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Humanities Council Grant Will Focus on Construction of Tillman Hall

Winthrop University

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Humanities Council Grant Will Focus on Construction of Tillman Hall

Quick Facts

- The grant will focus primarily on the construction of Tillman Hall, which was completed immediately prior to Winthrop's October 15, 1895, opening exercises.
- The Richardsonian Romanesque-style building was conceived as a spectacular structure signifying the progressive purposes of South Carolina's first state-supported college for women.
- The \$1,409 planning grant will assist Winthrop staff and faculty in determining the feasibility of a documentary featuring this National Register of Historical Places property.



ROCK HILL, S.C. – The [Humanities Council^{SC}](#) recently awarded the [Winthrop University Foundation](#) a planning grant to research the establishment of the Winthrop University campus in Rock Hill.

The grant will focus primarily on the construction of [Tillman Hall](#), which was completed immediately prior to Winthrop's October 15, 1895, opening exercises. The **Richardsonian Romanesque-style building** was conceived as a spectacular structure signifying the progressive purposes of South Carolina's first state-supported college for women, said **Jane Starnes**, director of research with Winthrop's Office of Development and the project director and historian.

[Winthrop Normal and Industrial College](#), as it then was known, had lofty goals to accomplish, said Starnes. She cites the 1896 declaration by **State Superintendent of Education and Winthrop Trustee W. D. Mayfield** to **S.C. Governor John Gary Evans** that, in the education of "the head, the hand and the heart of South Carolina's young women," Winthrop would be the "equal of any institution of its kind in the nation."

The \$1,409 planning grant will assist Winthrop staff and faculty in determining the feasibility of a documentary featuring this [National Register of Historical Places property](#).

Tillman Hall, called Main Building at the time, was among the most technologically advanced structures in the Carolina Piedmont when it was built, said Starnes. Prisoners assigned from the state penitentiary in Columbia worked for two years on its construction. The planning project will examine the intertwined roles of college administrators and local businessmen, elected officials and governmental staff, individual laborers and professional contractors in the realization of the original campus plan.

The Winthrop community's help is needed to identify and to provide research sources including original documents, family papers, period photographs and oral traditions.

[Edward Lee](#), a Winthrop associate professor of history and a 1983 Winthrop graduate, considers this construction era a long-missing chapter of the Winthrop story. Lee will assist with the grant by providing perspective on [Winthrop Founding President D. B. Johnson](#) and **U.S. Senator and former S. C. Governor Ben Tillman**.

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