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If you don't tell the story of your community, who will?

9 **BLACK PIONEERS OF NEVADA COUNTY**

Writing their history and searching for their descendants.



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Help the Olson children find their way home to a relative.

# the Baobab Tree

Journal of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California, Inc. / Vol. 20 No. 4 / Fall 2015 / ISSN 1543-4125

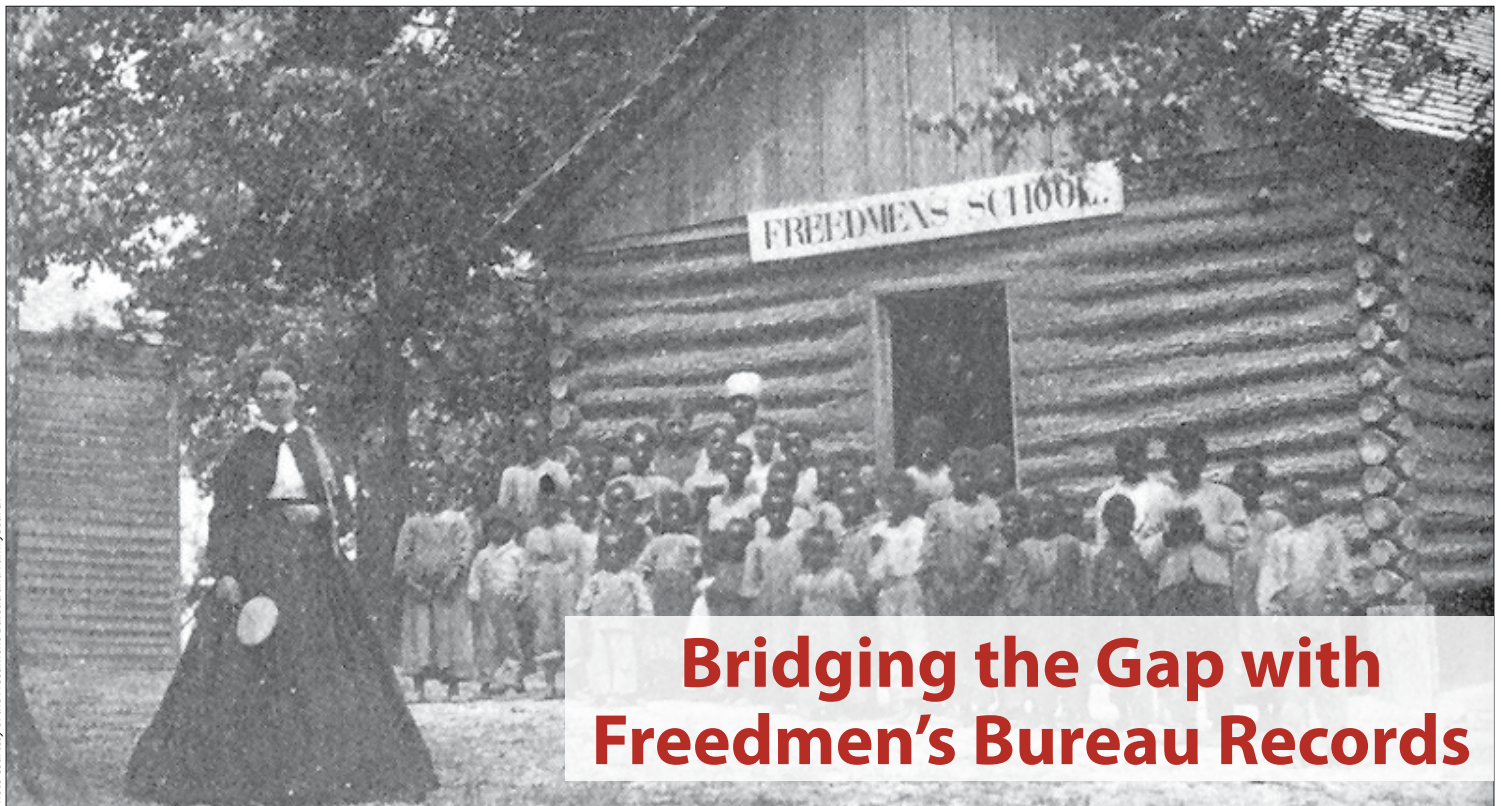


Photo courtesy of the Freedmen's Bureau and FamilySearch

## Bridging the Gap with Freedmen's Bureau Records

**Lauren Sullivan**  
Contributor

In October 1865, Edgar E. Lincoln, a newly freed black American, was employed at the Taylor Sawmill in Virginia. He was "in charge of lumber" and was paid \$20 a month for his services. According to his new employment record, he had worked 30 days in October.

Millions of details such as these will be easily uncovered online, thanks to

the work of thousands of volunteers participating in the historic Freedmen's Bureau Project (<http://www.discoverfreedmen.org/>). On June 19, 2015, celebrating the 150th anniversary of Juneteenth (Freedom Day), FamilySearch International (<http://www.familysearch.org/>), the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture, the Afro-American Historical and

Genealogical Society (AAHGS), and the California African American Museum launched the Freedmen's Bureau Project, a landmark initiative that has already begun to open floodgates of knowledge and understanding for black American genealogists and Civil War historians worldwide. This national project is pivotal to the success of black American genealogy research.

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*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) nonprofit organization dedicated in its commitment to national and international black 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 of African Americans.
- 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 material and make such material available to all.
- To promote and maintain ethical standards in genealogical research and publications.

### Membership and Its 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, Nonprofit Group
- Lifetime Regular Membership: Age 17 and Over
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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 Oakland Public Library Dimond Branch, 3565 Fruitvale Avenue, Oakland, CA 94602.

Field Trips and Support: Members can attend regularly scheduled trips to the Oakland FamilySearch Library 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 genealogical and historical organizations are included in our program.

Members Only Section of Our Web Site: Compiled databases, *The Baobab Tree* archive, meeting presentations (PDF's, video, and podcasts), ancestral charts, and more.

To join, please visit <http://www.aagsnc.org/>.

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## Don't Let Your Story Be Forgotten



Photo courtesy of M. Howard Edwards

by M. Howard Edwards  
President, AAGSNC

Mr. Gilbert became a photographer indistinguishable from his boss. His skill as a spotter, acquirer, and preparer of bird specimens for a newly founded museum at Harvard University became indispensable. Mr. Gilbert was an accomplished pianist. He was the chauffeur and pretty much constant companion to Mr. Brewster, welcomed into his society, almost as an equal, and held in high regard. Before Mr. Brewster died, he arranged to have Mr. Gilbert employed by the museum at Harvard to maintain the exhibits he had prepared over the years and to stay until he retired.

When the author finally located an old patron of the museum who might have remembered him (Mr. Gilbert had been pretty much forgotten so many years after his death), the interviewee indicated that he kind of remembered an old colored man who was “a porter or something” at the museum years ago, and that seemed to be the sum total of the legacy Mr. Gilbert had left.

After his wife’s death, the contents of Mr. Gilbert’s house were sold to an antique dealer. The saddest part of the story was the account by a neighbor of all that was left of Mr. Gilbert’s lifetime of papers and possessions being carried out to a dumpster at the curb of his home. This effectively wiped out his history, his lifetime contribution to the Harvard museum, his friendship with Mr. Brewster, and all else about him. Sad.

The take-aways from reading this book?

- Contribute to and purchase from the Black Elephant Sale and potluck this December; one never knows what one will find.

I have never done this before, but I particularly like this earlier issue of the President’s comments and am taking the liberty to reprint it.

### AAGSNC President’s Column, Winter Issue 2009, *The Baobab Tree*

At last year’s Black Elephant Sale I picked up a book just to support the fundraiser. A couple of weeks later I flipped through it before donating it to the Friends of the Library. I never put it down.

*Looking for Mr. Gilbert: The Reimagined Life of an African American*, by John Hanson Mitchell, was written as spontaneously as my purchase of the book. The author was going through the attic of the former home of William Brewster, first president of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, now owned by the society. There he discovered a cache of 19th-century glass-plate photographic negatives. In many, the author saw this sole black face in the midst of the white ones. Who was this guy, different from all the others, yet visually not much different in dress and posture? The author spent the next 25 years trying to find the answer to this question.

Mr. Gilbert was an employee, companion, friend, confidant, and supporter of William Brewster of the Audubon Society. As time went on,

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Meetings are held from 1:30–4:00 p.m. at the Oakland Public Library, Dimond Branch, 3565 Fruitvale Avenue, Oakland, unless otherwise noted.

