

# Memphis Business Journal

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## Henning museum project honoring author Alex Haley finally gets funded by the state

Memphis Business Journal - by [Michael Sheffield](#)

Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects is handling design work for a \$1.26 million museum behind the boyhood home of Alex Haley in Henning, Tenn.

The project, after nearly 12 years of inactivity, is scheduled to break ground sometime in October. Louis Pounders, who is working on the project for Askew Nixon, says it will take about 10 months to complete.

"It should be ready to open next summer," Pounders says.

In addition to Askew Nixon, Memphis firms Allen & Hoshall, **Jamnu Tahiliani & Associates**, **Thompson Engineers and Engineering Design** Consultants will team up on the engineering needs, while Jefferson, Ind.-based **Natural Concepts Exhibits** will work on the museum side.

The project has been on the drawing board since 1994, two years after Haley's death, when Pounders performed some preliminary design work. When the project was recently reactivated, he was asked to do some new concepts.

"The state added more money and came back to us," he says.

The 6,500-square-foot museum will have an interpretive center that will include Haley's **Pulitzer** Prize and other artifacts from the life of the author of *Roots* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

Troy McCormick, a consultant with Natural Concepts Exhibits, says the museum will focus on different parts of Haley's life leading up to the research and writing of *Roots*.

It will include a recreation of the front porch and voice-overs of the stories Haley heard growing up. There will also be a recreation of a slave ship.

"That part of history needs to be told, so we want to build the ship and show what slaves dealt with," McCormick says. "We want to get people past wishing that it hadn't occurred and tell them what happened. It is part of the story of West Tennessee."

Haley spent a significant portion of his childhood in Henning with his maternal grandparents, who built the house. He is buried in the front yard.

Pounders says the house is in great shape and will not be altered. The new museum will be built to match the house.

"The brick we chose is the same as the brick in the house and there are discussions about adding floodlights,"

