JCBHPS Overview and The Great Tablet

James Taylor/JCBHPS President, James Tolbert/JCBHPS Secretary

Jefferson County Black History Preservation Society
Jefferson County, West Virginia
Background

• James Taylor, Nathaniel Downing (deceased), James “Alvin” Tolbert and George Rutherford formed the JCBHPS in 2000 (The Founding Fathers)

• The organization’s goal is to research and preserve little- or unknown facts and historical contributions by African Americans in Jefferson County

• Findings are published and shared through books, pamphlets, social media and on our website (www.jcblackhistory.org)
Significant Achievements

• Purchased the Webb-Blessing House in 2003; this unique structure is on the National Register of Historic Places (major tourist attraction soon)

• Restoration project in progress; meeting room in honor of Nathaniel Downing completed, along with rooms dedicated to the Blessing family and African American Veterans from Jefferson County

• Rear porch will be rebuilt, garden and log cabin will be added in back yard, and water pump and hitching post will be installed in front
Partial List of Publications

• The Capture, Trial and Execution of Shields Green and John Copeland
• The Life and Death of Dangerfield Newby
• Africans in America of the Lower Shenandoah Valley (1700-1900)
• African American Heritage Trail Brochure
• African Americans of Jefferson County
Awards and Recognition

• Received the prestigious “Arts and Letters Award” from the Eastern Panhandle Alumnae Chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

• Honored with West Virginia Senate Resolution #29 for outstanding work in historical research

• Coordinated with local Landmarks Commissions to identify historic African American landmarks and install plaques and wayside signs at the sites

• Worked with Highway Commission and legislators to get highway markers installed
The Shepherd Monument

- Heyward Shepherd, a free Black man, was the first casualty during John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry
- The United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) praised Shepherd’s death, considering it an effort to preserve the institution of slavery
- The UDC and SCV erected the controversial stone monument in Harpers Ferry, as a memorial to Heyward Shepherd
The Great Tablet

• In 1932, the NAACP planned to erect the Great Tablet on the Storer College campus in tribute to John Brown

• The College President and the Board of Trustees refused the NAACP request for fear of racial violence

• In July 2006, the Great Tablet was placed on the Storer College campus by NAACP delegates with the original inscription from May 1932
W.E.B. Du Bois Response

• In 1932, Du Bois (founder of the Niagara Movement and a founder of the NAACP) responded to the Heyward Shepherd Monument

• Du Bois wrote, “Here John Brown aimed at human slavery a blow that woke up a guilty nation...John Brown’s body lies a mouldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on.”

• The Du Bois marker is next to the Shepherd Monument outside the John Brown Museum in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia
Contact Information

• If you’re interested in receiving our publications, please contact us through the website or by mail at— JCBHPS, P.O. Box 569, Ranson, WV 25438

• We’re also accepting donations toward the Webb-Blessing Restoration Project; if you’d like to help, please send your check to the address above and write, “Friends of Webb-Blessing” on the memo line. Thanks in advance!

• www.jcblackhistory.org