

VOICES FROM SMALL PLACES

The goal of this project is to preserve and document the history of small places across East Texas. Focusing on communities, population of 100 or less, we hope to recapture the history of these once thriving communities and make it available to the general public. Through this effort these communities are able to leave a lasting legacy for future generations.



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The goal of this project is to preserve and document the history of small places (population of 100 or fewer) throughout East Texas. We believe we have designed a low cost way to help communities preserve their history and make it available to the public. Using a unique combination of methods we are able to construct a multifaceted history of each community.

- We use “photovoice.” We give cameras to current and former residents and ask them to take pictures of places that have value for them. We ask them to explain in a journal why they took the pictures they did, collecting both a written and photographic record of personal remembrances all directly tied to place.
- We conduct oral history interviews asking in-depth questions about life in the community, how they made a living, their adventures, how they had fun, and what happened over the course of time.

- We conduct a site survey photographing, describing, and documenting every structure we can see from the road, thus preserving the built landscape as it currently exists.
- We ask community members to loan us documents, photographs, and objects relevant to both their personal history in the community and life in the community in general. We scan these materials into a digital collection available to anyone who wants to look. These collected materials (when read in conjunction with county histories, local newspapers and other “official” records) produce a multidimensional history of the community, putting it back in the larger historical context.



PARTNERS

This project is housed at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. Each community will work with researchers from the Center for Regional Heritage Research, the department of History, and the East Texas Research Center to document their history.

MAKING IT AVAILABLE

Once all the materials are collected they will be made available through the larger project webpage. Each community will have its own webpage featuring the photos and journal entries from the photovoice component, recordings and transcripts of oral history interviews, and the site survey. The digital collection of loaned materials will be hosted by the East Texas Research Center, but linked to each community’s webpage.

COST

While there is no cost to the communities for this project, we ask that each community donate monies towards the purchase of equipment and materials (such as the purchase and developing of disposable cameras) and help defray the costs of travel. We ask that each community give what they can towards the support of the project, making a real investment in their history and their future.