



The Baobab Tree

Journal of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California, Inc.



Remembering the Booker T. Washington

By Jacqueline Chauhan

The Booker T. Washington Hotel in San Francisco was a world unto itself for Black celebrities in the days of segregation, when Blacks were not allowed to stay at the city's downtown hotels. It hosted some of the biggest names you could find, and I was right there with them, because my mother worked there. She's provided me with a history of my childhood that I want to preserve, and now I hope to preserve the memory of the Booker T. This hotel should be on a list of historic landmarks for African-American entertainment in San Francisco.

I was at the Booker T. on and off from age eight to 18 years old, spending time there while my

mother, Sadie Williams, was working. She started as a hotel desk clerk. Maya Angelou's mother, Vivian Bixter, was also a clerk and they became good friends. Later, when I was in high school, my mother became manager. Marie Alexander was head of housekeeping, but only men were allowed to use the vacuum cleaner. The hotel probably had fifteen employees, including three bartenders.

To occupy my time, I gave out room keys and became a PBX operator at a young age. PBX was a telephone system with a switchboard, an electromagnetic device that required the operator to plug telephone lines into their

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BAOBAB WRITERS' GUIDELINES



You don't have to be a professional writer! Just tell your story the best you can and be willing to work with the editors to polish it for publication.

Type all submissions. Times New Roman font, 12-point size is best.

Write 1 to 3 pages. We always need some one-page stories; more than three pages is too long.

We may edit. All submissions are subject to review by our journal committee and editors, and may be edited for clarity and to fit the space available.

Send your bio along with your story; include your contact e-mail and phone number(s). Bio should be in narrative form if possible, not a resume; we will still edit as needed.

Send your portrait. E-mail a JPEG photo of yourself along with your story or article. A good clear head-and-shoulders shot of you is best, in front of a solid color background that contrasts with your hair and skin tone. If you only have a shot of yourself with other people, we may be able to crop it (i.e. cut out the other folks).

Photos, documents and other graphics are always welcome, in JPEG format. Make sure pictures are sharp, clear and have enough contrast to show up well in black and white.

Respect the deadlines you're given for submissions and corrections. If your material is late, it might have to be held for the next issue or drastically altered to fit the space.

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AMAZING GIFTS

Receiving your story submissions every month is a lot like Christmas for us as editors. Once we finish an issue, we wait anxiously to see what we'll get for the next one. The call for stories goes out, and our sense of anticipation builds. Then finally, those wonderful e-mails start arriving. Like a whole crew of Santas, you shower us with gifts of your personal stories. Eagerly, we open each one, surprised and delighted to see what amazing information you're sharing this time. This issue we have everything from family reunions, to women in Black history whose names we should know. We appreciate every one of you for contributing to the Baobab and we hope you enjoy these stories as much as we do. We'd love to have your feedback and suggestions. You can email us at journal@aagsnc.org.

Charlene Brown

Annette Madden

Message from the President

By M. Howard Edwards



Society Communications

We have mentioned the new website commissioned and shepherded along by member and chair of the Web Site Committee, **Geraldine DeBerry**. It is proving to be popular among our members, and apparently the genealogy community is pleased with it as well. It has been viewed over 308,000 times to date. If you have not visited it yet, please do at www.AAGSNC.org.

AAGSNC-Officers: A private group for Executive Committee discussions

AAGSNC-Membership: A private group for membership questions and discussions of membership issues

AAGSNC-Friends: A public group for anyone interested in society activities

AAGSNC-Research: A private group for member discussions and resolution of family history research problems they've encountered

With the popularity of the web site, our other means of member communication are sometimes overlooked, even though it is alive and well. Member **Upperton Hurts** moderates and manages several Yahoo! Groups for the society, and you are invited to visit the ones that best suit your needs and interests:

You can access these groups, by going to <http://groups.yahoo.com/> and selecting the groups that suit your interests. As indicated above, membership in the society is required for most of the groups listed.

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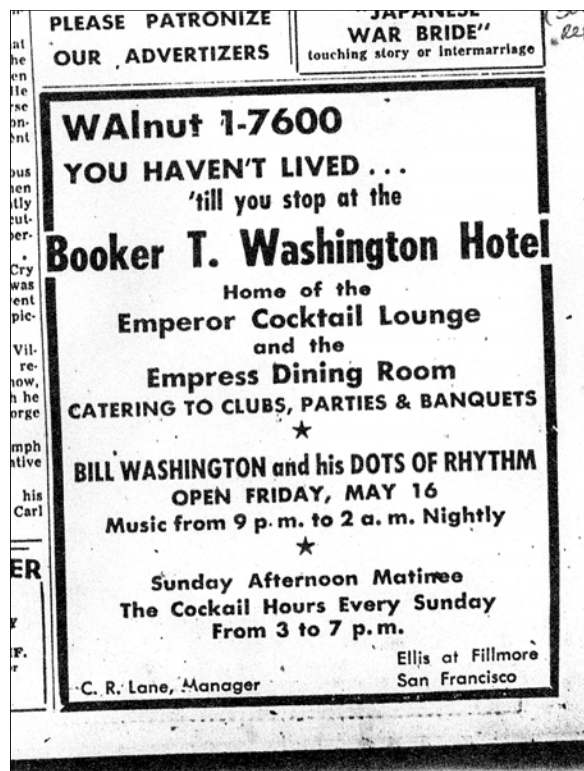
www.aagsnc.org

The Booker T.



