

**P3 BEFORE THE MEMORIES DISAPPEAR**  
Gathering new information is great, but don't forget to write down your experiences while gathering it.

**P4 A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS**  
Contribute to a better society by participating in our annual membership survey.

**P8 2012 AAGSNC MEMBERSHIP SURVEY**  
Have ideas for meeting programs? Receiving emails from us? Let us know about that and more.

**P20 SACRAMENTO MEMBERS GET TOGETHER FOR DOC**  
AAGSNC members living in Sacramento lend their expertise and experiences to a new documentary project.

# the Baobab Tree

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

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## Family Reunions: Good Medicine for the Soul

by Carole Neal  
Member, AAGSNC

Our 2012 Neal Family Reunion was held July 13 – 15 in San Antonio, Texas. This was a gathering of descendants of Eleazer Neal, Sr., and Ollie [Ward] Neal, along with descendants of Philip Neal who was Eleazer's first cousin. There were approximately 200 in attendance, having traveled from Florida, Kansas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Tennessee,

and California. The age of attendees ranged from four months to 76 years young. We had a truly happy and memorable family gathering.

And, despite forecasts of rain, it did not rain during the reunion.

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**A family reunion provides an opportunity for a joyous gathering of kinfolk to connect – and reconnect – to see and visit with those you have not seen for a while and to be introduced to those you have not yet met.**



### Board of Directors

W.E. "Bill" Melson (01/2013)  
Dr. Lois Freeman (01/2014)  
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Outreach & Education - Nicka Smith

African American Genealogical Society  
of Northern California (AAGSNC)

P.O. Box 27485, OAKLAND, CA 94602  
(877) 884-2843  
WWW.AAGSNC.ORG

*It's Your History...*

Isn't it time you told **your**  
story?

The African-American Genealogical Society of Northern California (AAGSNC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated in its commitment to national and international African-ancestry family history research. The society provides a unique approach to education, research skills, and support to anyone interested in genealogy.

### 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

### Membership and it's benefits

Any person interested in furthering the objectives of AAGSNC is eligible for membership upon submission and acceptance of a completed application form and payment of dues.

Membership categories are as follows:

- Regular Membership: Age 17 and Over
- Family Membership
- Youth Membership: Age 16 and Under
- Organization Membership: Association, Library, Society, Non-Profit Group
- Lifetime Regular Membership: Age 17 and Over
- Lifetime Family Membership

Monthly Meetings - AAGSNC holds monthly meetings that include guest speakers, workshops, seminars, and networking with other members. Meetings are held on the third Saturday of each month (except July and August) from 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Dimond Branch of the Oakland Public Library, 3565 Fruitvale Avenue, Oakland, CA 94602-2326.

Field Trips and Research Support - Members can attend regularly scheduled trips to the local Family History Center and receive assistance with their research projects. Participation in organized research trips to the Salt Lake City Family History Library and taking part in events with other historical and genealogical organizations are included in our program.

Members Only Section of Our Website - Compiled Databases, *The Baobab Tree* archive, meeting presentations (PDFs, video, and podcasts), Ancestral Charts, and more.

To join, please visit [www.aagsnc.org](http://www.aagsnc.org)

## Before the Memories Disappear



Photo courtesy of M. Howard Edwards

by **M. Howard Edwards**  
President, AAGSNC

Welcome back!  
Now what?

Let us assume for a minute that you read, believed, and followed my suggestions in the last issue of *The Baobab Tree*:

1. Over the summer return to the "Old Country."
2. Interview the old folks (include a video or audio recorder).
3. Contact the local historical or genealogical society and let them know you are on your way.
4. I implied that you should record all of this activity that provided new data.

Before it gets stale, write a page or two (or many) summarizing your findings. Share these remarks with those with whom you visited, especially the old folks you interviewed. It is kind of a kick to see our remarks in print, and it will probably be true with them. If you did a particularly thorough job, it might be worth contacting a local newspaper reporter for an article in the newspaper.

Do not forget to make a few notes about what you tried that did NOT work or did NOT produce the results you expected.

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## History is Just as Important as Genealogy



Photo Credit: Jasmine Briggs

by **Nicka Smith**  
Co-Editor, *The Baobab Tree*

This is a common theme featured throughout the Fall 2012 issue of *The Baobab Tree*.

It may seem obvious that history and genealogy go together. On the other hand, do we, as family researchers, operate by this mantra everytime we participate in genealogy activities that aren't research trips? Being in a rush to get as many facts as possible can derail the discovery of some important jewels and findings and can perhaps keep doors closed that could have been opened.

Taking time to grab a historical context on things is necessary to understand exactly where our ancestors were at mentally, physically, and emotionally.

Yes, getting that census is important. Gaining all the vital records you can is rewarding and educational. On the other hand, if we aren't clear about the things taking place historically when those documents were created, we rob ourselves and our family members of the ability to truly get a grasp on all we have gained from being the descendants of our ancestors.

I'm sure you'll enjoy the many histories provided within this issue of *The Baobab Tree*. Perhaps they can serve as motivation to always remember history as you go about any search.

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# A Penny for Your Thoughts

*Share your opinions, and experiences about our meeting programs, services, and membership benefits.*

As part of its mission, AAGSNC is dedicated in its commitment to national and international African-ancestry family history research. Additionally, it focuses on providing a unique approach to education, research skills and support to anyone interested in genealogy. Over time, the board of directors, officers, and committee chairs want to know how the organization is doing when it comes to fulfilling the aforesated mission and goals.

In 2011, a survey was sent out to membership via the AAGSNC Yahoo Group and by email. This survey gathered feedback from society membership on subjects such as:

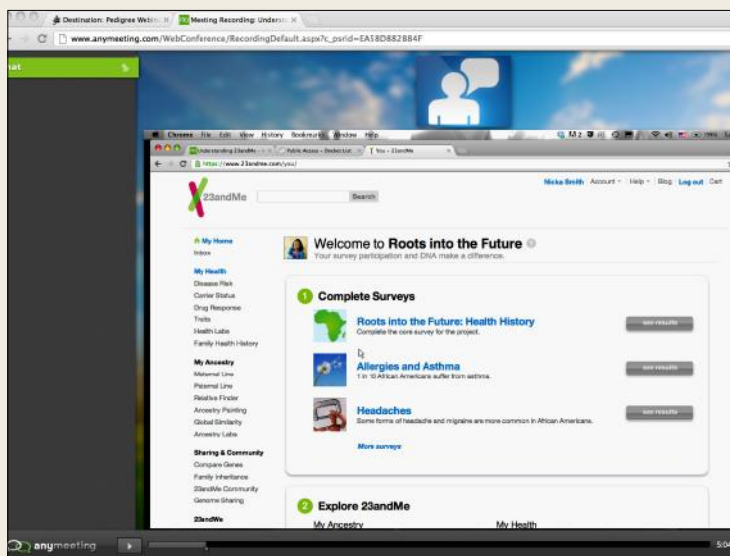
- yearly meeting attendance
- the most and least valuable meeting programs
- ideas for new meeting programs
- member desires to participate in online society and committee meetings
- interest in participating in society programs and partnerships

The 2012 Membership Survey (pages 8-13 of this issue of *The Baobab Tree*) looks for feedback on most of what was asked in 2011 but also seeks input on topics like:

- what would keep members from renewing their membership
- what makes members attend meetings
- the types of technology members use to conduct genealogy research

There are several ways you can participate in the 2012 Membership Survey:

Attendance at AAGSNC monthly meetings has increased during 2012. The Program Committee intends to use the input provided by the 2012 Membership Survey to help create the schedule of meeting programs for 2013.



As part of new services offered to AAGSNC membership, the Outreach and Education Committee will begin offering more members only and public webinars. The first one held was titled Understanding 23andMe.