**December 19, 2015**  
Annual Holiday Party

**January 16, 2016**  
Annual Election and Brick Walls Workshop

**February 20, 2016**  
Black Loggers Historical Project

**March 19, 2016**  
From DNA to Genetic Genealogy: Everything You Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask

**April 16, 2016**  
Resources on FamilySearch.org

**May 21, 2016**  
My Slade Phenomenon

**June 18, 2016**  
20th Anniversary Celebration

**September 17, 2016**  
Braggin' and Lyin'

**October 15, 2016**  
Records Analysis

**November 19, 2016**  
USCT Military Research

**December 17, 2015**  
Annual Holiday Party

Meeting program topics are subject to change. For more information and updates on our events and meetings, visit <http://www.AAGSNC.org/>

# William Maddox, the White Confederate Who Loved a Black Family

*Research sometimes takes you in unexpected directions*

**Michael Willis**  
AAGSNC Member

As I continue researching my 3rd-great-grandmother Artimease Wederstrandt Benton, a former slave and widow of a Civil War United States Colored Troop (USCT) soldier, I'm amazed at the untold, underlying stories revealed about her life and times. It's taught me that the Antebellum and Postbellum South, Louisiana in particular, have a very complex history. When I started these research projects, like most black Americans, my presumptions were that racism and segregation would show my family in complete isolation from the social mainstream and an ethnic divide analogous to the parting of the Red Sea. Yet, as my dear mother always said, "There's two sides to every coin," and I'm seeing that other side as I examine the role a man named William Maddox played in Artimease's life.

As I wrote in my article "The Bentons and Jacksons: The Truth Revealed" (published in *The Baobab Tree*, Summer 2014), the 1880 U.S. federal census in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana, showed a household with Artimease living with five of her seven children. The household next door, 247 America Street, included her sister, Wartha Wederstrandt, and, according to oral history, her common-law husband, a white male named William Maddox, a carpenter. According to the census, Maddox was 55 years old and Wartha was 36, which places their birth dates in roughly 1825 and 1844, respectively, with their birth locations given as Louisiana.

My curiosity got the better of me, so I continued to research Maddox. When I examined the 1870 census in East Baton Rouge Parish, I discovered a white male named William Maddox, age 40 (born about 1830), from Ohio, living with "Waffie" Wederstrandt (a

known alias of Wartha), age 25, and Joseph Wederstrandt, age 15, both born in Louisiana and listed as mulatto. His occupation was listed as carpenter, and his real estate was valued at \$150 and personal property at \$100.

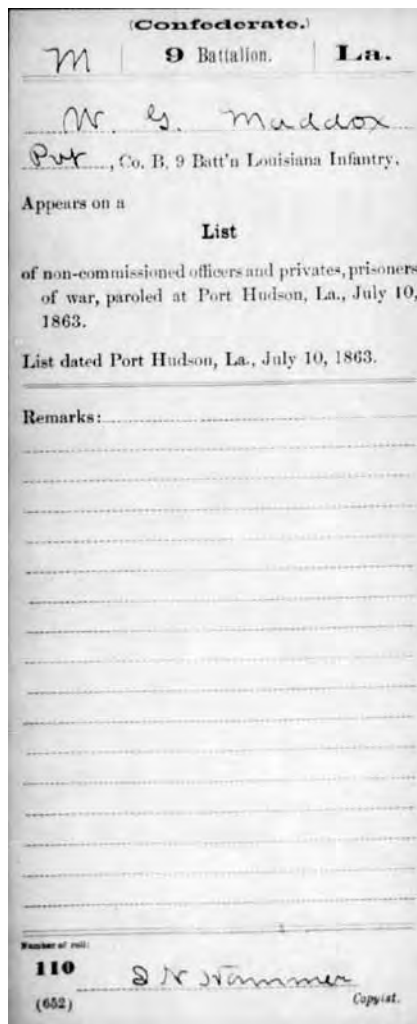
In the 1860 U.S. federal census in East Baton Rouge Parish, nearly eight months before the Civil War began (and five years before slavery ended), "Wm G Maddox", age 30, is listed alone as an overseer with personal property valued at \$500 and, similar to the 1880 census, a native of Louisiana. To date, I have found no record of Maddox prior to 1860, but I need to visit the Louisiana State Archives and the East Baton Rouge Parish courthouse for further investigation.

On GenealogyBank.com I found a death notice in the Baton Rouge *Daily Advocate* of February 17, 1900, regarding the passing of William G. Maddox. It stated that the funeral for Maddox, who died on February 14, was to be held at his residence on America Street. The last sentence of the paragraph stated that he "was a member of Company 'B,' Ninth Battalion Infantry." I checked Fold3.com, a Web site with U.S. military records, to verify Maddox's military service and to my surprise discovered that he was a Confederate soldier! Above are Maddox's Confederate prisoner of war muster rolls showing

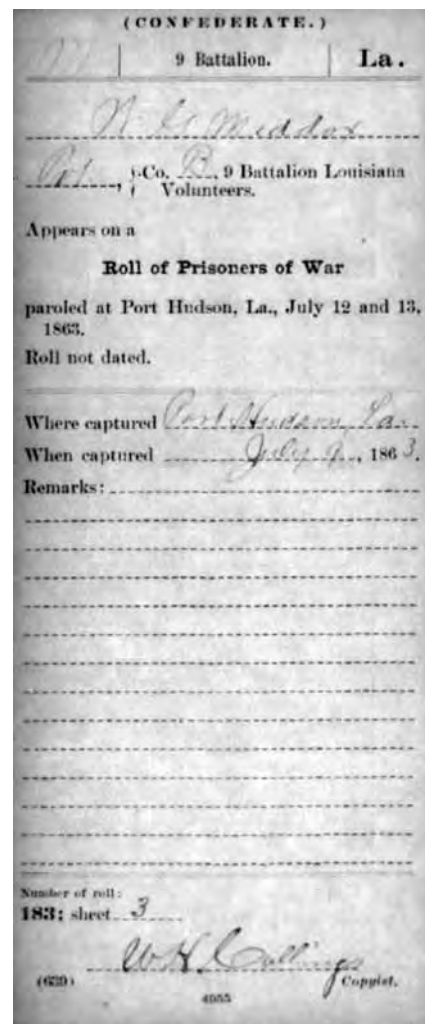
**DIED.**

**MADDOX**—Wednesday, February 14th, 1900, at 3:30 o'clock a. m., William G. Maddox, born July 24, 1830.

The friends and acquaintances of the deceased attenden the funeral from his late residence on America street, at 10 o'clock, Thursday morning. Services at St. Joseph Catholic Church. Interment in St. Joseph Cemetery. He was a member of Company "B," Ninth Battallon Infantry.



All images courtesy of Michael Willis



his battalion was captured near Port Hudson and paroled in July 1863.

After finding these, I checked the National Park Service Soldiers and Sailors site, which includes a database of Civil War historical facts about soldiers, regiments, and battles. I found the following description of the 9th Battalion, Louisiana Infantry:

“OVERVIEW: 9th Infantry Battalion [also called 17th Battalion] was formed at Camp Moore, Louisiana, during March, 1862. It contained four companies, and some of the men were raised in Rapides Parish. The unit served in Gregg’s and Maxey’s Brigade in the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana and was captured in the fight for Port Hudson. After being exchanged, it was not reorganized. Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Boyd and Major Tom Bynum were its field officers.”

What is intriguing about this information is that Artimease’s husband, Thomas Benton, served as a soldier in the USCT from 1864–1867 with the 67th and 65th regiments—both organized at Port Hudson, only 20 miles north of Baton Rouge, the place the regiments mustered out after the war in 1867. In addition, Wartha’s death record states she was born in Bayou Sara, Louisiana, and the 67th Regiment moved there during an expedition in 1864.

So, am I to believe that a white male Confederate soldier and former overseer on a plantation, upon his capture and parole from being a prisoner of war in Port Hudson, established a friendship with three former slaves: a soldier fighting for the opposition, his future wife, and her sister, with whom he developed a lifelong relationship that lasted more than 30 years??

More circumstantial evidence I uncovered supports this theory. In July 2013, I ordered Artimease’s Civil War widow’s pension file from the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Thomas Benton died in 1877 from tuberculosis, twelve years after the war ended. By that time, Artimease had borne four children with Benton. She applied for the pension 15 years later, in August 1892, after legislation was passed (a few years earlier) allowing widows of Union soldiers to collect benefits. By that time, all seven of Artimease’s children had been born. The 65-page file of documents collected over a 32-year period contained Benton’s military record, medical exams, muster rolls, letters from the War Department, letters from Artimease and her family members, and general affidavits from people who personally knew the couple and their children. These individuals also attested to the events surrounding the Bentons’ lives and the nature of their relationship.

Claimant Artimease Benton Soldier Thomas Benton  
Co. (11) 65 Regt. USC Vols. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Nature of claim Pension

In the above entitled claim personally appeared, the undersigned;  
Wm. Maddox aged 65 years, address Baton Rouge, La.  
testifying in relation to the above of claim as follows:  
I have kept a record of the births of the children of claimant and soldier having known them intimately. I find upon reference to the record so kept by me that the only child of said claimant and soldier under 16 years of age on Aug 2 1892, was their daughter Nelly, who was born August 30 1877. This affidavit was written in my presence at Baton Rouge, La. June 10 1895 from my oral statements then made to Alv. Smith, I was not aided by any written or printed memoranda otherwise than stated, nor by dictation from other persons.