Desk Clerk Sadie Preston Serving Hotel's Star Boarder

Newspaper clipping of San Francisco Giants slugger Willie McCovey at the Booker T. Washington Hotel



1952 Sun Reporter newspaper ad for the Booker T. Washington

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destination telephone wires by hand.

The hotel's last owner, Willie Lee Young, was born in Texas in 1920; he died in San Francisco in 1985. He owned a rooming house before he bought the hotel. Mr. Young leased the cocktail lounge to Charles Sullivan, who pulled in standing room only crowds every night with live music. Mr. Sullivan also booked some of the biggest black entertainers at San Francisco's Fillmore Auditorium (called The Harlem of the West), including James Brown, Bobby "Blue" Bland, Jackie Wilson, Little Richard, and the Coasters. I remember having both James Brown and Hank Ballard sing Happy Birthday to me.

I interviewed folks about the hotel who also remembered Dinah Washington, Earl Grant, Nat "King" Cole and his trio, and others in that generation of musicians. They would rehearse at the hotel during the day, which was wonderful for me

because I couldn't go to the Fillmore—I was too young so my mother didn't allow it. However, I did see opera star Marian Anderson, singer-dancer Josephine Baker, and singer-actor Paul Robeson in concert.

In 1952, San Francisco Mayor Elmer Roberson said "it would be a desecration and an insult" for Robeson to perform at San Francisco's Opera House because of Robeson's support for Communist ideology, so the great bass-baritone was barred from that venue. In response, Robeson held a press conference with the *San Francisco Chronicle* at the Booker T. Washington Hotel, in which he called Roberson "one of the principal fascists of the West Coast."

It wasn't just musicians who patronized the Booker T. Washington. Legendary San Francisco Giants homerun hitter Willie "Stretch" McCovey and boxer Archie Moore stayed there. I saw Joe Louis fight. Civil rights activist W. E. B.

DuBois, the tap-dancing Step Brothers, and the Harlem Globetrotters were guests at the hotel. In 1960, the Ugandan ambassador to the United Nations changed from another hotel to the Booker T. Washington because, he said, "I wanted to see how my people live in your country."

I saw the celebrities in the daytime. Most were very friendly to Ms. Sadie's daughter and would hang around the front desk or in the lobby just to talk, like Little Willie John. Richard Berry was happy I liked his music so we started a fan club chapter. James Brown would ask my opinion on how a suit looked before he had it tailored. Bobby "Blue" Bland would talk to me to get on my good side because he wanted to marry my mother.

I was the unofficial critic of new songs for many groups. Jackie Wilson and Little Richard were not so friendly to me. Earl

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The Booker T.



Author Jackie Chauhan and her mother, Sadie Williams

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Grant would play at mother's friends' parties. Later, when Duke Ellington would stay downtown, his band members stayed at the hotel. I have many, many more celebrities I can talk about.

A man named Sam Mines was the cook and leased the dining room, which accommodated club events, parties and banquets. The soul food there was awesome! Mr. Mines' menu included dishes like ox tails, and red beans and rice because he wanted people to come off the street and get home style cooking.

The cocktail lounge was called the Emperor and the dining room was called the Empress, with chartreuse drapes and maroon carpets embellished with silver scrollwork. Mirrors decorated in peach and silver lined the serving counter. The hotel had six floors and 125 rooms, with suites in the front on the top floor. There were free radios in every room and television sets in the suites.

If you go to that once-famous spot now, you will find shopkeepers from Italy, Australia and New Zealand, according to an article from the AAA magazine *Via*. You'll find 11-dollar flip-flops and food from the Mediterranean. There's still

music, but only at Yoshi's jazz club and Japanese restaurant. Without community support, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency stepped in and this landmark hotel vanished.

The city assessor's office says the hotel address never existed. There is a Safeway store located there now. It crosses two streets but it uses a Webster Street address. Only a street sign indicates the possibility of the hotel's address, which was 1540 Ellis Street. My brother, many years later, was in BB King's company; he asked about the hotel and BB remembered it well. So living entertainers know, the former employees and their families know, and the folks at Marcus Books in San Francisco and Fillmore know about the hotel.

One of the ways I researched the Booker T. Washington Hotel was by sending a letter and questionnaire to people with whom my mother has kept in touch. I asked for their job titles, years worked, other employees, noted guests, etc. Then I taped face-to-face interviews with them. I have spoken to the accountant, a bellhop, a visitor, a guest and a permanent resident. They told me about the owners, folks in the block, and the history of the hotel. I was told that it was called the

Edison Hotel back when no blacks were allowed. Mr. William Ned Bush bought the hotel so Blacks could have a place to stay, and named it after the renowned Black educator and political leader.

My interest in the Booker T. stems from knowing the life there and the fact that its history is disappearing. I have spent time at the San Francisco Public Library using San Francisco city directories that sometimes list the owners, but always list the hotel and lounge separately at the same address and telephone number. At the library, I found the *Sun-Reporter*, a local Black newspaper, on microfilm and now I've uncovered ads and articles about the hotel, its guests, and events. The Booker T. Washington Hotel was an important part of my life, and I hope that through my efforts it will not be forgotten.