- Mail - Make a copy of the survey and mail it c/o 2012 Membership Survey to AAGSNC, P.O. Box 27485, Oakland, CA 94602;
- Online - Visit the following link <http://goo.gl/WtHH5>
- In Person - Hardcopy surveys will be available at our October and November 2012 meetings

Responses will be collected until **November 17, 2012**. Let your voice be heard! Participate in the membership survey.



Photo Credit: AAGSNC

# **The Leaf**

## Updates from the Board of Directors, Officers, Society Committees, and Blog

### Board of Directors Annual Meeting and Election of Directors

A portion of the society's January 19, 2013 meeting is dedicated to the annual meeting of the Board of Directors. The agenda includes the election of new Board members.

The Board of Directors is responsible for the overall operation and direction of the society. It interfaces with daily operations of the society through its President.

The society has five directors, each holding his/her chair for three years. The expiration of the terms of directors is staggered so that no more than two directors' tenure will end at any one time. The term for two of the current directors ends at the end of the year and an election will be held to fill those seats.

If you are interested in running for the board or would like to nominate someone for the board, please contact Chairman Bill Melson, [billmelson@aol.com](mailto:billmelson@aol.com), no later than November 17, 2012.

There will be a short program after the annual meeting and election, subject to be announced.

### Selected Members Only Content on the Blog

*Destination: Pedigree Podcast 6 – The 1940 Census*

AAGSNC's April 2012 meeting featured a presentation on the history and contents of the 1940 census. In this podcast, learn about what was captured by census enumerators, how to find your relatives (or yourself).

*Destination: Pedigree Webinar Recording – Understanding 23andMe*

Have you participated in the 23andMe Roots into the Future Project and gotten test results you don't understand? Learn practical tips and tricks for understanding your results.

Protected content is a benefit of AAGSNC membership and a password is required to view it on the AAGSNC blog. Please refer to the Members Only section of the AAGSNC website for access.

### Selected Recent Posts on the Blog

*Digital Family History Books Now Available on FamilySearch*

Family History Books from the Family History Library (Salt Lake City, Utah), the Allen County Public Library (Ft. Wayne, Indiana), the Houston Public Library – Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research (Houston, Texas), and the Mid-Continent Public Library – Midwest Genealogy Center (Independence, Missouri), among others, are being digitized and made available online for FREE!

*Georgia State Archives Set to Close to the Public on November 1*

Very sad news for genealogists and researchers who need documents from the Georgia State Archives. Read more about efforts online to keep the Archives available to the public.

## Membership Milestones

### New Members

Parius Futch

### 10 Years of Membership

Leamond Allen  
Gloria J. Edwards

Diane Mitchell  
Martha Swisher

## 2012-13 Calendar of Events

### October 20

Breaking Through Brick Walls  
and DNA Presentation

### November 17

Slave Research and Immigration

### December 15

Christmas Party and Black  
Elephant Sale

### January 19

Annual Board Meeting and Program TBD

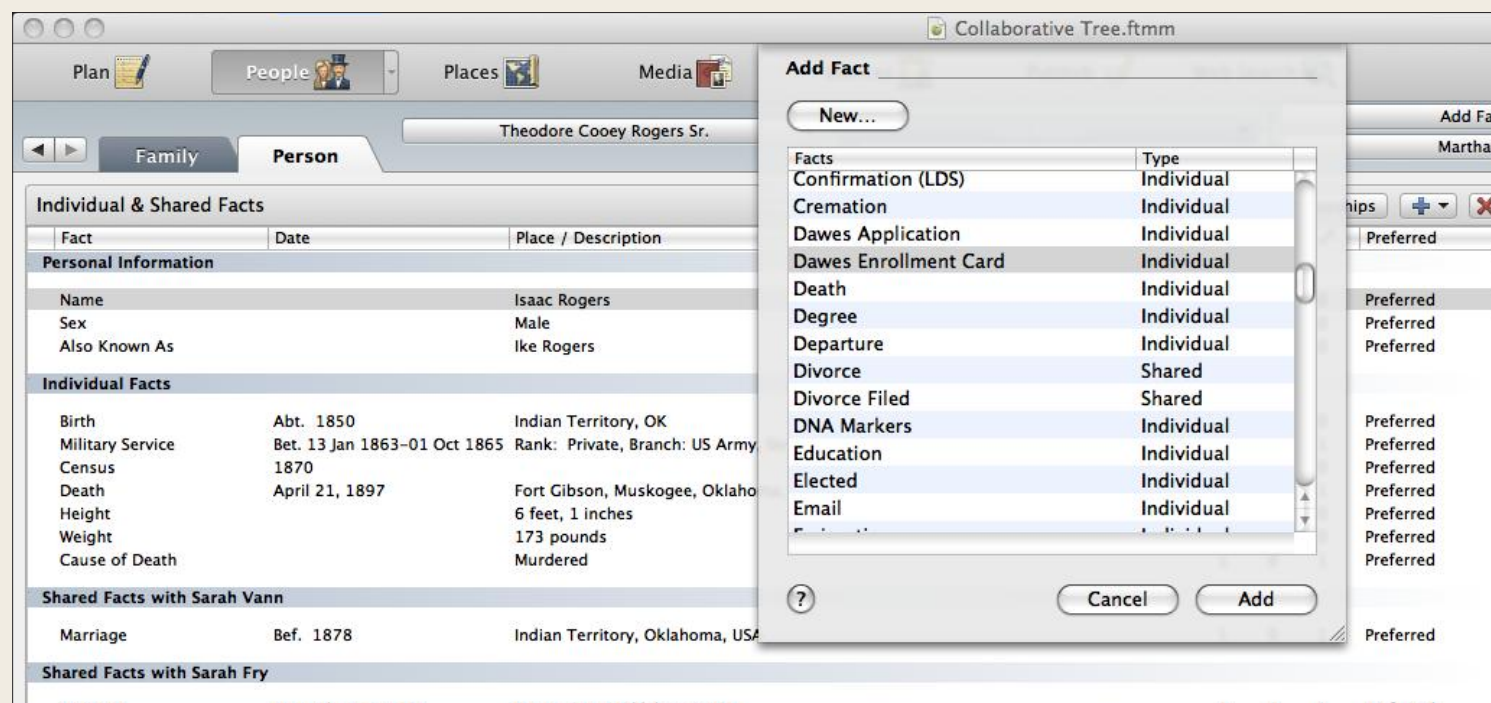
For more info on our events and  
meetings, please visit  
[www.AAGSNC.org](http://www.AAGSNC.org)

# Tech Talk

## Beyond Birth and Death—Using Custom Events or Facts in Your Genealogy Database

by Nicka Smith

Chair, Outreach and Education Committee, AAGSNC, Co-Editor, *The Baobab Tree*



Each of the major genealogy software programs on the market gives its users the ability to add custom facts to their database. Begin to capture more than just the garden variety facts in your database by creating ones specific to your family.

Genealogists and family historians often employ the use of a genealogy software program to capture their findings from both paper and digital files. There are a number of software programs, applications, and websites that can be used to capture all that lie within the documents unearthed and when used to their full potential, these systems can provide flexibility and options galore.

One of the primary ways of documenting information within one of these systems is the use of events or facts such as birth, marriage, and death to document the major events in an individual's life. While many of the events that are typically used are already programmed into a genealogist's system of choice, you can also create events or facts of your own that are unique to the

type of things you like to capture. These events or facts can have a date, location, and/or description and can be marked as private so they are not displayed outside of the database. In most systems, a custom report can also be generated for individuals who have that specific event or fact type.

For example, our family genealogy research team documents completed education for family members, including the school they went to, and the degree they obtained. This is done so we can see patterns of interests and vocations within the family and also so younger generations know who they can talk to about future careers. We designate this information with a title of "Education" or "College Degree." Additionally, we capture historical addresses, fraternal

organization membership, political party/affiliation, social and civic involvement, church membership, and more.