He further testifies that he has no interest herein. Wm. Maddox

} Wm. G. Maddox

State of Louisiana, County of E. B. Range  
Sworn to and subscribed this 10<sup>th</sup>  
day of June 1895, and I certify that  
I have no interest present or prospective in this claim.  
Alv. Smith  
Not Pub.

William G. Maddox's signature can be found on several of these documents as a witness to the various claims made by Artimease and others. Maddox also provided a sworn affidavit, as shown above, describing his knowledge of the family. He stated he "kept a record of the births of the children of claimant and soldier having known them intimately." That he kept such records comes as little surprise given his experience as an overseer in his previous line of work. The purpose of this affidavit was to provide proof on Artimease's behalf that her youngest child at the time of Thomas'

death, Nellie, was still a minor (under the age of 16) when Artimease filed the application for the pension, thus making Artimease eligible to receive additional benefits for Nellie.

It should be noted that Artimease was illiterate during this period and there is no doubt in my mind that Maddox assisted her in the review, completion, and processing of these documents. On page 17 is an additional document signed by Maddox that illustrates his direct involvement in assisting

Artimease with her case for widow's pension benefits.

In retrospect, it became apparent to me that, from the perspective of the children, Maddox was their uncle. I commonly refer to him as "Uncle Will" because I believe that, as the only adult male figure and role model, he must have been influential in their lives. My great-aunt Marguerite told me that her grandfather, Edward Benton (Artimease's son), was a carpenter and that many of the men in the family created a long line of carpenters. The fact that Edward, the oldest, was only 7 when his father died implies that he more than likely learned the trade from "Uncle Will", as did his brothers, whose death records all indicate they were carpenters by trade. I also discovered newspaper articles on GenealogyBank.com that show Ernest Gibbons Benton, Artimease's youngest son, purchased property sold to him by Maddox—more evidence of Maddox's involvement in the prosperity of these children.

In summary, William G. Maddox's influence in the lives of this black American family cannot be denied. This man, a former plantation overseer who risked his life to support the Confederate States of America—a government dedicated to preserving the institution of slavery—had a change of heart and chose a different path for his life at war's end. He appears to have done everything he could to support Artimease and her children after the death of her husband. In my opinion, he loved Wartha until the day he died and demonstrated that, not only by his devotion to her and their interracial relationship that would not be recognized in Louisiana until a Supreme Court ruling in 1967, but also by helping her family members through some of their darkest days. Given that he and Wartha apparently never had children, it is conceivable that he loved his nieces and nephews as if they were his own children.

# Genealogy-based Community History

*We need to preserve the stories of our communities*

**Pearl Alice Marsh, Ph.D.**  
AAGSNC Member

Black American community history is an essential part of our national history. Our story is more generally written and taught as the formal story of enslavement, emancipation, migration, desegregation and civil rights, culture—music, literature, fashion, food—and civic life—education, work, associations, institutions, and faith.

Through genealogy research, we can aggregate information from family trees and gather the personal stories of individuals and their families into a compelling community history based on both public and personal sources. Traditional historical research on an industry, community, or era provides the setting for the story.

Important resources include the massive expansion of online records, more highly developed Internet research tools, electronic collaborative groups, good old-fashioned digging through local records, oral history (including “fragments” passed down through generations), and the elder informants who provide clues and verify hunches that fill in the stories.

My community history project is “The African American Loggers of Wallowa County, Oregon.” Between 1923–1950, the Bowman-Hicks Lumber Company brought black American loggers and their families from the Deep South to cut timber in Wallowa County in northeastern Oregon. Most of the loggers were farmers who had experience working in sawmills in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

I began this project in 1993 by recording conversations among the last seven loggers who still were alive from that era: my father, three uncles, and three coworkers. These were not formal interviews but sprawling conversations

that spanned many topics covering several decades.

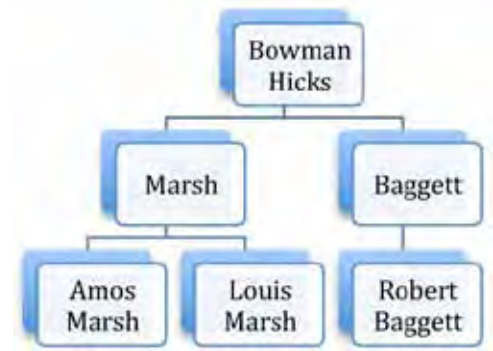
The conversations revealed critical dates, places, events, and people who were part of this migration story. They also revealed the story of the timber industry, labor relations, and changes in log-cutting technologies over time. Since I knew the location of the original logging camp (Maxville), I turned to the U.S. Federal Census to identify the workers and their families who appeared in the decennial record to form the basis of my community.

## Online Census Research

I used Ancestry.com to set up the small community as a family tree. You can use FamilySearch.org, Geni.com, and other sites in the same manner.

I made Bowman-Hicks Lumber Company the “father” and name of the community family tree. Since the loggers began arriving in 1923, I had to use the 1930 census to start my tree. On the search page for the 1930 census, I selected “lived in” Maxville, Wallowa County, Oregon, and USA and checked “exact to this place.” I selected “Negro” as race and chose “exact.” My search produced 58 names of black Americans living in 1930 in Maxville. Information on each person included name, residence, birth year, and birthplace, and the composition of the family. I next edited the search, selected the field “relation to head of household”, and chose “head”, which resulted in 23 households. Next, I looked at the census record for each head of household and checked for the occupation as log cutter.

It is important to begin building the community family tree using surnames only before creating the community tree. In other words, with the company serving as the “father”, the community is constructed by adding only the loggers’ surnames as the “children.” Then add the actual logger’s full record as a child of this surname. This step allows you



to add siblings and their descendants who also appear in the census to the same surname. Above is an example of a company “family tree.”

Ancestry.com has a useful tool to build individual biographies. After fully researching and adding records to an individual record, click on the individual, select “profile” and then the “life story” feature. A timeline with biographical notes will appear from which you can cut and paste a short biography. For example, here is an unedited narrative that was automatically generated.

Robert L. Baggett was born about 1875. He moved three times during his lifetime. He lived in Lawrence County, Mississippi, in 1880 and moved to Promise, Oregon, by 1935. He died on October 21, 1946, in Union County, Oregon, at the age of 71 and was buried in Wallowa, Oregon. After the Selective Service Act was signed in May 1917, Robert L. Baggett registered for the draft. Robert L. Baggett lived in Bolivar County, Mississippi, in 1917. Robert L. Baggett lived in Maxville, Oregon, in 1930. Robert L. Baggett lived in Promise, Oregon, in 1935. Robert L. Baggett lived in Promise, Oregon, on April 1, 1940. Robert L. Baggett died on October 21, 1946, in Union County, Oregon, when he was 71 years old.

Returning to the 1930 census for an individual, check “view others on page”, and a picture of neighbors, from where they came, their family composition,

race, and employment begins to emerge. I also can see the Maxville labor community as a whole and how the camp was organized and can compare the occupations of the black workers with the white workers. The collective “life stories” begin to form the basis of the community history.

### **Collaborate with Descendants and Other Informants**

Collaboration with descendants and other informants is critical to this project. In the absence of the actual loggers, I sought out first- and second-generation descendants and asked them to share memories of their families, community, and the logging experience. The farther removed in time you are from the actual logger, the more fragmented the stories become. Each scrap of information is critical to the whole story, however. I use the quilt metaphor: From many pieces comes a whole quilt/story.

To collect these stories, I located groups of descendants and conducted both group and individual interviews. Based on death certificates and burial sites, I searched for descendants in the respective towns. I used surnames but often, since sons are named after their fathers, I searched for the fathers’ names. I found several “juniors” that way. Once an individual was located in a town, I asked that person’s help to locate other descendants in the same area. Not surprisingly, families followed other family members and friends and left descendants.

Stories collected from descendants are not always complete. Many interviewees are second- and third-generation and were children and moved when the logging experience took place. Because the stories are fragmented, I wanted to capture every memory, regardless of how small. I hired an advanced student stenographer from a local training school to record the group interviews verbatim. From the transcripts, I selected and reviewed individual memoirs for follow-up interviews, which were also recorded.

The follow-up interviews were mostly in locations distant from me. In those cases, I used the three-way call feature on my smartphone to connect the interviewee, stenographer, and me on a call. The stenographer then transmitted the editable transcripts to me by e-mail and I was able to format them, place them in attractive folders, and share them with the interviewees.

### **Update Workshops and Other Follow-up**

Sharing interviews and results of research is another critical part of the project. For one group of descendants in Portland, Oregon, I organized a PowerPoint presentation and photo exhibit for their large extended family. They secured the venue, set the date, sent the invitations, and provided food for the event. Nearly 70 people of all ages showed up. I have subsequently conducted interviews with several older participants and found leads to other nonrelated families who also are descendants.