Jacqueline "Jackie" Chauhan was born in San Francisco, California, and raised in the Bay Area. She's had a passion for genealogy for ten years. Most of her research is focused on the Houston area of Texas, where both her paternal and maternal ancestors are from. She is also an organizer and presenter for the African American Family History Seminars held in Sacramento. Her email is: thefamilypath@yahoo.com.



THE PAUL FAMILY REUNION & THE MYSTERY AT BULL HILL CEMETERY

Is Famous Texas Ranger Buried in Historic Slave Cemetery?

By Sharon Styles and Monique Johnson

Every second Saturday in July, the Paul Family gathers in Marlin, Texas, for their annual family reunion. On July 9, 2011, family members arrived in Marlin from cities such as Los Angeles, Sacramento, Houston, Dallas, Ft. Worth and Austin to reconnect with each other. This year's theme was Uniting Our Roots and Branches.

The day began at Bull Hill Cemetery to honor and remember ancestors resting in this hallowed ground. This historic African-American Cemetery dates back to the 1850s. It was closed in 1961, but was rededicated last year after three years of research identified 106 of those buried there. Paul family patriarch Charles Herman Paul urged those gathered to remember their roots, remember the contributions of the elders and reflect on the family's heritage.

He stated that many families gather in different cities each year for reunions, however, the Paul Family decided long ago to always return to Marlin to remain connected to their history. The reunion

serves as a type of pilgrimage to the place where the Paul family has lived since the 1850s. Paul is also interested in restoring the China Grove Baptist Church where members of the family and community worshiped for over 100 years.

Jim Bruseth, Director of the Archeology Division of the Texas Historical Commission (THC) was present for the gathering. Sharon Styles interviewed him for a documentary film on Bull Hill Cemetery. He updated the Paul Family on the status of Bull Hill—a state Archaeological Landmark and a historic Texas cemetery—and the recent discovery of a grave believed to be that of Jim Coryell, a famous Texas Ranger from the earliest days of the Republic of Texas. Coryell was killed by Indians in 1837.

The grave was discovered while preparing for the July 2010 dedication ceremony at Bull Hill. The skeletal remains were exhumed and transported to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., for DNA comparison and further analysis. Although the DNA was

insufficient to make a positive identification, Bruseth is certain this is indeed the body of Jim Coryell..

Oral history given almost eighty years ago by former slave Ned (Tom) Broadus matched the description of the grave. Broadus was once enslaved on the Churchill Jones plantation where Bull Hill is located, and gave rich testimony about how enslaved Blacks covered the grave with rocks to keep the spirit of Coryell, who was white, at rest when the grave caved in. The current plan is to bury the remains in the Texas State Cemetery in Austin, and place a marker at the site of the original grave near Bull Hill Cemetery. A video of the excavation of Coryell's grave will soon be available on the THC website at www.thc.state.tx.us.

In honor of his tireless work at Bull Hill, Bruseth was presented with a Paul Family Reunion shirt and named an honorary Paul family member. The family also acknowledged the extraordinary efforts of John Crain, A THC commissioner, and

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Paul Family Reunion



Reverend Will Miller, Jr. prays at Bull Hill Cemetery.



Jim Bruseth of the Texas Historical Commission addresses the Paul family at Bull Hill Cemetery.

(Continued from page 6)
 president of the Summerlee Foundation which owns Bull Hill. Although unable to be present this summer, Crain has joined the family at Bull Hill each year since 2008, and was instrumental in the success of the 2010 dedication ceremony.

Reverend Will Miller, Jr. offered a prayer for those who have passed on and those gathered. Miller's parents, Lula Sneed Miller and Will Miller, Sr., are buried in Bull Hill. He has led the family in prayer at the cemetery each year since 2009, the first time friends and relatives had been allowed access since the cemetery was closed in 1961. Charlotte Wyman Armstead of Dallas led the closing hymn, "Amazing Grace."

At 3:00 p.m., the family gathered at the Booker T. Washington Alumni Building to enjoy fellowship and fun. No reunion is complete without delicious food, and this one had tables overflowing with barbecue, sausage, beans, salads, cakes, breads, vegetables and a wide variety of wonderful dishes.

While the children enjoyed a bounce house, songbirds Carlene Mack and Ola Mae Webb Ellis serenaded the crowd. Mistress of Ceremonies Sherri Armstead Vault also kept the program flowing nicely. Family Reunion Committee President

Herman Bell conducted the raffle and bingo games.

Sacramento fashion and beauty consultant Emjai (pronounced MJ), accompanied Styles to assist with hair, makeup, and set placement for the documentary. At the reunion, Emjai offered free makeovers to all the ladies. She said looking good begins with great skin, and noted that the Paul women all have beautiful skin, which must be a genetic trait passed down through the generations.



AAGSNC member Sharon Styles with her great aunt, Bea Paul of Waco, at the Paul Family Reunion

A book giveaway encouraged everyone to take time to read. The books covered topics such as sports, politics, genealogy, religion, slavery, Reconstruction, cooking, music, history and much more. The family donated surplus books and genealogical information to the Faith, Hope and Charity youth organization, where

Executive Director Shirley King plans to hold a session on making a family tree.

One of the many highlights of the day occurred when Letha Paul Avery of Waco was honored for reaching 100 years of age. After her niece, Shirley Hawkins, saw the birth date on Avery's personal papers, she immediately notified the reunion committee and everyone sprang into action. Mrs. Avery was born March 12, 1911 to Churchill Paul and Ida Childress. The family presented Mrs. Avery with a card signed by all, a beautiful moneybox, and an award recognizing her longevity as well as her dedication to family. Mrs. Avery was overcome with joy.