Creating a custom event or fact is subject to the system of your choice. Be sure to read the user manual to determine exactly how this is done. In the end, you'll be able to create a deeper understanding for those who are able to enjoy the fruits of your genealogical labor and have the ability to capture just about anything you find in your system.

**Nicka Smith** is the chair of the Outreach and Education Committee and co-editor of *The Baobab Tree* for the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California (AAGSNC). She's been researching her family since 1999. Email her at [oande@aagsnc.org](mailto:oande@aagsnc.org)



# Genealogy 101

*Using a genealogy program can save you time and redundancy in your genealogy research pursuits.*

by Annette Madden  
Co-Editor, *The Baobab Tree*

In the “good old days”, pre-computer, genealogy involved paper—lots and lots of paper! Computers have changed all that, and saved a lot of trees. Part of getting organized is finding a genealogy program in which to keep all of the precious data you will be gathering. There are lots of programs out there so how do you decide which one to use?

Here are a few questions to ask yourself when deciding:

1. What kind of operating system do you have and what are its capacities?
2. Besides the basic information about your ancestors, will you also want to store photos and documents?
3. Do you want to share your information with others?
4. Is price a factor? Costs start at “free” and go up to \$90.

Do some research on the internet on software programs and “test drive” some programs before you decide:

- Check with other genealogists and find out what programs they use. Ask if they will give you a demonstration.
- Some programs have free versions which do not include all the bells and whistles. Download them and try them out first.

The chart below compares five of the top genealogy programs available.



Photo courtesy of Annette Madden

**Annette Madden** has been researching her family history since 2000 with great success. She has traced her history back to the late 1700s, has met many cousins she never knew she had and was instrumental in organizing a reunion of parts of her family that had not been together since the 1880s. She is a member of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California and is currently the co-editor of the organization's quarterly journal, *The Baobab Tree*. Email her at [journal@aagsnc.org](mailto:journal@aagsnc.org)

## Genealogy Software Comparison

Software	Mac or PC?	Free Version?	Price
Family Tree Maker	Both	No	\$29-\$82
Legacy Family Tree	PC	Yes	\$30-\$60
Personal Ancestral File	PC	Yes	Free
Reunion	Mac	No	\$90
RootsMagic	PC	Yes (14 day trial)	\$30-\$40

# 2012 Membership Survey

*Thanks for participating in the AAGSNC Membership Survey. The answers you provide are valuable and will help AAGSNC's leadership. Please provide your responses below for the calendar year 2012 submit a photocopy by mail to AAGSNC, P.O. Box 27485, Oakland, CA 94602.*

## Membership and Mission

**How long have you been a member of AAGSNC? \***

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ One year to four years
- ☐ More than five years

**Please rate how you feel your membership in AAGSNC has supported you in the following: \***

	Not Supportive	Somewhat Supportive	Very Supportive
Educating you about genealogy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing your genealogy research skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning about African ancestored genealogy research in the United States	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning about African ancestored genealogy research internationally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning about preserving genealogical and historical materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning about maintaining ethical standards in genealogical research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**What reason(s) would keep you from renewing your membership? (Check all that apply) \***

If you have a life membership, please check N/A, if appropriate.

- ☐ Lack of services and support available locally
- ☐ Lack of services and support available nationally
- ☐ I've outgrown what is currently being provided
- ☐ I've found better value and support by joining another society
- ☐ I stopped doing genealogy research
- ☐ Society Culture (Politics, personalities, etc.)
- ☐ Financial reasons
- ☐ N/A: I have a lifetime membership
- ☐ Other:



# 2012 Membership Survey

## Communications

**What type of emails do you receive from AAGSNC? (Check all that apply) \***

- ☐ Yahoo Group - Contain links to genealogy resources but no photos
- ☐ MailChimp - Contain information about upcoming events and meetings, include photos
- ☐ I haven't received any email from AAGSNC
- ☐ N/A: I'm a new member and haven't been added to any lists yet

**How do you learn about what's going on within the society? (Check all that apply) \***

- ☐ Yahoo Group - Contain links to genealogy resources but no photos
- ☐ MailChimp - Contain information about upcoming events and meetings, include photos
- ☐ The Baobab Tree Journal
- ☐ AAGSNC Blog
- ☐ AAGSNC Website
- ☐ I haven't heard about anything going on in the society

## Meeting Attendance and Programs

**How many AAGSNC meetings have you attended this year? \***

- ☐ None
- ☐ None - I live outside of the area
- ☐ One to Three
- ☐ Four to Six
- ☐ Seven or More

**If you live locally, what would make you attend more meetings? (Check all that apply)**

This question is optional

- ☐ Better meeting topics/programs
- ☐ More support for my individual research needs
- ☐ Personal relationships with other members
- ☐ More local programs outside of monthly meetings
- ☐ N/A: I cannot come for personal reasons
- ☐ Other:

# 2012 Membership Survey

**Choosing from a list of 2012's meeting programs, please select those you found the MOST valuable: \***

If you're a new member or you live outside of the area, select the applicable n/a

- ☐ Organization - Genealogy Software/Record Keeping
- ☐ Beyond the Census: Other State and Federal Resources, Newspapers
- ☐ Writing Your Story: Presenting Your Family's History
- ☐ Reviewing the 1940 Census
- ☐ The Great Migration and Migratory Patterns
- ☐ Genealogy Research Techniques and the Ancestral Project Presentation
- ☐ Braggin' and Lyin' (What I Did This Summer) and Social Media
- ☐ Breaking Through Brick Walls and DNA Presentation
- ☐ Slave Research
- ☐ Christmas Party and "Black Elephant" Sale
- ☐ N/A: I'm a new member
- ☐ N/A: I live outside of the area
- ☐ N/A: I live locally but have not attended any meetings.

**Choosing from a list of 2012's meeting programs, please select the those you found the LEAST valuable: \***

If you're a new member or you live outside of the area, select the applicable n/a

- ☐ Organization - Genealogy Software/Record Keeping
- ☐ Beyond the Census: Other State and Federal Resources, Newspapers
- ☐ Writing Your Story: Presenting Your Family's History
- ☐ Reviewing the 1940 Census
- ☐ The Great Migration and Migratory Patterns
- ☐ Genealogy Research Techniques and the Ancestral Project Presentation
- ☐ Braggin' and Lyin' (What I Did This Summer) and Social Media
- ☐ Breaking Through Brick Walls and DNA Presentation
- ☐ Slave Research
- ☐ Christmas Party and "Black Elephant" Sale
- ☐ N/A: I'm a new member
- ☐ N/A: I live outside of the area
- ☐ N/A: I live locally but have not attended any meetings.

**Please provide topics that you feel would be great for 2013 meeting presentations (programs)**

This question is optional.

# 2012 Membership Survey

## Use of Technology

**In the last year, which types of technology have you utilized to add to or aid your genealogy research? \***

Check as many as apply. Check N/A if you have not used any of these things.

- ☐ Online repository research (Ancestry.Com, FamilySearch, etc.)
- ☐ Search engine research (Google, Bing, Mocavo, etc.)
- ☐ Webinars
- ☐ Podcasts
- ☐ Virtual Conferences or Workshops
- ☐ N/A: I haven't used any of the technology mentioned
- ☐ Other:

**If you have used DNA to further your genealogical efforts, which services have you used? \***

Please select all that apply. If you have not used DNA, please select N/A.

