

West Medford Afro-American Remembrance Project

SHILOH BAPTIST CHURCH HISTORY RESEARCH

Project Proposal: Fall 2005

During Fall semester 2005, students in Dr. Mark Auslander's course "Museums and Public Memory" (Anth 159a) at Brandeis University will work with the West Medford Afro-American Remembrance Project and the Medford Historical Society, in continued consultation with our colleagues at Tufts University, to document aspects of West Medford's Afro-American history. As agreed in spring 2005, the principal focus of the students' research will be on the Shiloh Baptist Church and its position in the community from the time of the church's founding up until around 1970.

The main goal of the class will be to develop a digital audio walking guide to the history of Shiloh and its surrounding neighborhood, that can be "podcast" or broadcast through the internet for playback on computers or portable audio devices. Using digital recording devices (ipods with italk attachments) the students will interview members of the community about Shiloh's early history and their memories of life in the community up until 1970. These voices, supplemented by commentaries from the students, will be incorporated into the audio walking tour, which will be freely available to everyone from Brandeis University servers. The tour, consisting of many segments which can be played in any order, may also include audio material collected by Dr. Shaw's students at Tufts.

If possible, the class will also try to develop a small exhibition on the history of the church, including historic documents and objects of memory from the community. The exhibit may be displayed in several sites, including the Medford Historical Society of the Medford Library, to be determined in consultation with the WMAAR committee. (We anticipate that more extensive exhibitions will be developed in subsequent semesters through collaborative work between the committee, the MHS, and Tufts and Brandeis universities.

We anticipate a schedule of work as follows:

September 2005. Training workshops for students on the use of ipods for digital audio recording, audio editing on computers, and podcasting through RSS feed. Students also undertake readings in Medford's history, and familiarize themselves with the work done by Dr. Shaw's classes in earlier semesters.

October: week 1. Walking tour of the West Medford neighborhood by members of the WMAAR committee. Initial conceptualization of the digital audio tour.

October. Weeks 2 and 3. Oral history interviews by students with principal resource persons on Church history. Other students will develop timelines and summaries of historical texts. A third group of students will record appropriate choral music for the tour. Notes will be taken on possible objects of memory that might be loaned for the exhibition.

October. Week 4. Consolidation and review with the committee. Agree on more detailed plan of the audio tour.

November. Weeks 1 and 2. Digital editing of the gathered audio material by some students. Other students will produce a physical map and other written materials to be used by those taking the tour. Another group will 'translate' the interview material into wall panels for a mobile exhibit.

November. Week 4. Test of audio walking tour with committee members, community members, and especially Medford High School students. Brandeis students carefully take notes on strengths and weaknesses of the tour. Test demonstration of the mobile exhibit.

December. Week 1. Final re-editing and revisions of walking tour. Final revisions of the mobile exhibit.

December. Week 2. "Roll out" of the walking tour for community. ("Driving tour" for many, because of the cold.) And opening of the exhibit in a venue to be determined.