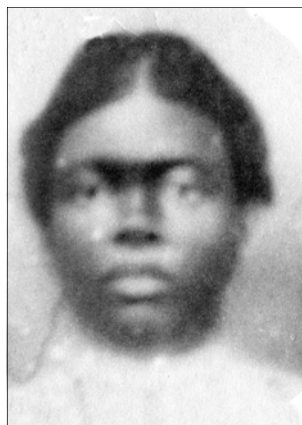
Also in attendance at the reunion was Laura Ann Ward Holliday, who is conducting genealogical research on the Ward, Shields and Cox families of Marlin. Anyone with information concerning these families is encouraged to contact her at laurskyl@sbcglobal.net or 713-942-2500.

Sunday morning found the faithful gathered at Spring Hill Baptist Church where Reverend Charles Bailey is the pastor. Reverend Bailey reminded the congregation that the Paul Family welcomes everyone. "No one ever marries out of the Paul Family; everyone else marries into the Paul Family."

(Continued on page 12)

A Tale of Two Great-Grandmothers

By Vernester Sheeler



Luvenia Crayton Utsey

Although I still haven't achieved my goal of finding my family's last slaveholder, I've found something even better along the way. I located a lost family member of my great-great-grandfather, Cincinnati Utsey. In the process, my cousins helped sort out a mix-up of names that had left several of us thoroughly confused.

During a trip to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, fellow AAGSNC member Nicka Smith suggested I broaden my search for slaveholders to include combing the census records for the families that lived near my ancestors. I had already found my paternal great-great-grandparents, Cincinnati and Nancy Brown Utsey (Utesy) in the 1870 census of Union County, Arkansas. When I revisited this census, I discovered that living nearby was another couple with the same last name: William and Pateme Utsey. I don't know how or even if they're related, but it was an intriguing find that pushed me forward.

I continued to study the 1870 census looking for additional clues and found a familiar family name, Bradford Crayton, a few doors from William and Pateme Utsey. Bradford is the older brother of my paternal great-great-grandfather, Hardy

Crayton. Bradford and Hardy are the sons of Essex Crayton, who the census shows was born about 1800 in Georgia. Hardy married Lucy Branch. Their daughter, my paternal great-grandmother, Luvenia Crayton, married Cincinnati's son, Elmo "Nuck" Utsey on 18 May, 1906 in Ouachita County, Arkansas. Since I was concentrating on former Utsey slaveholders, I set aside this information to discuss later with my cousin, Rosie Crayton.



Rosie Lee Crayton

Rosie is the great-granddaughter of Bradford Crayton, and my primary Crayton genealogy resource. She created a family tree outline several years ago based on information she received from another cousin, Irvin Crayton. I have a copy of the document, which lists Rosie's great-grandmother as Lavinia Utsey and my great-grandmother as Luvinia Utsey. This was confusing because I knew my great-grandmother was not her great-grandmother.

Eventually, I looked for their birth and death information and figured out they were two different women, with Lavinia being much older, but I still didn't know how they were related. Rosie was not clear about the relationship either, and I don't think she knew about Cincinnati at all.

This year, Rosie contacted me for information about the 2011 Utsey Family

Reunion. It seemed odd to me at the time, because she's a Crayton, not an Utsey. The Luvenia/Lavinia Utsey/Crayton confusion was finally cleared up when Rosie talked to another of our cousins, Verdana Ferguson Foreman, who is a direct descendant of Cincinnati Utsey's son, Henry. Verdana's grandmother, Delia Ferguson, became Bradford's second wife after Lavinia died.

Rosie learned that her great-grandmother, Lavinia (Lavinia) Utsey, married Bradford Crayton and became Lavinia Utsey Crayton. My great-grandmother, Luvenia Crayton, was Bradford's niece; when she married Elmo Utsey, she became Luvenia Crayton Utsey. Two women with almost identical first names had swapped last names when they married, and left a generation of us in confusion! But there was more.

Verdana also provided a key piece of information that neither Rosie nor I had known before—that Lavinia Utsey Crayton was Cincinnati Utsey's younger sister. That finally connected them for both Rosie and me, and restored a missing branch on our family tree. Now if I can just find that last slaveholder!



Vernester Sheeler is a longtime AAGSNC member and former editor of The Baobab Tree. Even with a busy professional life, she still finds time to research her Utsey family tree, attend biennial family reunions, and keep the family history book updated.



Ancestral Project Reaps Rewards

By Nicka J. Smith



Left, this student found his ancestors with help from AAGSNC Board Member Bill Melson. Above, Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson (third from right) recognized AAGSNC members (l. to r.) Alvis Ward, Felicia Addison, Nicka Smith (holding award), and M. Howard Edwards, and Ralph Severson, Director of the Oakland Family History Center, for their help with the Ancestral Project.

On June 28, 2011, AAGSNC was recognized by the Alameda County (California) Board of Supervisors for our help with the Ancestral Project, a genealogy program which was the brainchild of County Supervisor Keith Carson. The project was established to help youth in the area realize the benefit of learning about their ancestry and those who paved the way for them to be where they are now.

AAGSNC volunteers provided curriculum, one-on-one assistance, and mentoring to more than 50 students from the Culture Keepers Program at McClymonds High School in Oakland, Berkeley Technological Academy in Berkeley, and former foster youth from Alameda County's Beyond Emancipation Program.