- ☐ African Ancestry - <http://www.africanancestry.com>
- ☐ 23andMe - <http://www.23andme.com>
- ☐ Family Tree DNA (FTDNA) - <http://www.familytreedna.com>
- ☐ National Geographic - <https://genographic.nationalgeographic.com/>
- ☐ Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation - [www.smgf.org/](http://www.smgf.org/)
- ☐ N/A: I have not used DNA in my research
- ☐ Other:

**Did you view the 23andMe webinar recording presented by the Outreach and Education Committee? \***

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**Have you listened to podcasts on the AAGSNC blog? \***

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**If you have listened to podcasts on the AAGSNC blog, which ones did you listen to? (Check all that apply)**

This question is optional

- ☐ Podcast 1: Library of Congress
- ☐ Podcasts 2 and 3: Melvin Collier Interview (Parts 1 and 2)
- ☐ Podcast 4: Slave Research (Meeting Presentation)
- ☐ Podcast 5: Social Media and Web 2.0
- ☐ Podcast 6: The 1940 Census (Meeting Presentation)



# 2012 Membership Survey

**Please provide your suggestions below for future webinar and podcast topics you'd like to see covered by AAGSNC.**  
This question is optional

## Society Journal (The Baobab Tree)

**How many issues of the Baobab Journal have you RECEIVED? \***

- ☐ None
- ☐ One to Three
- ☐ Four to Six
- ☐ Seven or More

**How many issues of the Baobab Journal have you READ? \***

- ☐ None
- ☐ One to Three
- ☐ Four to Six
- ☐ Seven or More

**On a scale of one to three, rate your satisfaction in the Baobab becoming a digital only publication. \***

1   2   3

Not Satisfied   ☐   ☐   ☐   Very Satisfied

**On a scale of one to three, rate how useful you find the Baobab to be for your genealogy research efforts. \***

1   2   3

Not Useful   ☐   ☐   ☐   Very Useful

**What are your favorite types of articles to read about in the Baobab Journal? (Check all that apply)**

This question is optional

- ☐ Genealogy How-To's
- ☐ Personal Stories
- ☐ AAGSNC Society Updates/Stories
- ☐ President's Message
- ☐ Editor's Message
- ☐ Other:

# 2012 Membership Survey

## Society Website

Do you have access to the Members Only section of the AAGSNC website? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How often do you use the Members Only section of our website? \*

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Very Seldom
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ N/A: I don't have access

What would make you use our website more often? (Check all that apply) \*

- ☐ Make it easier to use
- ☐ Add more content such as indexes and information in Members Only
- ☐ Better design or aesthetics
- ☐ Other:

## Gauging Interest

Please rate your interest in participating in: \*

	Not Interested	Somewhat Interested	Very Interested
AAGSNC Sponsored Research Trips (Salt Lake City, Washington, DC)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fundraising Rummage Sale	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Society Socials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
AAGSNC Workshops, Seminars, and Webinars (With Additional Fees Required to Participate)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cemetery Index and Database (Creation and Maintainance)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obituary Index and Database (Maintainance)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ancestral Project (Genealogy and Youth)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Their Stories (Genealogy and Elders)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Webinars (Participating as host or presenter)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Podcasts (Participating as host or presenter)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Free Persons of Color in Southwest Arkansas: The Dimery Family

by Peggy S. Lloyd  
Contributor

Stephen Dimery was a free person of color who came to Hempstead County, AR, from Catahoula Parish, LA, about 1840 with his wife and two sons, Absalom and Ezekiel. The Dimerys were part of a community of free persons of color in Washington, Hempstead and Sevier Counties who have been part of a study sponsored by the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives (SARA) Foundation and the Arkansas Humanities Council.

Recently Dimery (The name has a variety of spellings) descendants have contacted SARA for a mutual exchange of information on the family. The Dimery family moved from North Carolina to Tennessee to Louisiana and on to Texas and Arkansas in the early decades of the 19th century. Stephen and his older brother Allen served in the Tennessee Militia with Andrew Jackson. Allen went early to Texas and acquired 2,000 acres of land. Later he sold out and returned to make his home in Nachitoches, LA, where he was residing in 1860. His descendants are still living in the area today.

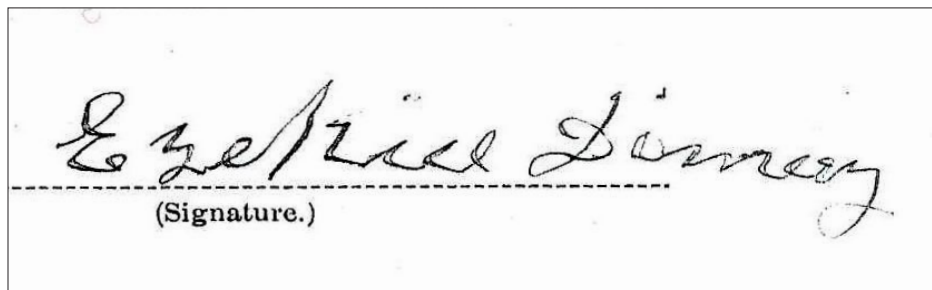
One of those descendants is Vernita Morgan of El Dorado, AR. Vernita visited SARA recently and donated a copy of the Demery, Farley, Syas, Taylor Family Trees in the name of her parents Paul and Oneda Rogers Morgan of Natchitoches, LA. She enjoyed researching Stephen and his family in Washington and studying the Union Army pension files for Ezekiel and

Absalom Dimery that had been purchased by SARA Foundation from the National Archives.

Stephen Dimery died sometime between 1850 and 1860. Under an Arkansas law passed in early 1858, free persons of color had either to leave

the state or to go back into slavery by January 1, 1860. Ezekiel, who lived in Washington, and Absalom, who lived in Sevier County, left Southwest Arkansas with other families and went to Kansas, the nearest free state. Absalom and Ezekiel were probably first in Fort Scott, KS, near the Missouri line and later in Lawrence, KS, where they spent the majority of their lives.

Photo courtesy of Peggy Lloyd



Ezekiel Dimery's Union Army pension file, shown in his signature above, was a valuable resource for Vernita Morgan, who is a relative of Ezekiel's.

**The Dimery family moved from North Carolina to Tennessee to Louisiana and on to Texas and Arkansas in the early decades of the 19th century.**

Both brothers joined the Union Army on the outbreak of the Civil War and served in the Kansas Colored Troops. Ironically, both were sent to Arkansas. Absalom was in Little Rock, and Ezekiel was posted for a time in Camden.

Absalom, a blacksmith by trade, died in Lawrence in 1894 and is buried in Oakhill Cemetery with a marker. His wife applied for his pension. Ezekiel was longer-lived and the father of a large family. He died in 1910.



Photo courtesy of Peggy Lloyd

**Peggy Lloyd**, a native of Hope, AR, is the Archival Manager of the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives at Washington, AR, now a branch of the Arkansas History Commission. Peggy's research interests are the history of Southwest Arkansas, cemetery preservation, African-

American history, maps, history of the land, and family history. She speaks frequently to a wide-range of groups on courthouse research, local history, and black history. She is a long-time member of the Arkansas Archeological Society and works closely with the archeologists of the Arkansas Archeological Survey.



# A Trip “Down Home” to Arkansas

*An old picture can stir up memories of family reconnections.*



Photo courtesy of Howard O'Guin

From left is the author's dad and mom, John and Fanny O'Guin, Uncle Eddie, man in back (unknown, may be author's uncle Charlie), Aunt Dochie, wife of Uncle Eddie, Aunt Mary Howard (a sister of Fanny and Eddie), their father and the author's grandfather, Rev. Wiley Howard. On the end is Eddie and Dochie's son, Napoleon. The cute kid in the short pants is the author, the youngest child of John and Fannie. Next to the author is Wilford Green, the son of the author's aunt, Laura. Photo taken in front of Uncle Eddie and Aunt Dochie's house, in Camden, AR by the author's Aunt Lucy.