I had my laptop set up so I could add family tree information on the spot with participants. They were a source of more information and provided more photos and contacts. Some participants wanted to create their own memoir using the three-way call method. I agreed to interview them separately and they agreed to pay the expenses for the stenographer. (My stenographer charges \$35/hour for an interview and \$5/page for transcripts.)

### **Work in Partnership with a Local History Center**

I found the Wallowa History Center and contacted the officers. I explained my project and gained their support. I live 800 miles from Wallowa, so cooperation with local researchers has been very important. They have provided me old newspaper articles, photos, and other documents they have come across for my project as they research their own. They also sponsored and promoted my photo exhibit and public lecture so I could share my research with the communities in the county.

### **Budget and Finances**

I did not have a grant to pursue my project, nor did I want to spend precious time chasing fickle donors and grant submission dates. So I gave myself an “unsolicited grant” and set up a bank account with a debit card which I used to pay for all expenses: office supplies, photo duplication, subscriptions, death/birth certificates, travel, etc. I recommend creating a small fund to which descendants, family members, and others can contribute. As long as you educate them about the project, I have found willing small donors within my immediate circle. At the end of the year, I will have a record of my expenditures on which to base a formal budget request from a foundation.

### **Other Potential Projects**

To increase public exposure to my story, I submitted my father’s memoir to a historical magazine that was very interested in the story. Since these are “niche” stories, the receptivity from historical magazines is quite high. The Wallowa County Museum and Wallowa History Center have requested articles and memoirs for publication. I have created a list of local, state, and national publications that focus on local community histories.

I have asked a retired curriculum specialist to create a unit for Black History Month that can be distributed with copies of the PowerPoint and a digital version of the photo exhibit to Oregon schools. Lastly, I have a writer working on a children’s book on the logging experience.

I recommended the development of a project to descendants of Mexican-born sawmill workers from the 1920’s in Rapides Parish, Louisiana. I was prompted to do so after a Louisiana researcher commented that sawmill companies identified Mexican workers by number rather than name because of the language barrier. I checked the 1920 census, and there they were with their surnames and family members. I searched public member trees on Ancestry.com, found several descendants, and recommended the process to them.

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# African-American Pioneers of Nevada County

Researching early black Americans in the Sierras

Linda K. Jack  
Contributor

I enjoyed having the opportunity to attend the AAGSNC meeting on November 21 to discuss briefly my research project, which is to document the black Americans who were in Nevada County during the Gold Rush and through the end of the 19th century. Thank you for your kind hospitality.

My goals for the project include learning about:

- names
- family connections
- residences and businesses
- status upon arrival in California (free, slave, labor contract) and, where appropriate, name of slave holder and emancipation method
- role(s) in local society and institutions created
- participants in Canadian emigration in 1858
- when and where residents relocated from Nevada County, and trying to connect with descendants

To date I have identified:

- 216 names
- a half-dozen slave holders
- various labor contracts and emancipation methods
- many social roles and institutions
- about 30 relevant images
- some participants in the 1858 Canadian emigration

As I continue my research, my plans include several methods of sharing the information I gain. I will curate a small exhibit titled *Civility to All, Servility to None: Early African American Pioneers of Nevada County* from February 1–29, 2016 at the Nevada County Library. In January 2016 the Nevada County Historical Society *Bulletin* will feature stories on Jennie Carter, Isaac and Isaac T. Sanks, and John Bulmer, some of the residents that I, and other researchers, have already identified. I will also lecture on this topic at the Grass Valley Unitarian Church, tentatively scheduled for February 2016; write an op-ed piece in the *Grass Valley Union* in early 2016;

and lecture to the Nevada County Historical Society on November 17, 2016.

In addition, I plan to reach out to other organizations and individuals with similar interests, such as how I connected with AAGSNC.

Although this is still very much a work in progress, the following is a list of names I have compiled to date. If you recognize anyone and/or have knowledge of where someone went after leaving Nevada County, please contact me at [linda\\_jack@earthlink.net](mailto:linda_jack@earthlink.net). If you believe that someone on this list is one of your ancestors feel free to contact me, and I will be happy to share any information that I have.

Ackwood, Henry  
Adams, John  
Aikens, J.  
Alexander, Horatio Henry  
Alexander, John Preston  
Alexander, Louisa  
Alexander, Preston  
Allen, Caroline  
Allen, Francis  
Allen, Frank (Hybo)  
Allen, John  
Allen, Robert  
Armistead, Rachael  
Blackburn, Henry  
Blackman, H.  
Boardley, Perry  
Bobmer, Charles  
Booth, Edward A.  
Booth, Elijah  
Booth, Lauralin  
Booth, Mary Ann  
Booth, Samuel John  
Bradley, P.  
Brasfrila, Alex  
Briscoe, Lewis  
Brown, ?  
Bullman, J.  
Bulmer, Isaac  
Bulmer, John (possibly Bulman)  
Burbage, John  
Burnridge, ?  
Callaway (Calaway, Caloway, Colloway), Milton  
Cantine, Garrett A.  
Cantine, Matilda (Jessie)

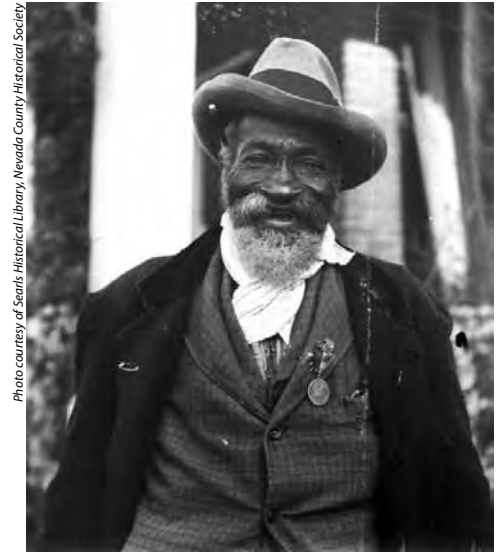


Photo courtesy of Sarah Historical Library, Nevada County Historical Society

Preston Alexander arrived in Nevada County in 1853. He lived and worked in Nevada City, where he held many jobs, including the city's "bill poster." He raised a large family on a street that, by 1932, had been named for him and that still exists today. Alexander died in 1889.

Carter, Dennis Drummond  
Carter, Jennie  
Catanch, James  
Catanch, Loretta  
Clay, George H.  
Davis, Cesar  
Davis, Hampton  
Davis, John C.  
Denman, Francis  
Dorsey, Alice  
Dorsey, Emily  
Dorsey, Eugene  
Dorsey, George  
Dorsey, Grant (twin of Lincoln)  
Dorsey, Henry  
Dorsey, Lillie  
Dorsey, Lincoln (twin of Grant)  
Dorsey, William  
Dudley, Samuel  
Dudley, Solomon  
Dunne, Francis  
Duvall, George A.  
Farr, Robert  
Farrel, Robert  
Ferguson, James  
Ferguson, Lydia  
Findley, Henry  
Finley, Henry  
Fisher, Archibald  
Fitzpatrick, Manuel  
Fleming, P.  
Ford, Nathaniel

Foster, Calvin  
 Gaines, Bernard  
 Godair, Grace  
 Goodair, Henry  
 Green, Fanny  
 Green, John  
 Green, Willie C.  
 Hall, R. A.  
 Hamilton, G. H.  
 Hamilton, John H.  
 Hammond, John  
 Harris, Lewis  
 Harrison, Boz  
 Harrison, Fannie  
 Harrison, Hannah  
 Harrison, Jackson  
 Harrison, Minnie  
 Haskins, E. (the elder)  
 Haskins, E. (the younger)  
 Hassel, John  
 Hernandy, A.  
 Hicks, J. (possibly John or James)  
 Hicks, James  
 Hicks, John  
 Hill, John  
 Holland, A. (female)  
 Holland, A. (male, possibly Abraham)  
 Holland, Abraham  
 Jacob, Laurence  
 Jenkins, James  
 Johnson, Claudia  
 Johnson, Francis  
 Johnson, G.  
 Johnson, Hook  
 Johnson, James  
 Johnson, John G.  
 Johnson, Onoria  
 Johnson, Thomas F.  
 Johnston, Mary  
 Jones, Edward  
 Jones, Frank  
 Jones, James B.  
 Jones, Nimrod  
 Joplin, Louis  
 Joseph, George  
 Kennie, Abraham  
 Labroide, Antoine  
 Lawrence, Henry  
 Lee, Albert  
 LeMar, Mac  
 Lewis, David  
 Lyons, Artegas  
 Magee, Milton  
 Mahoney, Daniel  
 Martin, Willis  
 Mathews, A. (female)  
 Mathews, C. E. (male)  
 Mathews, J. A. (female)  
 Mathews, J. D. (male)  
 Mathews, J. W. (male)  
 Mathews, M. C. (female)

