stqry

African American Heritage Preservation Foundation, Inc.

Case Study: August 2021

Preservation Through Education

Overview

The African American Heritage Preservation Foundation, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization with a mission to preserve, maintain, and raise awareness of little-known African American historical sites located primarily in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast Regions, of the United States.

AAHPF founder, E. Renée Ingram , undertook the effort in the early 1990's to get her family's cemetery (The Stanton Family Cemetery) placed on the Commonwealth of Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places. The Stanton Family Cemetery became the first free African American privately held family cemetery to be placed on these registers in 1993. As a result of these efforts, Ingram was inspired to do the same for similar sites around the country and in 1993 founded the African American Heritage Preservation Foundation.

In the 27 years since its inception, AAHPF has continued to successfully engage and gain recognition for these endangered and little-known African American sites. Today, the Foundation also serves as a resource center for community groups, preservationists, and many others in terms of research and connection.

Creating an app as a mobile and online presence for the Foundation to raise awareness was a natural next step in helping expand AAHPF's resources, as well as expanding access for communities. With the app, the Foundation continues to serve groups such as community groups, genealogical societies, non-profit organizations, and government entities in new ways.
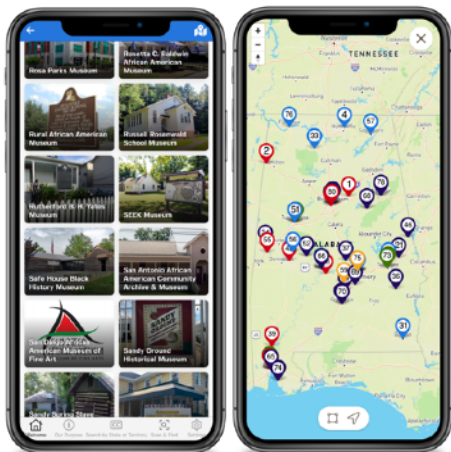
The Challenge

The immediate challenge that foundation sought to address was to help mitigate the threat to endangered African American sites across the U.S. The app is helping to expand and provide funding for this major ongoing project in new creative and innovative technological ways.

"So many African American endangered sites face immediate threats from demolition, deterioration, environment, surrounding development or infrastructure projects," said Ingram. She goes on to say that a lack of recognition and maintenance over time contributes to this threat, which is what the AAHPF is actively trying to address through the power of information.

"For several years, the Foundation Board of Trustees had discussed developing a mobile app primarily focused on endangered African American sites," Ingram said. "Ironically, the pandemic provided us with the opportunity to focus on the mobile app and expand the scope to include other African American sites to engage and appeal to a larger audience."

Similarly to many other institutions globally, the Foundation had a unique opportunity to focus on virtual engagement with their main audience during the pandemic, connecting with them through a robust app that provided all the information they needed in one place.

They quickly realized that an app would also enable them to take their mission a step further, providing resources about sites across the whole country rather than just the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions.

Key Features & Functionality

App Highlights

Educational resources

Preservation of endangered sites

Used on and offsite

Key Features

1,700+ sites
Specialized tours
Multimedia content
Mapping

Key Functionality

General site information
Interpretation
Self-guided touring
Virtual touring
Online and offline capabilities
Educational tool

> "The end user has so many options and flexibility of ease in this app. It provides a summary of the site, direct links to the documentation of the site, virtual tours, and educational lesson plans where applicable"
>
> - E. Renée Ingram, AAHPF Founder

The Solution

With the help of the STQRY app building platform, the Foundation was able to build a comprehensive mobile app called "African American Sites" featuring more than 1,700 African American heritage sites throughout the United States and its territories.

The advantage of the STQRY Platform allows for a single point of access for these African American sites. Rather than having to go to multiple websites for information about these properties, users can search through the database on the mobile app for free and then pull information they need about a specific site from a single source. Each site listing includes a summary, and relevant links to virtual tours, educational lesson plans, and more.

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In addition to the endangered sites, users can also explore heritage trails, military sites, landmarks, and museums to get an extensive understanding of African American sites throughout the country that contributed to U.S history. Widening the scope of the Foundation's focus to include these other sites was a unique opportunity with their app.

The Foundation's team was able to to include additional resources from the Smithsonian, the National Park Service, state, and local organizations, and even privately held properties to pull this information together. The importance of accessibility of this information will ensure the continued preservation and appreciation of these sites into the future.

The Result

The popularity of the app allowed the AAHPF team to release a second version of the app via STQRY, including advanced features like like geofencing, which notifies users when they are near a site so that they can explore both in-person and on the app.

"The STQRY platform has been very easy to use as an administrator for updating and adding sites to the app," said Ingram. Ease of use is imperative when building out a huge database of information such as this. In terms of impact, Ingram said, "The app has provided us more visibility and hopefully more financial support to maintain and add on features to the app, and to achieve our goals."

AAHPF's most immediate goal is to develop a grant program for 2022 called the Historic Preservation Bricks and Mortar Fund. A maximum of 4 grants will be provided to eligible 501(c) (3) organizations, funding projects that restore endangered African American properties and foster economic development of these sites within their communities into the future.

Learn more and check out the app at **www.aahpfdn.org**

If you are interested in setting up a free demo, please contact us to schedule an appointment.

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