## by Howard O'Guin Contributor

I remember the trip well. My dad John O'Guin had purchased an almost new 1940 Ford Deluxe 2-door maroon sedan. My father and mother, my mother's sister, Lucy, their cousin, Sallie Hardy, and I made the trip. I was about 5 or 6 at the time depending on which year it was (1940 or 1941). On the evening of our first day after arriving at Uncle

Eddie and Aunt Dochie's house, I can remember a discussion between my mom, Aunt Lucy and Uncle Eddie as they were preparing for a trip out to their father's farm to visit him and their step mother. They were wondering if it was acceptable for them to wear slacks. Uncle Eddie reminded them that their father was a minister and would not approve. He said it would be disrespectful and told them not to wear them. They didn't.

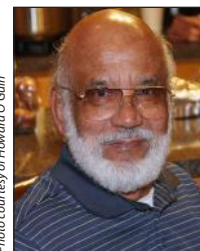


Photo courtesy of Howard O'Guin

**Howard O'Guin** was born in Kinloch, MO in 1935 and lived in the area until 1968. He worked with the fire department in Kinloch until 1966 and then was employed by the City of Berkeley, Missouri Fire Department and retired as Chief in 1992. Howard is an avid genealogist and historian.

His 20 years of research is centered in Union County, Arkansas, where his paternal and maternal ancestors and his wife were born. Contact him at [howardog92@att.net](mailto:howardog92@att.net).

# History of Union A.M.E. Church

*Discovering a church history makes for an amazing genealogical offering*

by Vernester Sheeler and Doris Smith

Members, AAGSNC

Union African Methodist Episcopal Church is located in the small rural town of Mt. Holly, AR formerly known as Boone Township, Mt Holly Post Office. It is 18 miles northwest of El Dorado at the junction of Highways 57 and 160. Mt Holly is the home place of our ancestors. Union A.M.E Church has been the primary place of worship for our family for 166 years. The Bates, Branches, Craytons, Matthews, Utseys, and Walkers have all held offices and served in a variety of roles integral to the community and the church. The history of Union A.M.E Church was initially compiled by David Fielding of Magnolia. He represents District 5 in the Arkansas House of Representatives. David and his family are longtime members of the church and have served the congregation in a variety of roles. Currently, David serves as a steward, trustee, and lay leader. David's wife, Shirley Faye Ritchie Fielding, is our third cousin and has spent her entire life at Union. Our great-great-grandparents Hardy Crayton and Lucy Branch Crayton, attended Union A.M.E., as did their daughters Dora Crayton and Luvenia Crayton Utsey.

Several years ago, David interviewed cousin Robbie Walker Thomas, conducted a search of the Union County courthouse records, and reviewed the church record books. This information was used to compile the church history. Robbie was the great-granddaughter of Shelby and Sarah O'Guin Matthews and the granddaughter of William Walker and Elvie Crayton. Shelby Matthews is listed as one of the founding trustees. The church records document his death as August 04, 1921. An active member until her death, June 16, 2001, Robbie, and her sisters Eddie



Photo courtesy of Vernester Sheeler

In 1909, Union became a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church community under the leadership of Pastor W. A. Hardin.

Lee, Beatrice, and Evelyn Walker, grew up at Union.

During a recent visit to the church, 40 record books dating back to the early 1900s were found stored in an old file

**For 166 years, Union AME Church has been the primary place of worship for our families.**

cabinet in one of the church offices. Efforts to preserve these records for future generations of the family and the Mt Holly community at large are underway.

Services are held twice a month on the first and third Sundays. The current pastor, Rev. Anthony Williams, has led the seven-member congregation since 2010; Rev. Clarence Reynolds, is the Presiding Elder and, the Rt. Rev. Samuel L. Green, Sr., is Bishop.

Prior to 1865 it is most likely our family members were slaves. Our research reveals that slaveholders were often conflicted, and the religious experience of slaves varied. One source notes most

slaveowners forbid the education of slaves. The biggest fear was centered on the slaves' ability to read; if slaves could read the Bible and became Christians they might interpret the teachings of Jesus Christ as being in favor of freedom and equality. In contrast, some slave masters encouraged religion among their slaves, because they believed it would make them more docile and obedient. It is fair to assume their primary means of travel was to walk to wherever they might need or want to go as slaves. Union church records confirm it was organized in the spring of 1846, and that the congregation consisted of people from the surrounding communities of Lisbon, Stephens, and El Dorado. They would find a remote section of the woods to meet, sing, and pray. Few congregations of any faith had a building beyond a simple log or frame structure. So it is likely the congregation of Union met in brush arbors during pleasant weather.

Brush arbors were built as settlements were being formed into viable communities. These temporary structures were later converted to outdoor churches.

**CONT. ON PAGE 26**



# BAY AREA RESOURCES

Compiled by Annette Madden, Co-Editor, *The Baobab Tree*

In this issue, we'll focus on a jewel in Oakland, the California Genealogical Society & Library.

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## **California Genealogical Society & Library**

2201 Broadway, Suite LL2, Oakland, CA 94612-3031

Phone: 510-663-1358, Fax: 510-663-1596

Email: [contact@californiaancestors.org](mailto:contact@californiaancestors.org)

Website: <http://www.californiaancestors.org>

Thursdays, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Fridays, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Also open by appointment

CGS' stated mission is "to help people trace and compile their family histories. To accomplish this, the Society maintains a library, gathers and preserves vital records, disseminates information through its publications and internet access, and teaches genealogical research methods through meetings, seminars and workshops."

The California Genealogical Society, organized in San Francisco in 1898, is a genealogical gem right here in Oakland. The Society offers research services, online one-of-a-kind genealogical indexes and databases, and a research library housing over 38,000 reference materials from California, the United States, and around the world. It includes thousands of family histories, local and state histories, maps, reference books, periodicals, city directories, and a manuscript collection. There is an emphasis on San Francisco and the Bay Area, but the entire country is well represented in the collection, as well as several foreign countries. There is a growing section devoted to African American genealogy and history.

There is a \$5 fee for use of the library by non-members. The first Saturday of each month is free. Fees will be waived for the month of October in honor of Family History Month.



Photo credit: Nida Smith

California Genealogical Society and Library is a jewel of a genealogical resource housed right in downtown Oakland. With more than 38,000 reference materials, it's definitely a place to be when it comes to East Bay.

The library has computers, a copier and a scanner for patron use.

A wireless connection is available.

Access to the following subscription sites is also available:

- Ancestry.com
- Fold3.com (formerly Footnote.com)
- Americanancestors.org
- NewspaperArchive.com
- Vitalssearch-ca.com
- Vitalssearch-worldwide.com

### *Lookup Searches*

Lookup volunteers will check the indexed sources of the library and send copies of the original records for a fee of \$10. Please visit the CGS website for more information.



# Vital Records

*Be sure about requirement years before you order records from a particular state.*

**Mandatory keeping of vital records and reporting them to state offices for each state varied. Some counties began earlier, and some much later. For example, the earliest birth records were recorded as early as 1841 in Massachusetts and as late as 1919 in Georgia. Marriage records and death records have similar variance. The following tables show when this record-keeping began:**

STATE	BIRTH	MARRIAGE	DEATH
Alabama	1908	1936	1908
Alaska	1913	1913	1913
Arizona	1909	1909	1909
Arkansas	1914	1917	1914
California	1905	1905	1905
Colorado	1907	1907	1907
Connecticut	1897	1897	1897
Delaware**	1861	1847	1881
District of Columbia	1874	1811	1874
Florida	1899	1927	1899
Georgia	1919	1952	1919
Hawaii	1842	1842	1859
Idaho	1911	1947	1911
Illinois	1916	1962	1916
Indiana	1907	1958	1899
Iowa	1880	1880	1880
Kansas	1911	1913	1911
Kentucky	1911	1958	1911
Louisiana**	1914	----	1914
Maine	1892	1892	1892
Maryland	1898	1950	1898
Massachusetts	1841	1841	1841

\*\* Delaware death and birth records stop in 1863 and resume in 1881. Louisiana birth records are kept in parish clerk offices. Tennessee has statewide birth and death records missing for 1913.

LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH  
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS  
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

STATE	BIRTH	MARRIAGE	DEATH
Michigan	1867	1867	1867
Minnesota	1900	1958	1908
Mississippi	1912	1926	1912
Missouri	1910	1881	1910
Montana	1907	1943	1907
Nevada	1911	1968	1911
New Hampshire	1901	1901	1901
New Jersey	1848	1848	1848
New Mexico	1920	1920	1920
New York	1880	1880	1880
North Carolina	1913	1962	1913
North Dakota	1907	1925	1907
Ohio	1908	1949	1908
Oklahoma	1908	1908	1908
Oregon	1903	1906	1903
Pennsylvania	1906	1885	1906
Rhode Island	1853	1885	1853
South Carolina	1915	1950	1915
South Dakota	1905	1905	1905
Tennessee**	1908	1945	1908
Texas	1903	1966	1903
Utah	1905	1887	1905
Vermont	1955	1955	1955
Virginia	1912	1912	1912
Washington	1907	1968	1907
West Virginia	1917	1964	1917
Wisconsin	1907	1907	1907
Wyoming	1909	1941	1909

This chart was originally published in the Summer 2012 issue of the *AAGGMV Newsletter* and is reprinted with the permission of the editor, Robert Harris.



# SACRAMENTO MEMBERS COME TOGETHER

*Sacramento AAGSNC members and friends gathered in the home of Sharon Styles on July 15 to participate in the filming of a documentary on Bull Hill Cemetery in Falls County, Texas. The documentary titled "Speak My Name and I Shall Live Again" is scheduled for release in the Fall of 2012.*



Photo Credits: Sharon Styles



# TOGETHER FOR DOCUMENTARY

by Sharon Styles and Linda Bradley  
Members, AAGSNC

AAGSNC members included Barbara Tyson, Linda Bradley, Eric Thomas, Sharry Covington, Jackie Chauhan, Carl Davis and Sharon Styles. All attendees gave a brief overview of their genealogical methods and shared family research.

Deidra Nelson is the niece of Sharon Styles and a huge part of the reason Styles began researching her family roots. James M. Scruggs provided oral history on life in Falls County. Scruggs, 86, was born and raised in the small Texas community. Scruggs, Nelson and Styles are descendants of the Paul Family.

Sacramento stylist, Monique “Emjai” Johnson, handled the hair, make-up and set decorations. Cameraman Steve McKay filmed the event.

Opposite Page Top: Seated: James Scruggs, Sharon Johnson Styles, Deidra Johnson Nelson, Standing L-R: Barbara Tyson, Sharry Covington, Judy Miller, Eric Thomas, TaSherra Elam, Linda Bradley, Teresa Gulley Reed, Lisa Hood, Jackie Chauhan, Steve Kantes, Jeni Hammond, Monique “Emjai” Johnson, and Carl Davis.

Opposite Page, Bottom Left: Steve McKay films Barbara Tyson discussing the 1940 census.

Opposite Page, Bottom Right: Linda Bradley shares her family history with the group during the taping.



Steve McKay films a discussion with l-r Barbara Tyson, Carl Davis, Steve Kantes, and Eric Thomas..



Stylist, Monique “Emjai” Johnson applies make up to Deidra Nelson before her interview begins.

# Family Reunions: Good Medicine for the Soul

continued from cover

The Sunday before the reunion, my cousin LeeLee (Arthur Lee Neal, Jr) one of the committee members, phoned to ask if I would be on the program at the Friday evening welcome dinner to talk on “The Occasion”-- why family reunions are important. Of course, I would have preferred more advance notice, but I agreed.

Following is the speech I made. I share it here as it might help others who may be getting resistance from family members about holding a reunion.

## THE OCCASION – 2012 Neal Family Reunion

Good Evening! It always is so good to get together with family.

Why do we gather for reunions?

A family reunion provides an opportunity for a joyous gathering of kinfolk to connect – and reconnect – to see and visit with those you have not seen for a while and to be introduced to those you have not yet met. It is a time to honor the family elders, to remember those who have passed on, to encourage and support younger family members, and to welcome new additions to the family be it by birth, adoption, or marriage.

I believe family reunions are good medicine for the soul. It is the perfect setting to fellowship and socialize with family, enjoy some “good eatin’,” and to observe the many talents offered by family members. That may be through a talent show or through a family business directory. Reunion location is not the most important thing – the most important thing is the gathering of family.

Your last name may not be “Neal,” but you are a Neal nonetheless because your mother, your grandmother, or your great grandmother was born a Neal. That’s makes you a Neal.

Winnsboro, Franklin Parish, LA – home place of the Neal Family. As far as I know, the first Neal Family Reunion was held in the summer of 1977 in Winnsboro. That was a one day event. All of the Neal brothers, except for Uncle Charlie, were there along with Aunt Eliza and our great-

uncle and aunt, Alfred and Arzella Ward. Extended Neal family members like Cousin Jack also were there.

The next time we gathered was in 1988 in San Jose, CA. Though the reunion was a one day event, it was a part of a very special weekend of family celebration. Uncle Jesse and Aunt Dear celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary that weekend. On Saturday, they renewed their wedding vows in a ceremony at St. John Missionary Baptist Church, followed by a reception at the same community hall where our 2008 reunion banquet was held. The next day, Sunday, we held the day-long reunion picnic at the IBM company picnic area in San Jose. Family members from Louisiana traveled out to join Bay Area based family members for this special weekend. Aunt Eliza wasn’t able to attend due to illness; Uncle Carey wasn’t able to attend. But everyone was so pleased and happy that Uncle Charlie was able to attend, along with the other brothers: Uncle Eleazer, my father, Solomon Neal, Uncle Jesse, and Uncle William.

At that 1988 gathering, various cousins were saying we should get together every other year. However, we did not have another reunion until 2000 and that reunion came about as a result of our gathering in Winnsboro in November 1999 for the funeral service of Uncle William. Some were saying at that time that we should plan to gather for a happy occasion.

Since 2000 we have held our reunions every other year in different locations:

2000 – Winnsboro and Monroe, LA  
2002 – San Jose, CA  
2004 – Winnsboro and Monroe, LA  
2006 – Baltimore, MD  
2008 – San Francisco, CA  
2010 – New Orleans, LA  
2012 – San Antonio, TX

I feel that the “spirit of the ancestors” has a hand in guiding the planning of our reunions. Some family members no longer are with us, but it seems they are smiling down and providing encouragement and support to make the reunions a success. All family members are not able to attend each reunion but by holding them on a scheduled basis, it allows people to plan and budget in order to attend when they can.

These family gatherings are important for all ages but especially for the young family members so they can meet and know who their cousins are. Reunions can also be where we help one another through family health discussions and information-sharing but also by keeping the family story (our history) alive. The Moore Family is having their reunion this weekend and the coordinator mentioned that she asked the adults to read a particular book in advance of their reunion. One of the activities at their reunion will be a discussion about the book. One of their young adults will lead that discussion. The book is *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* by Isabel Wilkerson.

# Tell us your delivery preference for *The Baobab Tree*...

*The Baobab Tree* has become a digital publication. It will still have the same wonderful content, the same advertisements, and the same frequency of publication you are accustomed to enjoying.

Most back issues of the journal are available as digital files in the **Members Only** section of our web site ([www.aagsnc.org](http://www.aagsnc.org)). As each new edition becomes available, it will be added to the collection and a notification will be sent by email to the membership list and posted in the AAGSNC Membership Yahoo Group site. Those that have opted to continue to receive the printed copy will be mailed their issue at the same time.