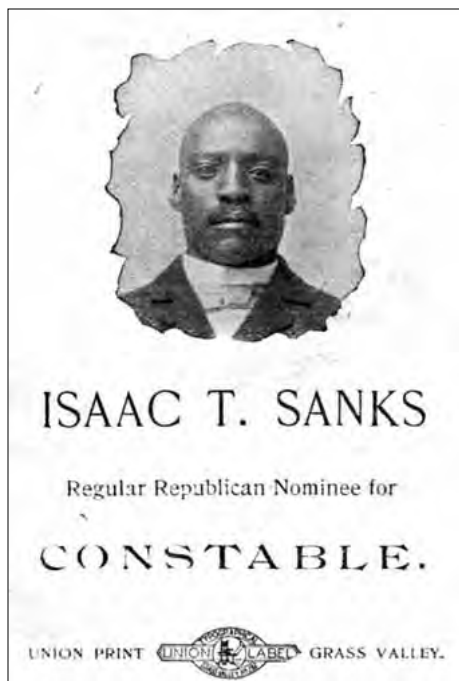


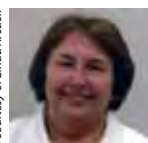
Photo courtesy of Searls Historical Library, Nevada County Historical Society

Isaac T. Sanks was born in Grass Valley in 1858. In 1894 he ran for the office of constable of Grass Valley Township as a Republican. Although he lost the race, he had the distinction of being the first black candidate in California to run on a major party ticket. He died in 1908.

Mathews, S. R. (female)  
 Matthaus, H.  
 Mawny, Martin  
 McKenny, A.  
 Miller, Amanda  
 Miller, George  
 Miller, James  
 Miller, Morrison  
 Mills, Edward  
 Mills, James  
 Mills, Jane  
 Mitchell, Jeremiah (Jerrie)  
 Montell, Oscar  
 Newal, R. (female)  
 Norton, Amy (Anna?)  
 Norton, Robert  
 Odell, Ann Maria  
 Odell, Thurman A., Dr.  
 Ousley, Elizabeth  
 Ousley, George  
 Ousley, Green  
 Ousley, Jordan  
 Ousley, Laura  
 Ousley, Louis  
 Ousley, Martin  
 Ousley, William  
 Page, William E. (Willie)  
 Preston, John  
 Richards, Henry  
 Robinson, William  
 Rogers, S.  
 Rudd, James  
 Russell, Emanuel

Ryerson, Albert  
 Sanders, J.  
 Sanks, Chasey (Chacy, Chasy)  
 Sanks, Isaac  
 Sanks, Isaac T.  
 Sanks, Jacob W.  
 Sarren, T.  
 Saunders, Jacob  
 Settlers (Sottles), Edward  
 Seville, Alice  
 Seville, Baby  
 Seville, Dora A.  
 Seville, Estella  
 Seville, Florence  
 Seville (Seiville, Sevelle), George D.  
 Seville, James  
 Seville, John  
 Seville, Rachel  
 Sharper, Robert  
 Smith, Annie  
 Smith, Chaney  
 Smith, F.  
 Smith, Grant  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, John Henry  
 Smith, John Jesse  
 Smith, Lincoln  
 Smith, William  
 Stanton, Mary  
 Stanton, William  
 Thomas, Jacob  
 Thomas, Joseph  
 Thompson, John  
 Timby, Mary R.  
 Tyler, Rev. Robert  
 Unknown, Henry  
 Unknown, Russell  
 Van Buren, M.  
 Vaughan, William  
 Vaughn, J. W.  
 Wadking, A.  
 Walker, Evans  
 Walker, John  
 Ward, Thomas Mayers Decatur  
 Waters, Emery  
 Watters (Waters), William  
 White, Henry  
 Williams, J.  
 Williams, Rebecca  
 Williams, S.  
 Willis, M.  
 Wilson, Matilda  
 Wilson, Simon  
 Young, Benjamin

Photo courtesy of Linda K. Jack



Linda K. Jack is the secretary of the Board of Directors of the Nevada County Historical Society and volunteers at the Society's research facility, the Searls Historical Library. She has lived in Nevada County since 2011, following her retirement from Stanford University.

# Mystery Photo

*This time the mystery is not the identities in the photo but that of a family member to give it to*

**Janice M. Sellers**

Editor, *The Baobab Tree*

I follow several groups and e-mail lists on Facebook, Google+, and other sites in an effort to stay aware of issues related to genealogy and also to be on the lookout for stories and items relevant to black genealogy and the mission of our society. Recently this photo was posted on an Oakland-focused group on Facebook.

The person who posted the photo mentioned that there were also a number of cards and letters with it. Observations from other members of the group included:

- Estimate of about 1950.
- It might be a birthday.
- The young man is holding a statue which possibly looks like some type of religious statue, and the girl on the right is opening a package that says “India” on it.
- Maybe it’s Easter or Christmas (winter or spring) because they have coats on.

Do these faces look familiar to you? Do the names Verner, Atril, and Martha Jane Olson or Charlotte Peake ring a bell? If so, contact me at [journal@aagsnc.org](mailto:journal@aagsnc.org) so I can give the information to the person who has the photo and papers. Perhaps these items can be reunited with family members.



*Verner, Atril & Martha Jane Olson. Grandchildren of Charlotte Peake of Oakland. CA*

## The Branch

continued from page 3

• The contributions one makes in life must be documented, often to keep one from becoming a version of “the colored man who was a porter or something over there.” Your family deserves something more than a dismissive reference by a stranger.

• Tell your own story! Probably no one else will. Mr. Gilbert was very, very lucky to have someone tell his.

• If you can find the book, buy it. It probably is out of print but still available (go to Amazon.com through the AAGSNC Web site; the society earns a commission). The author shares all the

techniques he used to uncover the totally lost story of Mr. Gilbert, approaches any researcher of family history could find valuable.

• Be patient. A good story takes time and a lot of work to research, and yours is a good story, absolutely worth the effort.

# Bridging the Gap with Freedmen's Bureau Records

continued from cover

FamilySearch has organized this collaborative effort to transcribe key records created by the Freedmen's Bureau with the goal of making them searchable online for free. The "Freedmen's Bureau", officially known as the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, served all who needed intervention after the war. The "Freedmen" were black, the "Refugees" were white, and the "Abandoned Lands" were those lands once owned by the landowners who were eventually resettled. This volunteer-driven project specifically focuses on the Bureau's interactions with those seeking intervention throughout its short tenure.

Upon the project's completion, the indexed records will be freely accessible online at FamilySearch.org and will also help create a unique discovery experience at the new Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., when it opens in late 2016.

## Understanding the Impact

The Freedmen's Bureau was created by an act of Congress on March 3, 1865, as part of the War Department. The mandate of the Bureau was to help a population of approximately four million former slaves, refugees, and those reclaiming abandoned lands by providing basic services, including registering marriages; issuing

rations, clothing, and medicine to the destitute; supervising the writing of labor contracts; and helping veterans file claims for bounties, pensions, and overdue pay to help them on the path to economic independence. Even though the Bureau's activities were short-lived (1865–1872), the War Department preserved the Bureau's records, which included censuses, hospital and school rosters, transcripts of tribunals, labor contracts, ration lists, marriage records, countless letters from individuals seeking assistance, and internal correspondence.

These documents were eventually turned over to the National Archives for safekeeping, and in 2000 the Freedmen's Bureau Preservation Act mandated that these records be preserved on

microfilm. FamilySearch International then acquired a copy of the microfilmed records to digitize them and make them more accessible to researchers and the public online.

## Keeping Count

Marriages entered into by slaves in the antebellum South were never officially registered with local or state agencies, yet the Freedmen's Bureau honored the marriages and registered them. Marriage records such as that shown below for Mr. and Mrs. Rapier in Owensboro, Kentucky, document not only the date of their registered civil union but also the original marriage date and the names and ages of children born in the family.



Cover image: In front of a Freedmen's schoolhouse (undated)

- 1867 marriage certificate for George and Ann Rapier, Owensboro, Kentucky
- 1865 "colored census" of Huntsville and Athens, Alabama
- Martin Cormier's 1867 ration application from New Iberia, Louisiana
- Rost Home Colony sick register (undated)
- 1867 labor contract for John and Mary Ramsey, Muscogee County, Georgia
- Letter from Columbus, Georgia, regarding Nathan Cox and his five children

All images courtesy of the Freedmen's Bureau and FamilySearch.