Most of them were able to trace their ancestry to the 1930 U.S. Census. This was a major milestone considering that many of them had never even talked about their genealogy with family members. Some were initially intimidated about having these conversations due to family dynamics or fear that they wouldn't get any answers, but their reservations were almost always eliminated.

Another problem was the generational divide. Many of the youth had to try to

locate great-grandparents or great-great-grandparents on the 1930 census, but most of them did not know the names of these relatives. Fortunately, through the efforts of volunteers from AAGSNC and the Oakland Family History Center, we were able to use information from family interviews and online records to piece together the data we needed to get them back to that pivotal census.

An additional challenge was the definition of relationships. When they were handed pedigree charts that used labels such as husband or wife, some students became confused and weren't sure how to list their own parents because they were never married. This can be a marked difference between a young person and someone much older who is seeking out their genealogy.

A number of news organizations, including KGO 7 News, the *Oakland Tribune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *San Jose Mercury News*, documented the Ancestral Project as it took place. The *Chronicle* story even made the front page! This news coverage was great exposure for everyone involved, especially AAGSNC, which has since created an Outreach and Education Committee to support efforts such as the Ancestral Project. The program culminated in a celebration

where the students displayed their findings and took part in a panel in front of an audience of more than 100 people from the community. At times part history lesson, at others a lesson in vocabulary and psychology, this program was a huge success.

Many of the youth have said their decisions are now motivated by what they discovered about their ancestry during the program. Now that they have a better perspective of who they are and where they come from, they can take full advantage of the opportunities they have, realizing that those before them didn't have such things. Others said working on the project has fostered closer relationships with their family members, especially youth who were in the foster care system.

In addition to those pictured above, special thanks goes to Aisha Brown, Hannah Greene and Reginald James for their support, and to AAGSNC members Judith Collins, Donna and Upperton Hurts, Annette Madden and Vernester Sheeler, who volunteered their time.

Nicka Smith is the lead researcher and family historian for the Atlas family from Lake Providence, East Carroll Parish, LA. You can see her work at <http://www.atlasfamily.org>.

FORGOTTEN WOMEN OF BLACK HISTORY

By Patrice Anderson

I went to the 2011 conference of the African American Association for Historical Research and Preservation in Seattle, Washington, hoping to learn more about the history of Mississippi and South Carolina between 1743 and 1843. But of the six sessions I attended at the beautiful Northwest African American Museum, some of the most fascinating information was about the forgotten women in Black history.

One lecture focused on the little-known case of Irene Morgan, a Virginia woman who refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus in 1944—eleven years before the more famous case of Rosa Parks—and won her case in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Morgan was a quiet person of steely resolve and integrity. She was a domestic worker at the time of her defiant bus ride. The 27-year-old mother of two was on a Greyhound bus headed for a doctor's appointment, seated in the rear section reserved for Blacks. When a white couple boarded about a half-hour into the trip, Morgan refused to get up and give them her seat. She also refused to go quietly when the sheriff came to arrest her. Her case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where she was represented by NAACP lawyers Thurgood Marshall and William H. Hastie. As a result of Morgan's case, the court declared racial segregation on public transit unconstitutional.

Southern states ignored the Supreme Court ruling, however, and continued the practice of segregated seating in public buses. Eventually, the practices of Jim Crow segregation were dismantled by the resistance of civil rights fighters like Morgan, Rosa Parks, and many others.

In 2001, Morgan was invited to the White House to receive the Presidential Citizens



Suzanne “Sanite” Belair, a heroic sergeant with Toussaint L’Ouverture’s troops in the Haitian Revolution, is pictured on a 2004 commemorative Haitian banknote. She and her husband were both executed. Image from thelouvertureproject.com

Medal presented by President Bill Clinton. She died in 2007.

Researcher Clare J. Washington unveiled the stories of some of the lesser-known, “invisible” Black women of history. I learned of women who fueled the Haitian Revolution, the slave uprising that produced the world’s first Black republic: Sanite Belair, Catherine Flon, Marie Jeanne Lamartiniere, Claire Heureuse, and Henriette St. Marc. I also learned of Caribbean resistance fighter Granny Nanny, also known as Nanny of the Maroons. She was an Ashanti woman who escaped from slavery in Jamaica and, along with her brothers, led slave rebellions and fought to drive the British out of the island in the 1700s.

In 1892, Queen Coziah Harmon and her three sisters led a strike by coal carriers in Charlotte Amalie, Danish West Indies (now the U.S. Virgin Islands). In a completely non-violent protest, hundreds of striking women danced and chanted through the streets, refusing to carry coal onto or off the ships. Many ships arrived in the port, but none could leave. The

goods on the ships rotted. The coal carriers demanded payment in Danish gold instead of the devalued Mexican silver they were being given, and they got what they wanted.

I was amazed to discover that the Negritude Movement, a literary movement begun in the 1930s among Black French-speaking intellectuals, was founded by Paulette Nardal (1895-1985) of Martinique. The movement’s male leaders, Leopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Leon Damas, generally get all the credit.

In the U.S., Ellen Smith Craft, a very light-skinned Black woman, famously escaped from slavery along with her darker-skinned husband by passing as a white gentleman, and traveling with her husband passing as a slave.