New members will be given the option of receiving the publication digitally or by mail.

Current members can state their delivery preference by completing and mailing the request below (or a photocopy if you prefer to not damage your issue). Emailed requests will also be honored. Please be sure to include the information below in your email. Members can also visit <http://goo.gl/teiFp> to submit their preference.

If a member elects to change his or her mind later, the member should contact the Journal Committee by mail: *The Baobab Tree*, c/o AAGSNC, P.O. Box 27485, Oakland, CA 94602-0985, or by email: [journal@aagsnc.org](mailto:journal@aagsnc.org) Requests will be honored at any time.

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[journal@aagsnc.org](mailto:journal@aagsnc.org)

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Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Family Reunions: Good Medicine for the Soul

continued from page 22

If you haven't heard of or read this book, I highly encourage you read it. My sister Maxine and I read it and afterwards had a great exchange, sharing notes and our thoughts and impressions about it. We were especially interested because a lot of what we read reminded us of things our parents had told us about their migration from Louisiana to California, as well as some of their experiences in the South before they moved west. And the book made the point that once in the new location, those who migrated tended to form communities like those they'd left behind to help them with their adjustment in their new location. You have heard the Neal Family story before but many of the younger family members may not know it. I

hope that each generation will keep our story alive. My local genealogy society has a motto: "It's YOUR History. Isn't it time you told your story?" That applies to our history, as well. Don't let someone else tell your story or "mis-tell" it.

Just a thought - during non-reunion years, have fundraisers. Raising money will make attendance affordable for more family members - i.e., money raised can cover lots of the upfront deposits and other expenses and thereby reduce individual registration cost. Lots of talent and creative minds among family members - can even have regional fundraisers.

I'd like you to think of the family as a solid tree - sturdy and strong! Its roots run deep, built on a solid foundation. That strong tree can weather the storms of life. Let the family be your anchor. A tree might bend and sway, but that does not mean it will break. Our young family members, especially, need to know this and rely on family when they encounter bumps in the road of life. Most likely there is a family member who has experienced the same situation. Their insight and suggestions can be helpful.

As I close I ask that you join me in giving a big round of applause -- thank you -- to Michael, Val, and the entire committee. They have done an outstanding job!

My aunt Ludy [Harris] Neal, Uncle Carey's widow, is the sole surviving member of my father's generation. In 2012 she celebrated her 96th birthday. For reasons of health, she was unable to attend the reunion but she sent a letter of greeting which one of her granddaughters read at the welcome dinner. (see opposite page)

I have always felt it important that each generation have at least one family member (and preferably more) who will engage in continued family research and keep the family history alive; i.e., be the family griot. I was so happy at this recent reunion when one of my cousins mentioned her son has a strong interest in family history research and that he had even been spending time visiting the cemetery. Kenny (Kenneth Blackson, Jr.) attends college at Southern University in Baton Rouge, LA. He and I spoke and I let him know I was thrilled to learn of his interest and that we definitely should work together. For one thing, I asked if he was open to going to Oakley Cemetery in Franklin Parish to take down headstone information. Many Neal ancestors and family

members are interred at Oakley Cemetery. So, we have added another budding family historian to our ranks. I'd like to think that our including family history information and displays at the reunions has helped generate this important interest.

There are many readily available resources to assist those wishing to plan a family reunion. The AfriGeneas website has a Family Reunions Forum, <http://www.afrigeneas.com>, and the *Reunions* magazine website has lots of information and tips, <http://www.reunionsmag.com>. There is information also at the Family Reunion Institute website, <http://www.temple.edu/fri/familyreunion/>.

**Carole Neal** has been researching her family history since 1997. She is a former Officer, past Membership Chair (two terms), and a life member of AAGSNC; a member of the National Genealogical Society, the Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society (AAHGS), the Louisiana Genealogical and Historical Society, the Ark-La-Tex Genealogical Association, and a past member of the California Genealogical Society. She is a family historian for her paternal and maternal sides and has planned family reunions for both. Email her at [rootsfinder@att.net](mailto:rootsfinder@att.net)





## GREETINGS - 2012 NEAL FAMILY REUNION



Hello Family,

How time seems to have taken on wings. It is time for another wonderful and blessed Neal family reunion! The Lord has certainly blessed me to still be among the living at 96 years of age.

I have such fond memories of past reunions. I can recall the love, laughter and tears shared, worship and praise services and new bonds of friendship. Oh, how I enjoyed the singing. Not that I could sing very well, but I love singing. It is still one of my joys.

Daily reading of God's Word has and will always be my anchor. It is still my greatest source of pleasure. In the last years of my teaching career, the Word sustained me to endure whatever the days would bring. God's Word continues to provide encouragement and joy.

My 96th birthday was made most memorable because of the many gifts, loving cards and good wishes I unexpectedly received from former school and church students. I continue to read them repeatedly. I was overwhelmed with happiness and gratitude.

Our God is so faithful! One of my prayers for the Neal family is to see future generations answer God's call to be shepherds to His people. My prayer was answered when my sons Russell and Christopher and grandson Von (Sam Moore) accepted His call. Carey's branch was not the only so blessed. I noted at least 5 other pastors and ministers were listed in the 2010 worship program. God exceeded my expectations by calling some of our women to ministry.

My challenge to you is to keep the doors of your hearts open to God's call on your life. As Jeremiah 29:11 states: "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord..." Always remember you can make a difference.

As I come to the end of life, I was moved by the poem, "The Dash" by Linda Ellis. It caused me to reflect on how I lived my life and gave me insight for living what remains. I share it with you to reflect upon.

### **The Dash**

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend.

He referred to the dates on her tombstone from the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came the date of her birth and spoke of the following date with tears,

But he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time that she spent alive on earth,

And now only those who loved her know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own, the cars...the house...the cash.

What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard; are there things you'd like to change?

For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real,

And always try to understand the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger and show appreciation more,

And love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile...

remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.

So when your eulogy is being read with your life's actions to rehash,

Would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent your dash?

So my challenge to you dear family is to think about your "dash", how to make a difference with your life. My love and prayers are with you.

**Mother Ludy H. Neal, May 2012**



## Baobab Writer's Guidelines

Interested in submitting your work to the Baobab Tree? 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.

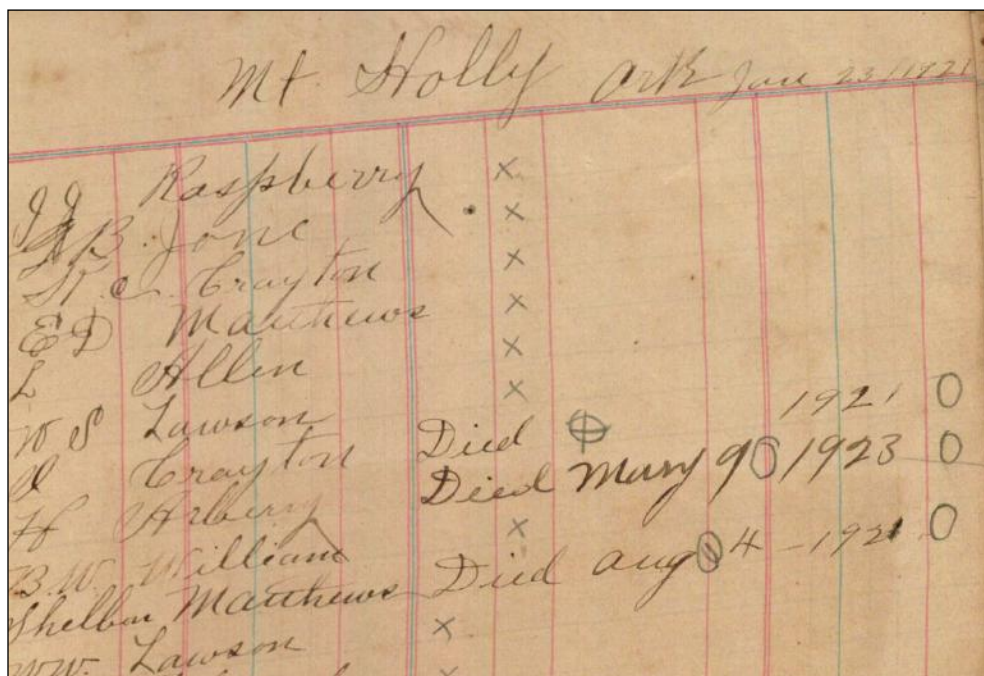
Here are some helpful hints when preparing your submissions:

- 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 at least 150 dpi (dots per inch), sharp, clear and have enough contrast to show up well in black and white. All photos and documents must have credit and captions submitted in a separate document.
- 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.