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### Colored Census

Name	Age	Sex	Street	Former Owner	Occupation
Jehmal Acklin	44	M	Franklin	Jm Acklin	Miller
Meliza do	1	F	"	A Buford	Washer
Oliver do	1	M	"	"	W Store
John A Town	1	M	"	E Town	Blacksmith
Mary W do	1	F	"	M Weaver	School
Robert Rainey	1	M	"	Jm	Baker
Isabella do	1	F	"	M Weaver	Washer
Virginia do	1	F	"	"	—
Sapt Humphry	1	M	"	Humphry	Walter
Arniela Hunt	1	F	"	D Hunt	Nurse
Martha do	1	F	"	"	"
Nattie do	1	F	"	"	—
Lenny do	1	M	"	"	—
Milly Minor	1	F	"	Minor	Cook
Ann Bayles	1	F	"	Bayles	Washer
James Stephen	1	M	"	Steele	"

Census records created by the Bureau in Huntsville, Alabama, in 1865 include the names of former slaves and free persons, the names of former slave owners, street names where people were living at the time, and information on occupations and current employment. Recently freed slaves sometimes took the surnames of their former owners. As can be seen in the example to the right, John A. Town of Franklin Street, formerly owned by E. Town, continued in his previous occupation of blacksmithing in the Madison County area.

### Providing the Essentials

The Freedmen's Bureau distributed food, clothing, and other rationed necessities to freed persons and other refugees after the war. On June 15, 1867, in New Iberia, Louisiana, a man named Martin Cormier applied for help to feed his wife, children, and father (see below right). Under Cormier's written request, the names of at least some of his family members were listed along with their ages and what they received.

Applications such as this one document family relationships not always shown elsewhere, and they allow researchers to calculate approximate birth years for family members. The Freedmen's Bureau also administered hospitals, schools, and other public services throughout the South.

Historian Robert Harrison notes that by 1868, the Bureau operated 56 hospitals and 47 dispensaries in its sphere of influence, which treated more than 500,000 patients per year. Hospital records, such as those created for the Rost Home Colony in Louisiana (see register on page 14), list the names, ages, and sexes of the current residents or patients and the names of the current owners of the place. For some residents, an entry and a discharge date are given, while other entries might simply state that a patient died after admittance. For these patients, this record serves as a *de facto* death record where no other may exist.

No 2  
Certificate of Applicant  
June 15<sup>th</sup> 1867

I do hereby solemnly declare, under pain of perjury and extreme excommunication, and under the penalty of being held in contempt of Court, to prevent starvation and extreme want, rendered so by the following circumstances.

Loss of all crops by the recent flood

Witness Signed by all a & sworn the Applicant Pierre J. J. J. J.	}	Philip X Blin age 53	53
		Martin X Cormier	50
		Blanche X Cormier	29
		Mary X Cormier	18
		Emma X Cormier	10
		William X Cormier	8
		6. Blanche X Cormier	6

Receipts of W. H. Cornelius & Co. Linn Co. Mo.  
 & A. S. O. Bureau of R. S. J. A. L. Co. in the sum  
 of the United States of America 13<sup>th</sup>  
 of Port. 22<sup>th</sup> of our local issues under  
 Authority of your resolution of Congress  
 approved March 30<sup>th</sup> 1867 to prevent starvation  
 &c.

Witness Signed Martin X Cormier  
 a & sworn Duplicate Philip X Blin  
 Pierre J. J. J. J.

2  
3

Record of Departures at Port Royal, S.C. 1865

No.	Date	NAME	AGE	SEX	By whom Employed	WHERE	FOR WHAT PURPOSE	WAGES PER MONTH	TIME	REMARKS
1	May 6	Edmund Black			W. D. Demmitt	Pecan Grove La				See arrival of family
2	May 6	Robert Fisher	42	M	H. Keenan	Pine Bluff La	Fieldhand	\$20.00	1 year	
3	do 6	Rachel Fisher	34	F	do do	do do	do do	\$20.00	1 year	
4	do 6	Reuben Jackson	50	M		Red blanch	cut wood	\$20.00	1 year	
5	do 6	May Jones	25	F	W. D. Demmitt	Pecan Grove La	Fieldhand	\$18.00	1 year	
6	do 6	Kaunahi Thompson	24	F	Kaunahi Thompson	McBouttaw L. Co.	do do			
7	do 7	Eli Butler	24	M	H. Keenan	Pine Bluff La	Fieldhand	\$25.00		
8	do 7	Reva Butler	25	F	Holdridge & Papan, Keenan	do do	do do	\$20.00		
9	do 7	Morning Butler	18	F	do do	do do	do do	\$20.00		
10	do 7	Jacob Bates	40	M	do do	do do	do do	\$25.00		
11	do 8	May Miller	20	F	W. R. D. "Capt. U.S.A."	Camp Pampot, La	Laundry	none	none	

Facilitating Independence

One of the most controversial endeavors tackled by the Freedmen's Bureau was negotiation of labor contracts and mediation of labor disputes. Labor contracts represented an unwelcome new world to some, who bitterly resented having to compensate those they had formerly owned for their labor, while others saw a thinly veiled attempt to reinstitute slavery in the

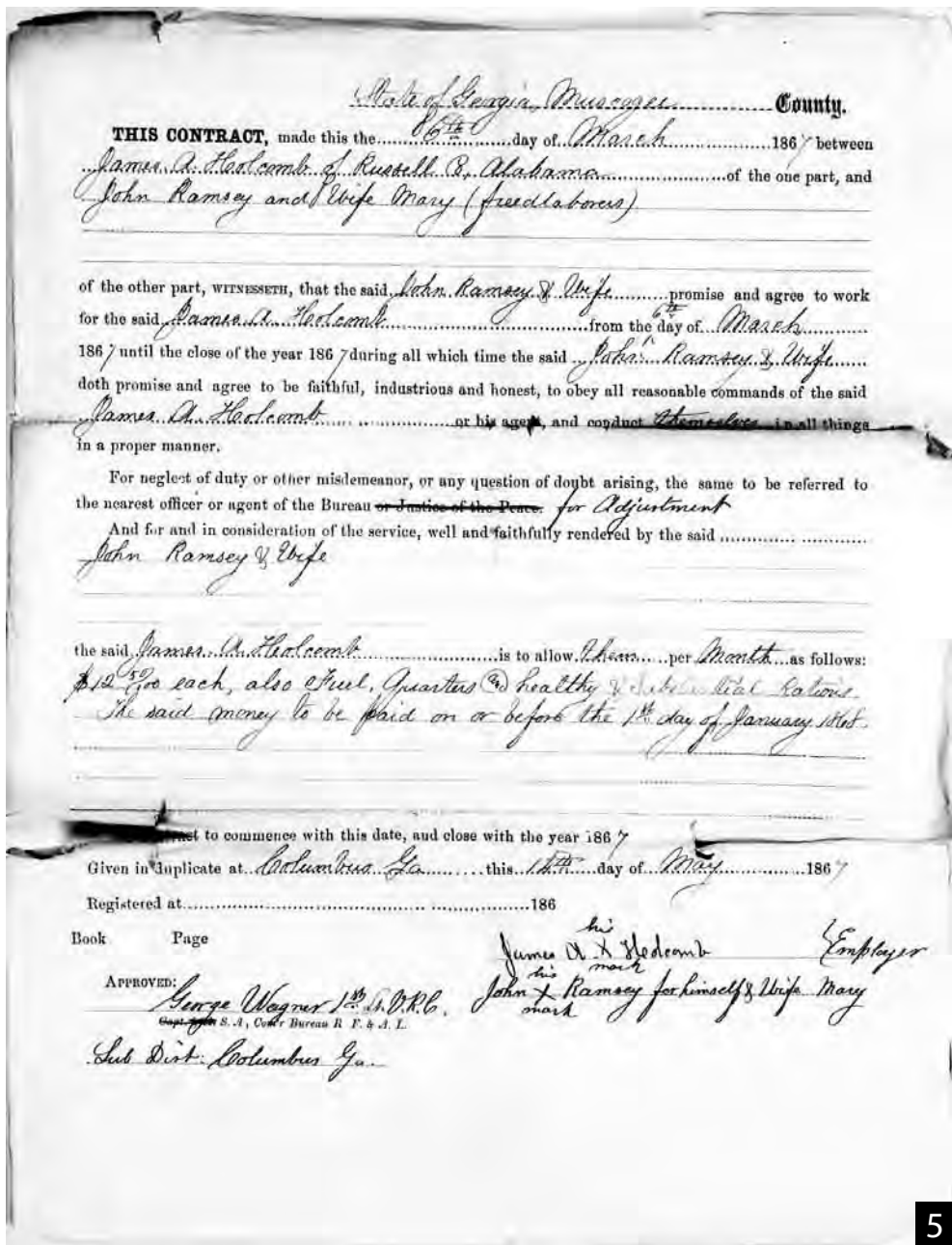
South. Nevertheless, the seeds of new social and economic relationships were sown through Bureau efforts then, just as ancestral ties can be traced through them now. For example, "freed laborers" John Ramsey and his wife agreed to provide labor to James A. Holcomb of Muscogee County, Georgia, in exchange for wages of \$12.50 per month each, plus fuel, food, and shelter (right, on page 15).