Ms. Washington also talked about Claudette Colvin, a 15-year-old girl who refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus on March 2, 1955, nine months before Rosa Parks.

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Forgotten Women

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However, the NAACP decided she wasn't the ideal subject to challenge the law. Then, because the teenager got pregnant out of wedlock, her example of heroic resistance to segregation was effectively silenced. She was, however, a key witness in the Rosa Parks case.

Other pivotal Black women leaders in history include Elma Constance Francois (1897-1944), a fierce and determined labor leader of Trinidad and Tobago, and Lillian Roberts, a legendary New York labor leader and executive director of New York's largest union, District Council 37 of the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

The most shocking revelations concerned Antoinette Harrell, a genealogist and researcher from Louisiana who has spent years uncovering peonage—modern slavery—in the United States. In the 1960s, Harrell found enslaved people of African descent living on a plantation in the Mississippi Delta, in abject poverty and isolation. One of them, Mae Wall Miller, was held in slavery with members of her family until 1961. None of them could

read or write. They were cut off from outside society.

They worked picking peas, beans and cotton. They ate house scraps thrown into a pig trough. They drank water that was green with slime. They did not have toothbrushes, shoes or beds, and they slept on the dirt floor.



Researcher Antoinette Harrell has uncovered shocking cases of modern slavery in the U.S.

Photo by Walter C. Black, Sr.

Mae's father, Cain Wall, was periodically beaten bloody for punishment. Once, during World War II, he tried to join the

army. He heard of the war and hoped to earn money for his family. Two white men in a truck picked him up as he walked to enlist. They brought him back to the plantation, where he was beaten severely.

Wall and his family thought all black people lived as they did because they never left the plantation. Fortunately, they were freed from that life of torture through the work of Antoinette Harrell, who shares her findings through her blog, American-Slavery.org.

Listening to and discussing these fascinating topics made the hours speed by. The AAAHRP is a rich resource for genealogists seeking the history of their ancestors, and I was glad to have learned a great deal more of our history through this conference.

Patrice Anderson is a native of Arizona and a second generation Tucsonian. She began her genealogical research in the 1960s with an eighth grade essay assignment interviewing her maternal grandparents. In 1979, Patrice interviewed her maternal great-grandmother, Mary Jane Elliot Johnson, when Johnson was 104 years old. Patrice now hopes to find all of her first 32 ancestors soon!

Book Review By Dera Williams

A MAN FROM ANOTHER LAND: HOW FINDING MY ROOTS CHANGED MY LIFE

By Isaiah Washington with Lavaille Lavette

In his new memoir, Isaiah Washington, award-winning star of the hit hospital drama *Grey's Anatomy*, traces his journey from childhood in Houston to finding his roots and his life's new purpose in Sierra Leone, West Africa. He reveals that throughout his life, no matter where he went in the world, Africans would stop him and ask him what country in Africa he came from or to what tribe he belonged. He would always disappoint them with the answer, "I was born and raised in Houston, Texas." Yet from the time he

was very young, Washington felt a kinship with Africa. In the color-struck African-American community, where intra-racial colorism ran rampant, he was always fine with his dark skin; he relished it and refused to let anyone make him feel inferior.

Washington did a stint in the U.S. Air Force, then entered Howard University in Washington, D.C., where he drew ever closer to his African roots. He became an activist, joining protests against South African apartheid and the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela. He also began acting at Howard, leading to dinner theater, plays, then films with Spike Lee in New York, and movies in Los Angeles. In 1998, en route to shoot a film in Namibia, the cast and crew went to Cape Town, South

Africa. When he stepped off the plane, Washington says he felt as if he had arrived home. Later, DNA testing revealed he shared over 99% ancestry with the Mende and Temne people of Sierra Leone, as well as the Mbundu people of Angola.

After controversial remarks about a gay costar ended his role on *Grey's Anatomy*, Washington established a foundation, The Gondobay Manga Foundation, to assist the people of Sierra Leone. He has donated medical supplies, built a school, and addressed infrastructure needs in the country, and been made a tribal chief and a citizen of Sierra Leone. His book chronicles the triumphs and trials of his life and career, and the power of the ancestors in all he's done.

Paul Family Reunion

(Continued from page 7)

This year's reunion was the center of a documentary on Bull Hill Cemetery, which will focus on the collaboration between the descendant community, the Summerlee Foundation, and the THC to bring attention to the forgotten burial ground. George "Slugger" Stricklin and Tommy Irvin assisted with filming, transportation and logistics for the Marlin interviews and local filming. Styles also interviewed David Scruggs and J. C. Williams of Hopeful Masonic Lodge No. 78; Hermetta Paul, June Paul, and Charles Herman Paul of Paul Funeral Home; historian and musician Frank Wyman; educator Elaine Wyman; George Hudson, owner of Sister's Restaurant; nurse Para Nell Johnson Hurd; retired barber Para Lee Johnson Williams; and researcher Pearl Taylor Vanderbilt.

Styles has been working with the THC and with Nedra Lee, a doctoral student of anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin, to find the names of those buried in Bull Hill. She also feels strongly that the documentary should begin with the Paul Family.



Sharon Styles is a resident of Sacramento, California. Now retired, Sharon plans to continue researching the Bull Hill Cemetery as well as her own family roots. Fortunately, her parents, four grandparents and great-grandparents all came from the same little town of Marlin, Falls County, Texas. She researches the surnames of Paul, Sneed, Shaw, Thomas, Broadus, Bailey, Johnson, Mozee, and Curry. You may contact her at 916-275-8084 or sharon.kay@sbcglobal.net.