E-mail us at [journal@aagsnc.org](mailto:journal@aagsnc.org)

## History of Union A.M.E. Church

continued from page 16



40 record books dating back to the early 1900s were found stored in an old file cabinet in one of the church offices at Union A.M.E. Efforts to preserve these records for future generations of the family and the Mt. Holly community at large are underway.

The bush was cleared from the floor, and rigorously swept just before the beginning of service with a brush broom. The pulpit was usually a round slick post set in the ground near the front of the arbor. It stood about four feet high with a section of split log nailed to the top of the post as the podium. This offered the preacher a vantage point to address the congregation. Benches were made by splitting logs, shaping the seat with an axe, then sanding the seat with a sandstone rubbing rock.

The name Union was suggested because the people of the surrounding communities united in spiritual brotherhood. In July 1876, the parcel of land on Old Camden Road in Mt. Holly, still the present location, was purchased from Edwin Dews for \$25.00. The record confirms the deed was recorded June 22, 1877, in Union County, to the African Episcopal Methodist Church.

As families grew, conditions changed and it became increasingly harder to travel to the church. A group of men decided to build another church about two to three miles away from Union which was also closer to their homes. They started St. Luke Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Harvey Utsey, and Gabriel Crayton, along with Julius Wilson Sr. and Will Revels Sr., built St. Luke's church on land that was granted to them by William Walker. It was decided the church should legally record a deed to the land. So they collected and paid the hefty sum of \$6.00 to record an heir property deed on February 17, 1902. Recording the deed as heir property meant the land would be held within the family and passed down from generation to generation. On Sunday, September 07, 2003, St. Luke's celebrated its 100 plus year anniversary. In honor and tribute to her grandfather, Harvey Utsey, and the church founders, Ruby Nell Utsey shared the history of St. Luke with the congregation.

The few settlers around the original Union Church decided to keep the name Union in tribute to the founding members. In 1909, Union became a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church community under the leadership of Pastor W. A. Hardin. Union was in a mission church with New Union A.M.E.

Church of Stephens and New Home A.M.E. Church. Services were held every third Sunday at Union A.M.E. New Home left the mission and Union and New Union became a two part circuit with Union A.M.E. meeting on the first and third Sunday. The trustees were listed as follows: Brother Henson Norful, Brother Jordan Took, Sister Clara Took, Brother Shelby Matthews, Brother Tony Lawson, Sister E. Jones, Brother Lim Wiley, and Brother Bradford Crayton.

In rural areas, it is common practice for several congregations to collaboratively contract and share a preacher. In the Methodist church, congregations do not “call” (or employ) a pastor of their own choice. Instead, a bishop “appoints” or assigns a pastor to a congregation or a group of congregations. Neither the pastor nor the congregation have a choice in the appointment. In the early days, as communities grew and the population developed, Methodist preachers were appointed to circuits wherever people lived.

In 1949, the church moved to its present location on the same land under the leadership of Rev. W. C. Burks. He served as pastor for twelve years. In June 1950, the brothers of King Edward Lodge 242 of Mt. Holly under the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Arkansas erected the current building and set the cornerstone.

## President's Column

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Over time, researchers may forget those experiences and resources because they sound so right and appropriate, and inevitably will try the same thing with the same result -- what a time-waster! And that is a commodity few of us have to waste. It is not unknown that a researcher ends up duplicating research done before, feeling that it is eerily familiar as they go along. If properly recorded in the first place, this might not happen to you.

Above all, share your hard work with the family. After all, in addition to yourself, that is for whom you are doing all of this. Be sure they benefit.

The Fellowship Hall was completed in 1966, and the Pastor's Study was enlarged by Rev. Wilbert Gray. In 2000, under the leadership of Rev. Pete King, aluminum siding was added.

On Sunday, April 17, 2005, Union A.M. E. celebrated its 159th Church Anniversary, under the leadership of the pastor Rev. Lessly Banks, Rev. T. W. Adair, Presiding Elder, and The Right Reverend Richard Allen Chappelle, Sr., Presiding Bishop.



Photo courtesy of Vernester Sheeler

**Vernester Bates Sheeler** was born in Camden, AR. Her passion for research was ignited in April 2005 while cleaning out her father's office; she stumbled upon family group sheets that outlined his paternal ancestry. Vernester served as the editor of the Baobab Tree from 2009-2011. Contact her at [ladyraider514@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ladyraider514@sbcglobal.net).



Photo courtesy of Doris Smith

A member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., **Doris J. Smith**, is a retired probation officer, who is originally from Union County, AR. Doris became interested in genealogy while working on a sociology class assignment. In 1989, Doris and her mother, Eddie Lee Walker Smith began to document

their family history.

Doris is the great-great-granddaughter and Vernester is the great-great-granddaughter of Essex Crayton.

## Contribute To The Baobab Tree

As I said last year, in addition to the Editor's entreaties, allow me to also encourage you to provide an article for the journal. It will be a great bid for personal and family immortality, and immortality for the topic of your submission. You may have talent you did not know you had. If you want to develop an article, consult with the editors. Help is available if you are uncomfortable with your writing skill level. We really would like to hear your story, and I am sure you have a story you are aching to tell.

**The Baobab Tree** is published four times a year and is provided free to all members of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California (AAGSNC). 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: Mar. 15 for the Spring issue, June 15 for the Summer issue, Sep. 15 for the Fall issue, and Dec. 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](mailto:journal@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
- 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



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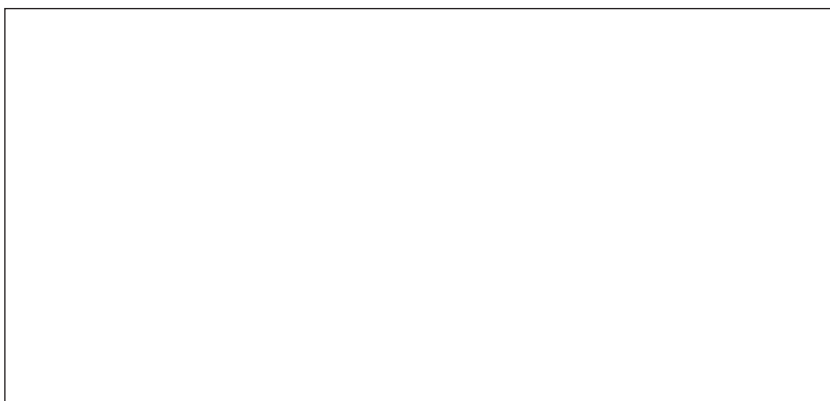
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## Roots Revealed: Going Deeper with 23andMe

**November 14, 2012 - 6:00pm PST**  
**Location: A computer near you!**

To register for the webinar, please visit  
**<http://goo.gl/xnLA>**

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- How to narrow down and keep matches and connections with them organized
- What to do after contact is made with an identified relative and more

This free public webinar is being offered by the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California (AAGSNC) and is limited to the first 200 registrants.