Bureau branch offices often received written complaints from freedmen seeking assistance with labor and contractual disputes. When these disputes crossed organizational boundaries, agents would often pass such information on to other branch offices that could help resolve the issue. Complaint letters, such as the one regarding a dispute over the children of Nathan Cox in Russell County,

Chamblee, Ga.  
 May 17. 1865.  
 A freedman's name is Nathan Cox. complains that one Frank Jones for whom he used to work took his five children and had them "bound" in himself. says papers of some bonds were made out but one part of persons consented. After keeping them eight months he sends them back to the father without wages or clothes. They have never received any

thing but the clothes they had on and the food they ate while with him. The father is blind, is supported by other children but wishes to have his name compelled to receive some compensation.  
 His address is Frank Jones. Afferson. Dawson Co. Ga.  
 The plantation was in Russell Co. Ala. Nathan Cox lives

with Mr. Pinner in Russell Co. about seven miles south of Girard. Please address Mr. Pinner Crossford Russell Co. Ala.



# Solano County Discussion Group 2016 Calendar

The Solano County Discussion Group is a regional group of family history researchers that is part of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California. Meetings are held from 1:00–3:00 p.m. at Solano Community College, Fairfield Campus, Building 400 1st Floor, unless otherwise noted.

January 9, 2016

February 13, 2016

March 12, 2016

April 9, 2016

May 14, 2016

September 10, 2016

October 8, 2016

November 12, 2016

The meetings will have open discussion and on-site computer research. For more information, contact facilitator Corvin Tademay at [tadcor@aol.com](mailto:tadcor@aol.com).

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Alabama (left, on page 14), provide names, relationship clues, and other genealogically significant information, not to mention personal accounts of harrowing experiences.

## Help Make the Freedmen's Records Freely Searchable Online

Work on the Freedmen's Bureau Project is currently being organized through the Web site <http://www.discoverfreedmen.org/>. Through this site, interested volunteers can register, learn the basics of transcribing digitized historical records for genealogical purposes, and contribute to this nationwide effort to make these records available to everyone.

## Bibliography

Douglas R. Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America's Most Progressive Era*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Robert Harrison, "New Representations of a 'Misrepresented Bureau': Reflections on Recent Scholarship on the Freedmen's Bureau", *American Nineteenth Century History* 8, 2007, pages 205–229.

W. E. Burghardt DuBois, "The Freedmen's Bureau", *Atlantic Monthly* 87:519 (1901), pages 354–365.

See also the article "African American Freedmen's Bureau Records" (<https://>

[familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/African\\_American\\_Freedmen's\\_Bureau\\_Records](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/African_American_Freedmen's_Bureau_Records)) on the FamilySearch.org wiki. Each state with Freedmen's Bureau records has a wiki page that explains the work of the bureau and gives further information and links.

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Lauren Sullivan is a freelance writer from Sacramento, California.

# Black Loyalist Web Site

*Did your ancestors leave with the British during the American Revolution?*

**Melissa C. Tennant**  
Contributor

Between April and November 1783, more than three thousand black Americans, many of them slaves, sought refuge with the British, who were leaving the colonies aboard ships departing New York and bound for Nova Scotia, Bahamas, Jamaica, and England. These individuals were recorded in the *Book of Negroes*, which was created in compliance with the Treaty of Paris as documentation for United States citizens who filed claims against the British for lost property. The Black Loyalist Web site, <http://www.blackloyalist.info/>, hosted by the University of Sydney (in Nova Scotia, Canada), collects historical and biographical information relating to those individuals recorded in the *Book of Negroes*.

The site can be browsed or searched by the given name and/or surname of an individual, runaway slave or owner. The results include a brief description; a relationship chart that shows family, owners, and sponsors; and a timeline with links to related transcriptions and/or digital documents, such as the digitized page from the *Book of Negroes*. Using this resource, one can link directly from a former slave to her family along with the former slaveholder and his family.

For example, Lucy Shepperd, her husband, Thomas, and her daughters, Maria (aka Nancy) and Kessiah, have entries. Lucy's relationship chart links her to 29 individuals, including her former owner, Robert Barron. Documents include a transcription of the 1778 "Tithables for Ferry Point to Great Bridge", which lists Lucy as a slave; the 1784 "Birchtown Muster of Free Blacks"; and her entry in the *Book of Negroes*. During the evacuation, she was a 45-year-old stout wench who boarded the ship *L'Abondance*, which

sailed for Port Roseway. Lucy had been a slave of Robert Barron in Norfolk until she ran away five years earlier. Following this entry, more information on Robert Barron is provided, including documents about his family relations and his five runaway slaves who appear in the *Book of Negroes*.

The site has an abundance of source material, such as "List of Blacks in Birchtown Who Gave Their Names for Sierra Leone in November 1791", "Tithables", "Patriot Claims for Losses to the British, 1785", and much more. Articles and other documents provide a background to the events and organizations relating to Black Loyalists, such as specific individuals and families, Methodists and Quakers, and significant military skirmishes.

The Black Loyalist site is a great start for anyone interested in the political and historical decisions that marked this time period and is a definitive resource for anyone descended from a Black Loyalist.

This article originally appeared in *Genealogy Gems* #137, July 31, 2015, published by the Allen County Library.



Melissa Tennant has a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of Florida and an M.A. in Library and Information Science from the University of South Florida. She pursued her interest in genealogy instruction and joined the staff of the Genealogy Center at the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 2007. She was promoted to Assistant Manager in 2012.

Rose Fortune, whose face is featured on the Black Loyalist site although her name does not yet appear in the database, immigrated to Nova Scotia with her parents when she was about 10 years old. An entrepreneur, she began a baggage delivery business that later segued into her monitoring activity on the wharves in Annapolis Royal, effectively making her Canada's first female police officer. Fortune's descendant eventually became the first black female mayor in Canada. More information about Fortune can be found at <http://newsone.com/2277618/rose-fortune-loyalist/>.





**GENERAL AFFIDAVIT.**

State of Louisiana County of East Baton Rouge ss: gr

In the matter of the pension claim of Arthurese Benton, wid of Tho  
Benton late of Co. D, 65 Regt. U. S. C. Vols.

**Personally Appeared** on this 10 day of June A. D., 1895, before me,  
 a Natural Publici in and for the aforesaid County, duly authorized to administer  
 oaths, Wm G Maddox aged 60 years, whose Post Office address is  
Baton Rouge, County of East Baton Rouge and State of  
Louisiana who being duly sworn declares in relation to aforesaid case, as follows:

*The he is well acquainted with the widow  
 and claimant in this case and live near by.  
 Claimant has not been married since the death  
 of the soldier. There had never been any  
 divorce between claimant and the soldier  
 and they lived together as man and wife  
 to the day of soldiers death. I know the  
 claimant does not possess any property  
 and depends for a living on her own  
 labor such as washing and ironing. The  
 claimant had never been married before  
 her marriage to the soldier.*

*This affidavit was written  
 in my presence at Baton Rouge La  
 June 10, 1895 by Alex Smith, I know  
 my own statement made to him orally,  
 I was not aided by any written  
 or printed memoranda or by dictation  
 from other persons.*

I am not interested in said claim nor concerned in its prosecution.

If the affiant makes his mark, two persons must attest by writing  
 their names on the lines below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. \_\_\_\_\_

*W. G. Maddox*  
 (Affiant's Signature.)

Affiants must not fail to state how they know or knew of the facts and circumstances to which they testify.

These new revelations in my research have definitely given me a different perspective on the South, the war, and what the war meant to its participants. As I stated earlier, Louisiana's history is a complex one, which must be studied as carefully and impartially as possible. Nevertheless, I came away with a newfound respect for "Uncle Will"—for his courage and his character. To me, his is a true story of redemption.

I like this side of the coin.

Photo courtesy of Michael Willis



**Michael Willis**, an Oakland native, is an IT Analyst for the State of California with more than 10 years of experience as a genealogist, primarily doing African-American genealogy in Louisiana. In addition to being a member of AAGSNC,

Michael belongs to Le Comité des Archives de la Louisiane (a nonprofit genealogical support group for the Louisiana State Archives) and the Terrebonne Genealogical Society.

## Member Milestones

### Anniversary Members

- 5-year Members** (joined in 2010)  
 Patrice A. Anderson  
 Marie A. Johnson  
 Sharion Styles  
 Jacqueline Williams  
 Michael A. Willis

- 10-year Members** (joined in 2005)  
 Vernester Sheeler  
 Dera R. Williams

- 15-year Members** (joined in 2000)  
 Patrica A. Bayonne-Johnson (Lifetime)  
 Edward Butler (Family Lifetime)  
 Rhonda Edwards  
 Lisa Lee (Lifetime)  
 Annette Madden  
 Bill Melson  
 Carol Ann Miller (Family Lifetime)  
 Cleveland Smith (Family Lifetime)  
 Norman Lee Thompson

### New Members in 2015

- Billy Alexander  
 Monifa Allen  
 Agatha Brisco  
 Dale Brum (Lifetime membership)  
 Ester Bohannon  
 Mallun Breedlove  
 Lonnie R. Bunkley  
 Carolyn Colbert  
 Reneta F. Davis (Family)  
 Nelvia Davis (Spouse)  
 Robert Louis Davis  
 Vandalia Googe  
 Stewart Harris  
 Linda K. Jack  
 Phil James  
 Carol A. Jensen  
 Regina Jones  
 Umi Kilolo  
 Carrie Leiser-William  
 Gail Lewis  
 Maureen Middleton  
 Love Miller  
 Maudie Noyd  
 Linda Okazaki  
 William Pettis  
 Johnny R. Preston (Family)  
 Dr. Fannie Preston (Spouse)  
 Teresa Shellmon  
 Michelle Lynn Thomas  
 Paul Thrash  
 Enevia Wilson  
 Veola Wortham

# 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 16, 2016 meeting will be 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 oversees daily operations of the society through the President.

