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## Process Paper

When it came time in class to pick a topic for National History Day, I did not know what to choose. One day, my teacher gave a presentation of different options. When she came to Horace King, I was in was interested because I had heard his name before and knew that he was listed on a historical marker, but did not know anything about him. “Horace King was a slave that worked on bridges as a partner with his master and later bought his freedom,” she explained. The part about working with his master caught my ear, as it seemed unusual based on what I knew about slavery. When I got home, I quickly researched this topic and learned that while there was some information about Horace King, there wasn’t as much as some of the more well-known topics. After some initial research, I decided it would fit perfectly with the theme for Natural History Day, “Rights and Responsibilities.”

I was excited about my topic so I went to the library over the next couple of days. After some searching, I found out that our school library did not have any books on King. Disappointed, I had to look online more thoroughly. I soon found many of the sources I needed, including several experts to interview. Afterwards, I went to the Columbus Library and looked for both books on bridge building, in order to better understand what King did, and for books about King himself. As I got deeper into my research and interviewing the experts, I learned how to use digital archives in Georgia, Alabama and other archives. I also went to the Troup County Archives because there is a lot of material there about Horace King. I also realized that I needed to get sources, mainly books, about the time in which Horace King lived, so I got some books on

slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. Finally, because many of King's structures are close to where I live, I had my parents drive me to several of the structures that Horace King built to look at them, including the only known bridge he built that is still standing. I took pictures with those places to document my research of them.

I decided to do a website because I understand websites better than any other category, and I knew that there is some software I hadn't used before that I wanted to learn. I also had some ideas about how to design it. So while I was doing my research, I began by mapping out my site, using examples I liked from the internet. Then I began learning how to use Weebly, the official NHD website builder. It took me some time to figure out some of the features, but it was fairly straightforward. From my sources I chose pictures and information I thought most important. Finally, I finished my website. I've had some more ideas about improvements to the website, so I made some updates once I plan them out, such as adding a timeline.

Horace King was a master engineer who built many important Southern bridges and structures in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was a slave until he bought his freedom in 1846 with money he earned from his projects. During this time period before the Civil War, it was unusual for masters to pay their slaves and then allow them to buy their freedom. King is an important person in the history of the South for two reasons. First, the bridges that he built across major rivers in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi allowed commerce within and between those states to happen to a degree not possible before. This created economic growth for areas like Columbus, Georgia, that could not have happened otherwise. Second, while King was born as a slave, it was because of the responsibility he took for his education, his work and his relationships, that he gained a

level of rights, reputation and position that was rare for any African American living in the South at that time. By taking personal responsibility, he started life as a slave but became a free man, a celebrated bridge builder, an entrepreneur and a legislator. In the end, for Horace King, the responsibilities he was given and the rights he earned cannot be separated. They were woven together, and each made the other stronger, like the lattices of the Town truss he used in so many of his bridges.