Monique Johnson is a longtime resident of Sacramento and an old family friend of co-author Sharon Styles. The mother of two has been a public servant for 17 years and works as a trainer and analyst in civil rights. Emjai (pronounced MJ) is especially interested in helping women find their look and personal style. While juggling work, family, social life, faith and finances, Emjai is also committed to lifelong learning, and feels best when giving something back to her community.



Photo by Sharon Styles

Prince Hall Masonic Museum Worth A Visit By Sharon Styles

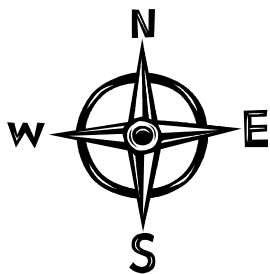
Curtis of the Texas Prince Hall Masons called to invite me to tour the museum, and said he would look for information on my relatives.

On the last day of my trip, I visited the museum accompanied by Gayle Hanson, a fellow genealogist and historian. We were escorted to a beautiful room filled with photos, uniforms, books, capes, cornerstones, ledgers, original lodge charters, paintings and more. An archivist is painstakingly cataloging boxes of information. Once the collection is processed, a more accurate account of individual applications and lodge records

will be available upon request. This information will produce even more genealogical gold.

Although he was not present for my visit, Grand Master Curtis made sure I received copies of information from 1912 and 1929 which included my family members. If you plan to be in the Ft. Worth area, try to visit The Wilbert M. Curtis Texas Prince Hall Library Museum. It's open by appointment Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, contact the Grand Lodge office at 817-534-4612 or online at www.wmctphlm.com.

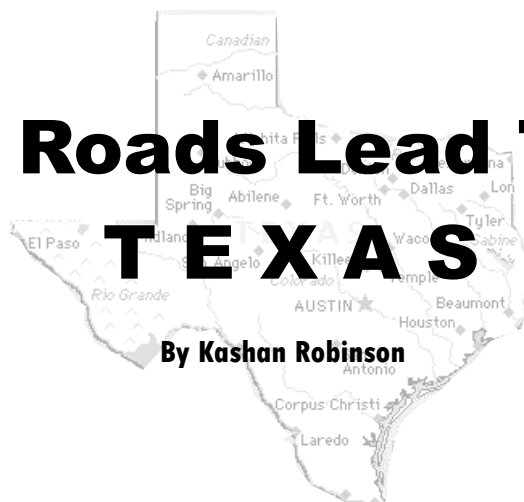




All Roads Lead To

TEXAS

By Kashan Robinson



For several years Sharon Styles of Sacramento and I have been communicating via email to determine if we have a family connection through the Thomas surname. We both belong to the Central Texas Genealogical Society (CTGS) and Sharon contacted me in connection with the Thomas name and wondered if we were related. We both have Texas roots, with Sharon's in Marlin and Fort Worth, mine in my birth city of Waco, and all points north, south, east and west in Texas.

Even though we could not make any connection between our surnames we continued to stay in touch and she shared her involvement in the documentation of the Bull Hill Cemetery in Marlin, Texas.

I contacted Sharon to see if she was going to be in Texas this summer, and if we could meet there. It turned out that she would be arriving in Waco the same day that I would be leaving for other Texas destinations, but we made it work.

We met, and she followed me to the home of my cousin, Sadie. I had left Waco at the age of four, and although I spent all of my summers there, I didn't know many people other than my relatives and immediate neighbors, but Sadie knew practically everyone.

We visited for about 30 minutes while Sharon quizzed Sadie on Waco residents who were related to her, and we took pictures to capture the moment. Although Sharon and I had never met in California, there we were together in Waco, Texas. Afterward, we headed off

in different directions in triple digit heat.

On Sunday afternoon I was back in Waco to take my friend, Monique Johnson of Sacramento, to spend the night with her aunt and uncle, Doris and J.W. Williams. Unfortunately, Monique's back went out and she wound up spending three days on their couch. That was unfortunate for her and might have put a damper on the average person's vacation, but as a genealogist, I just went to plan B.

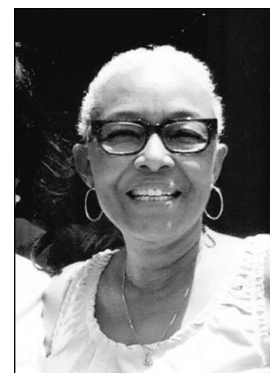
For me, that meant extra time to traipse around the backwoods and countryside, visiting every old cemetery and abandoned home of my relatives who lived in and around Falls and McLennan Counties. It paid off, too. I found the grave of my maternal great-grandmother, Millie Cotton, in the Majors Chapel Cemetery in Lorena, Texas.

I also got to meet another researcher, Pearl Taylor Vanderbilt. Pearl drove over from Ft. Hood and we spent the morning visiting cemeteries and cooled off with treats from Dairy Queen. I topped off my time in Marlin on July 13th with a trip to the county courthouse for a quick peek and a chance to meet the new county clerk. I loved it! I picked up my patient in Waco, and drove to Ft. Worth, where I visited family, the Texas Prince Hall Mason's Museum, and the Lenora Rolla Heritage Center Museum, where I decided to become a member. The next night we headed back to California, and the sweet cool air of Sacramento.

