



COURTESY STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Museum Back from the Flood

They passed through the Door of No Return in Africa. Survived the Middle Passage from Africa to Iowa, some arriving via the Underground Railroad. Once in Iowa, they made their mark in countless ways. The Civil War. Civil Rights. Agriculture. Law. Journalism. And more.

“Iowa’s African Americans have a significant history, in spite of their small numbers,” says Tom Moore, executive director of the African American Museum of Iowa. “The museum shares history that’s not told anywhere else.”

Now that history includes coming back from the 2008 floods. The Cedar Rapids-based museum sustained \$1.3 million in flood damage but salvaged 98 percent of its artifacts and reopened its doors in mid-January. While the museum’s permanent exhibit is not yet reestablished, two temporary exhibits are worth the visit.

“No Roads Lead to Buxton” chronicles the history of a small Iowa coal town touted as a “black man’s utopia” because of its integration and opportunity for African Americans in the early 20th century. The Buxton population was 55 percent African Americans and 45 percent Caucasians. Blacks and whites lived in the same neighborhoods. African Americans practiced all professions.

“Spirits & Sequins” is a display of Haitian prayer flags created by enslaved African people. The flags are unique in the way they blend the beliefs in African deities with devotion to Catholic saints. — C.B.

Learn more online: www.blackiowa.org

AT TOP James Warren, “Pedro,” Dr. Carter, Dr. Powell, Dr. Gray, and Duke on the porch



An elaborately beaded Haitian *drapo*

COURTESY WATERLOO CENTER FOR THE ARTS