

## Explore Durham's history from your classroom

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Three Durham-based digital history projects, with accompanying 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies lesson plans, have been developed to help teachers and students explore Durham's rich economic, social, and cultural history. Christie Hinson Norris, Project Director at the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium, teamed up with the Digital Innovation Lab (<http://digitalinnovation.unc.edu/>) at UNC-Chapel Hill to produce classroom curriculum for three Durham digital projects: *The Parrish Street Project*, *The Tobacco Heritage Trail*, and *Repopulating Hayti*. These projects recover and re-create digitally Durham's rich African-American history while tracing important economic institutions, from American Tobacco Company to North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company. Students can wander virtually through interactive maps to discover the influence of Jim Crow segregation and the ways in which individuals tried to overcome racial and economic discrimination. They can experience "hands-on" learning through these websites while the accompanying lesson plans guide teachers in interactive classroom activities to help students engage with the virtual material.

These projects were developed as a part of the "Main Street, Carolina" project (<http://mainstreet.lib.unc.edu/>). "Main Street, Carolina" uses an innovative system for linking historical content (documents, photographs, postcards, and oral history interviews, largely drawn from the holdings of UNC, Duke, and the Durham Public Library) with locations on historical maps to create a variety of digital history projects, including online exhibits, virtual walking tours, and "ghost" tours of lost spaces. The software platform used in "Main Street, Carolina" projects was developed as part of a collaboration between UNC's Wilson Library and Professor Robert Allen of UNC's American Studies Department. The system uses historic Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, the most comprehensive set of urban ground plans ever produced, to show changes in the built environment from roughly 1880-1920. The maps have been layered over contemporary Google satellite imagery to allow for comparisons between then and now.

"Main Street, Carolina" has brought together cultural heritage organizations around the state with UNC-Chapel Hill faculty and students to produce digital history projects on the early life of African-American artist Romare Bearden (Levine Museum of the New South), the history of downtown Greensboro (UNC-G Public History Program), and the photographic history of Wilmington's waterfront (New Hanover County Public Library). Since fall 2011, "Main Street, Carolina" projects have been developed in association with UNC's new Digital Innovation Lab (<http://digitalinnovation.unc.edu/>), which focuses on the development of public digital humanities tools, projects, and programming. These three digital Durham projects were created in 2010 and 2011 by students in Professor Robert Allen's American Studies graduate seminar on digital history.

"Parrish Street" ([http://mainstreet.lib.unc.edu/projects/parrish\\_st\\_durham/](http://mainstreet.lib.unc.edu/projects/parrish_st_durham/)) was developed in collaboration with the City of Durham's [Office of Economic and Workforce Development](#) on behalf of the public-private Parrish Street Project in the fall of 2010. It offers a virtual walking tour of downtown Durham's Parrish Street district, once dubbed the "Black Wall Street" as a tribute to the success of such black-owned businesses as North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company and Mechanics and Farmers Bank around the turn of the century. These Jim Crow-era business achievements fueled the development of many important community institutions throughout Durham. The project documents both "lost" sites associated with Parrish Street's heyday as the hub of African-American economic life in Durham a century ago and surviving structures that might serve as the basis for the street's rehabilitation. The area is now the focus of an intensive redevelopment campaign, led by the City of Durham (see: "The History of Parrish Street," online at [http://www.durhamnc.gov/departments/eed/parrish/p\\_history.cfm](http://www.durhamnc.gov/departments/eed/parrish/p_history.cfm)). The accompanying lesson plans (<http://www.civics.unc.edu/resources/docs/ParrishStreetLessons.pdf>) allow

students to explore the website while learning about Jim Crow. The culminating exercise asks students to design their own redevelopment plan for Parrish Street.

**“Tobacco Heritage Trail”** ([http://mainstreet.lib.unc.edu/projects/tobacco\\_durham/](http://mainstreet.lib.unc.edu/projects/tobacco_durham/)) was developed in fall 2010 in collaboration with Preservation Durham (<http://www.preservationdurham.org/>). The project is a virtual extension and enhancement of Preservation Durham’s “Tobacco Heritage Trail” walking tour. It incorporates ten sites, including Liberty Warehouse (in today’s Durham Central Park), various warehouses and administrative buildings along Main and Duke Streets, the Liggett & Myers Cigarette Factory, and the Imperial Tobacco Building. The virtual tour includes excerpts from oral histories and features examples of typical Piedmont Blues music that emerged out of tobacco auctions and cigarette factories. The lesson plans for this project (<http://www.civics.unc.edu/resources/docs/TobaccoHeritage.pdf>) give students the opportunity to explore the rich history of tobacco in Durham, including farm and factory life. The culminating activity provides an opportunity for students to design a living history museum exhibit on tobacco in North Carolina.

**“Repopulating Hayti”** (<http://mainstreet.lib.unc.edu/projects/hayti/>) was another project undertaken with Preservation Durham, this time in the fall of 2011. This project virtually repopulates Durham’s Hayti community of Durham on the eve of its destruction by urban renewal in the 1960s. The Hayti neighborhood of Durham was a vibrant African-American community that flourished from the 1880s to the 1940s—one which W.E.B. DuBois held up as a shining example of black success. With its own thriving businesses and culture, Hayti was home to / or associated with many important institutions, including North Carolina Central University (NCCU), White Rock Baptist Church, and Lincoln Hospital. By 1960, the community was targeted for destruction during the process of urban renewal. Many homes and businesses were torn down to make way for the Durham Freeway (Highway 147). Very little remains of Hayti’s built environment today, though its legacy still persists. The site currently maps over 200 homes and businesses, using the photos and parcel appraisals from the Durham Urban Renewal Records (<http://digitalnc.org/collections/durham>). The accompanying lesson plans (<http://www.civics.unc.edu/resources/docs/Hayti.pdf>) guide students through the complicated questions of urban renewal and redevelopment. The students will reenact a town council meeting in which they must debate the benefits and drawbacks of urban renewal before voting on whether to carry it out.

These lesson plans are available for download from the NC Civic Education Consortium’s online database: <http://www.civics.unc.edu/resources/>. Preparation of the lesson plans was supported through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.