

# Fondren Fellows Project

## Project Title

The Red Book of Houston



## Brief Summary

We would like to work with self-motivated students who are interested in writing biographies of Black people showcased in the Red Book of Houston, published in 1915. This will require detective skills, tracing people's genealogy, and crafting research into a finished narrative. The students will also be required to present their work at Humanities Day or at another relevant venue.

## Project Description

The Red Book of Houston, published in 1915, provides a detailed view of middle-class Black life in Houston. It includes information pertaining to the fields of education, business, and religion, as well as brief personal histories and lists civic and social organizations. The book provides many physical addresses for churches, schools and teachers, businesses, social clubs, civic organizations, and the home addresses of prominent families. We have worked with both undergraduate and graduate students supported by the Fondren Fellows program, the department of history, and faculty research funds to first map these locations and now offer more context about the people and places in the Red Book. Ultimately, we have created a project that enables us to visualize the space occupied by the African American community in the early nineteenth century in Houston. Currently, we have students conducting research on individuals in the Red Book in order to write extended biographies that will then be added to an online exhibit in Quartex.

For this round of funding, we would like the potential fellows to continue writing biographies, but with the addition of an Ancestry.com nine-month subscription. This subscription could enhance their ability to find a larger range of genealogical resources. Furthermore, we would like at least one of the students to assist with data clean-up. We are creating a small-scale database of names, addresses, and other information of Black people culled from Houston city directories from the 1870s-1920s. A finished database could make searching across the directories quick and easy for academic researchers and the broader public interested in genealogical work.

We would like the students to present some of their work at an undergraduate research conference, most likely Humanities Days. This would allow students to work on their oral and visual presentation skills.

## Outline the key tasks that the Fondren Fellow(s) would work on.

The digital work would entail students using tools to extract data from city directories. The investigative work involves using newspaper archives, census materials, city directories, government archives, and secondary historical works to research the lives of individuals.

Students who present at a research conference will create written and visual materials for their posters and oral presentations to share with the audience.

**What qualifications would you expect from students working on this project?**

We would prefer both students to be Humanities majors, preferable History. If someone is drawn to data clean-up and extraction, that would be a plus.

**What would students learn through their participation in this project?**

Students will build on their research and writing skills if they choose to work on individual biographies. Students who choose to engage in digital work will enhance their data refinement skills.