. Augustine that would amplify marginalized voices and preserve the rich tapestry of Black History in St. Johns County," stated Susan Phillips, President & CEO of the St. Johns County Visitors & Convention Bureau. "By utilizing technology, our visitors and residents will now have another way to engage with a more comprehensive understanding of our shared past, fostering a future where knowledge, appreciation, and unity flourish."

When St. Augustine was founded in September of 1565, free and enslaved Africans stepped ashore with the Spanish crew of Pedro Menendez de Avilés. In October 1687, the first recorded group of fugitives who were escaping British slavery arrived at the city gate, asking to be accepted into the "true faith." They were the first of hundreds of enslaved people who would seek sanctuary in Spanish Florida, creating an early version of the Underground Railroad that ran south instead of north. This eventually led to the founding of Fort Mose, the first legally sanctioned free Black settlement in the United States. Lincolnville Historic District, originally called "Africa" or "Little Africa" was founded in 1866 by Black Americans. Now, we are approaching the 60th anniversary of the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which many historians believe would not have passed if it were not for the resistance and courage shown by activists here in St. Augustine.

"The Visit St. Augustine team is grateful to everyone who has collaborated with us to make the release possible," explained Cheyenne Koth Leahy, one of the writers of the new app. "This initial project stage has shown us that St. Augustine's historical and cultural organizations exist in an ecosystem that thrives when we communicate and celebrate with each other. We are excited to share the Black History App — and help it evolve together."

Created by Visit St. Augustine and available now for download, the app's functions and content seamlessly integrate history with real life exploration (including a "What's Nearby" tool that uses the cell phone's location services to show users nearby historical sites). Research is conducted through reputable sources, including

articles and books by historians from across the world. Foundational research databases include Florida Memory, the Library of Congress, the Civil Rights Library of St. Augustine (maintained by Flagler College), and Enslaved.org (maintained by the National Endowment for the Humanities).

The St. Augustine Black History App has four main sections — Events Timeline, Historical People, Historical Places, Historical Topics. The information within is inter-connected, allowing any user to delve deeper.

The Events Timeline is the backbone of the St. Augustine Black History App. This section contains an overview of the 450+ year history of Florida's Historic Coast, from the 1513 voyage of Ponce de Leon to the recent Fort Mose groundbreaking ceremony on January 19, 2024.

The Historical People Section is composed of biographical "profiles," highlighting the stories of Black people who have either resided or spent significant time in St. Augustine. From icons like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Frederick Douglass to lesser-known local heroes, like Francisco Menendez, the leader of Fort Mose. Each historical person profile includes a short biography, links to related pages on the app, a media gallery, and a personalized event timeline.

The Historical Place Section is very similar, including profiles on sites that relate to Black History, each being a setting for unique stories and challenging events. Every historical place profile provides an overview of the site's history, a media gallery, a unique event timeline, as well as links to related people and topics. Every Historical Person and Historical Place profile includes a bibliography of sources used to create the content.

The Historical Topics Section connects the Historical People and Historical Places through "topic pages" that explore time periods, themes, and local groups. For example, the Civil Rights Movement topic page includes the "place profiles" of the ACCORD Museum, Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center, and St. Paul AME Church and the "person profiles" of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dr. R. B. Hayling. Each topic page also has its own unique timeline.

Visit St. Augustine will update the app's features and content on a quarterly basis with new content and functionality. The app will evolve as history continues to be discovered and uncovered, providing a layered experience for all users.

As projects like the reconstruction at Fort Mose Historic State Park begin and St. Augustine vies to become home to the proposed Florida State Black History museum, the significant Black History of Florida's Historic Coast is stepping into the forefront.

Located midway between Daytona Beach and Jacksonville, Florida's Historic Coast includes historic St. Augustine, the outstanding golf and seaside elegance of Ponte Vedra, the rural beauty of Hastings, Elkton, St. Johns, and 42 miles of pristine Atlantic beaches. Visitor Information Centers are located at 10 Castillo Drive, St. Augustine; 200 Solana Rd. Suite B, Ponte Vedra Beach; and at the St. Johns County Beach Pier Park, 350 A1A Beach Blvd., St. Augustine Beach. For advance travel information, call 1.800.653.2489 or go to the Visitors and Convention Bureau website at www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com. Check us out on social media: Instagram

@FloridasHistoricCoast; @ViajaStAugustine, Facebook.com/officialstaugustine, and Facebook.com/ViajaStAugustine and Twitter @FLHistoricCoast.

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