My 22-day vacation had started in Chandler, Oklahoma, attending the

Caldwell Family Reunion. Using the internet, I had found descendants of my mother's maternal great aunt, Octavia Gault Caldwell Freeman. Octavia had left Taylor, Texas, with her husband, Marshal Caldwell, six small children, and six cows in the late 1890s during the Oklahoma land rush. They settled in the community of Sweet Home in Chandler.

After a week in Chandler, I left for Texas, including stops in Austin, Taylor, Pflugerville, Waco, Grand Prairie, Ferris, Crowley, and finally Tyler. This was the most fulfilling trip I had ever had to Texas. In the end, I had put over 1,200 miles on the rental car and survived 22 days of continuous triple-digit heat.



Kashan Robinson was born in Waco, Texas, raised in Richmond, California and resides in Oakland, California. She is a retired AT&T auditor and educator. She has been a member of AAGSNC since 1997. Kashan is a world traveler and adventurer.



HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER

Summer is the time when families gather from all over the country to renew bonds, share triumphs, and indulge in all the treats their best cooks turn out. Besides having family fun, some AAGSNC members also spent time volunteering to help others learn the art of genealogy.



LEFT: Descendants of Cincinnati Utsey and Nancy Brown Utsey met in Hot Spring Village, Arkansas, August 5-7, 2011. Glynnis Rene Utsey-Underwood was the event Chairperson. The theme was *Utsey... 165 Years and Growing!* Ninety-one adults and twenty-two children from across the U.S gathered for this photo on Saturday, August 06, 2011 at the west gate entrance to the village. Cousin Trayvon Waller of Los Angeles, designed the t-shirts.
Vernester Sheeler; Photo by Diane Mitchell

The 2011 Atlas Family Reunion took place July 27-31, 2011 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. More than 100 family members attended, representing California, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Texas, and Wisconsin.
Item & Photo by Nicka J. Smith



Welcome New Members!

- Fred Bowe
- Keith Carson
- D. Jean Collins
- Karen Francisco
- Ida Louise Johnson
- Ethel Rice



AAGSNC made the Bay Area edition of the *New York Times*. In a Sept. 3 story about Oakland's Mormon Temple and genealogy library, reporter Louise Rafkin wrote: "...local teenagers working with the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California have used the library to uncover lost family histories." See page 9 for *The Baobab's* story on the Ancestral Project.
Reginald James; Photo by Nicka J. Smith

CALENDAR

AAGSNC

AAGSNC meets every third Saturday of the month from 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Oakland Public Library, Dimond Branch, 3565 Fruitvale Avenue, Oakland, California. No meetings in July and August. Upcoming topics:

October 15 - Beyond the Census: Other State and Federal Resources, Newspapers
 November 19 - Slave Research
 December 17 - Christmas Party and Black Elephant Sale

Other Events

Fourth Wednesday of each month, October 26 through May 23 - African American Research Workshop, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.; individual help 4:45 p.m. to 5:45 p.m., Regional Family History Center, 4766 Lincoln Ave., Oakland, CA, 510-531-3905
 Facilitator: Judith Collins of AAGSNC

California Genealogical Society and Library offers Genealogy for Beginners, first Saturday of every month FREE at 2201 Broadway, Suite L12, Oakland, California 94612 www.calgensoc.org.

The Baobab Tree is published four times a year and is provided free to all members. Additional copies and past issues may be purchased for \$5.00 per copy. All articles and manuscripts submitted for publication are evaluated and may be edited. Authors retain copyright. AAGSNC does not assume responsibility for errors of fact or interpretation. Deadlines for submission of material for publication in The Baobab Tree are: February 15 for the Spring issue, May 15 for the Summer issue, July 15 for the Fall issue, and October 15 for the Winter issue. Correspondence on editorial matters, story submissions and requests for permission to reprint articles may be sent to journal@aagsnc.org. For Writer's Guidelines, send request to journal@aagsnc.org or on the web at www.aagsnc.org.

Articles and manuscripts acceptable for publication include:

Manuscripts/Articles:

- African and African-American genealogy, cultural traditions, and philosophy
- Church histories
- Documentation of African oral traditions and African writings
- Stories & documentation of African-American families
- Ancestry charts, family group records, personal family papers
- Miscellaneous topics of interest in researching African ancestors
- Resources and methods of research in Africa

Abstracts:

- Census transcriptions (federal, state, county & city)
- Church records (baptisms, burials, marriages, etc.)
- Court records
- Manumission and freedom certificates
- Missionary and benevolent society records
- Military and pension records
- Newspaper transcriptions
- Plantation family papers relating to slaves
- Tax lists naming free blacks or slaves
- Voter registration lists

Visit the [AAGSNC Website...](http://www.aagsnc.org)

Read the blog, post ancestor charts, read back issues of The Baobab
 Check our Resources Section, Calendar of Events, Society Information

aagsnc.org



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OBJECTIVES

- To promote interest in genealogy, biography and related history in African ancestry research
- To supplement and enrich the education of African-Americans through the collection, preservation and maintenance of African-American genealogical materials
- To promote the accumulation and preservation of African-American genealogical and related historical materials and make such materials available to all
- To promote and maintain ethical standards in genealogical research and publications

It's *Your* History...Isn't It Time You Told Your Story?