The society has five directors, each holding the position for three years. The expirations of the terms of directors are 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 this 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 Annette Madden, [amadden45@hotmail.com](mailto:amadden45@hotmail.com), no later than **January 2, 2016**.

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

### It's Time to Renew

Yes, it's that time of year! Your AAGSNC 2016 membership dues are due. You should receive your renewal notice soon, if you haven't already.

Thank you very much for being a member and supporting us during 2015. We hope you will renew your membership for 2016. Please join us for another great year of *The Baobab Tree* (published quarterly), informative monthly meetings, Black Family History Day, the Web site, and more.

The African American Genealogical Society of Northern California is a

nonprofit organization. AAGSNC invites you to join with us to further the objectives and purposes of the society. Your membership is renewable on January 1 and ends on December 31 of each year. Dues not received by January 30 will be considered late and subject to a late fee of \$5.00. Members whose dues are not received by March 1 will be dropped from formal communication.

Membership options:  
Regular (age 17 and over), \$30.00  
Family, \$50.00  
Youth (16 and under), \$20.00  
Organization, \$55.00  
Lifetime Membership, \$300.00  
Lifetime Family Membership, \$500.00

You can renew online at <http://goo.gl/VRH7pl>. If you have any questions about membership, please send a message to [membership1@aagsnc.org](mailto:membership1@aagsnc.org).

### Search for AAGSNC History

The AAGSNC Historian collects archival items and documents to preserve the society's history. This person assembles files of the society's activities, events, and in-house records (yearly program calendars, Board and Executive Committee's monthly meeting minutes, etc.) and maintains surplus copies of the society's journal, *The Baobab Tree*.

How you can help:

- Contribute meeting notices, membership applications, programs, etc.
- Donate copies of photographs of members and events
- Contribute items that help maintain society memory
- Furnish memorabilia that relate to or mention the society
- Share articles about yourself and the society

If you have documents or information to contribute, please contact the AAGSNC historian, Jackie Chauhan, at [historian@aagsnc.org](mailto:historian@aagsnc.org).

### AAGSNC Executive Committee Meeting Notes September 19 and October 17, 2015

September 19, 2015

Present: President Howard Edwards, Jackie Chauhan, Upperton Hurts, Diana Ross, Jackie Stewart, Dera Williams

The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:30 p.m.

### Committee Reports

**Journal:** Janice M. Sellers (report delivered by President Edwards)

The electronic version of the Summer 2015 *Baobab* has been e-mailed to members. The print version has been printed and will be ready for mailing very soon.

**Historian:** Jackie Chauhan

Jackie wants to set up archives for Executive Committee and Board minutes. Howard asked for a timeline history of events of AAGSNC. Jackie plans to compile timeline for 20th year celebration. She will be writing annual and five-year summaries, as well as creating a legal binder with bylaws. The Officers' Service Record is a guide that has been helpful. She has also compiled a number of binders that will go into storage.

Jackie wants to have a sidebar section in *Baobab* for requests and to solicit help from members about any documents or items regarding our history.

Need to tighten up who is a founder. It can be those at the first meeting and/or those who organized and got the society up and running.

**Membership:** Upperton Hurts

There are currently 154 members.

**Program:** Jackie Stewart

September will be Freedman's Bureau presentation. Michael Willis is presenting his family research and getting past a brick wall created by oral history in October. November will be a slave research panel.

**Website:** Upperton Hurts

The new Web site is up and running. The changes are not visible to our eyes but there have been some updates.

**Publicity:** Jackie Stewart

The committee has been working with the Program and Education and Outreach committees to publicize meetings.

### Other Business

#### 20th Anniversary Celebration

Discussion about what we want to do. Some suggestions: interactive; workshop; honor the founders and charter members; public event or birthday party for us; sit-down buffet; large or small. Discussion tabled, but we will discuss between now and next month.

The meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

### October 17, 2015

Present: President Howard Edwards, Felicia Addison, Jackie Chauhan, Upperton Hurts, Jackie Stewart, Dera Williams

The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:29 p.m.

### Committee Reports

**Journal:** Janice M. Sellers (report delivered by President Edwards)

The Summer 2015 issue of *Baobab* has been distributed. More article submissions are always welcome.

**Historian:** Jackie Chauhan

The Historian has finished a draft of the history for the first five years of the

society. She plans to be caught up with the next five years by January and the remainder hopefully can be done by June. She has submitted a budget for her printing expenses. She wants to use VistaPrint or Pickaboo to make cards or posters with our history.

**Membership:** Upperton Hurts

There are currently 155 members. Members who join in the last quarter have their dues cover the following year.

**Program:** Jackie Stewart

Next year's tentative schedule: January, election. February, TBD. March, finding your female ancestors, Janice. April, tutorial on FamilySearch.org. May, suggested topic is DNA. June, TBD; possible anniversary event in lieu of meeting. September, Braggin' and Lyin'. October, creative format for brick walls. November, military records. December, Black Elephant Sale and TBD program.

Mountain View Cemetery is having an African-American-themed cemetery tour for Black History Month.

The Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group presents lectures for free on technology for genealogy.

**Publicity:** Jackie Stewart

Diana and Jackie have come up with a new way to help retain new members. We need to welcome and mentor new mentors. The committee is getting program information ready to send out to the public and Web site.

**Treasurer:** Reported by Howard Edwards

He has heard from four committees for next year's budget requests: Historian, Journal, Program, Publicity. We will need a separate budget item for any 20th anniversary programming.

### Other Business

#### 20th Anniversary Celebration

Howard has checked on the Alameda County Veterans building in Hayward, which would cost \$90 per hour plus

## Community History

continued from page 8

### Summary

Recovering the social history of small black American towns is a fertile topic for genealogy researchers. Some communities were destroyed by racial violence, while some just died out. The company town is a particular genre that has escaped the examination of historians and, for this purpose, genealogists.

This process can work to revive the memory of any small community's history. I am also working on a project for our small rural church in Louisiana, founded in 1865 after emancipation. Many of the family descendants grew up there and have vivid memories, but the church has lost its membership to the city and outmigrations. The church history and cemetery need preserving.

I hope this article inspires others to write more genealogy-based community histories. Public history, written from the perspective of the individuals whose lives formed the fabric of our history, provides texture, authentication, and substance to our tendency to write history from the top down.



Photo courtesy of Pearl Alice Marsh  
Pearl Alice Marsh is a retired foreign policy expert, avid genealogist, and avocational public historian. She currently uses the method described in this article to research the local history of the KKK in Wallowa County, Oregon (1921-1942). She lives in Patterson, California.

cleaning and insurance, but through a member it can be free. There is also the possibility of St. Benedict's.

Calling all members luncheon, honoring members the day of the June meeting. Annette will send out an e-mail to begin the conversation about the anniversary plans. Church attire.

The meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

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

*The Baobab Tree* is a digital publication. It still has 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 (<http://www.aagsnc.org/>). As each new edition becomes available, it will be added to the collection and a notification will be sent by e-mail to the membership list and posted in the AAGSNC Membership Yahoo! Group site. Those who 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). E-mailed requests will also be honored. Please be sure to include the information below in your e-mail. 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 e-mail: [journal@aagsnc.org](mailto:journal@aagsnc.org) Requests will be honored at any time.

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The Baobab Tree  
AAGSNC, P.O. Box 27485, Oakland, CA 94602-0985  
[journal@aagsnc.org](mailto:journal@aagsnc.org)



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### AAGSNC Merchandise Price List

You can proudly show everyone you are a member of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California and help support the society at the same time.



Coffee Mug, Beige with Green Logo	\$7.50
Tote Bag, Beige with Burgundy or Black Strap	\$20.00
Tote Bag, Vintage, White with Blue Strap	\$20.00
T-Shirt, Black, S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL	\$25.00
Magnifying Glass, Plastic, 2 ½"	\$1.00
Page Magnifier, Fresnel, 2 3/8" x 7 5/8"	\$2.00

All prices valid as of December 1, 2015.

## 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 is best.
- Write one to three pages. We always need some one-page stories; more than three pages is too long.
- We will 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 JPG 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 JPG format. Make sure pictures are at least 300 dpi (dots per inch), sharp, and clear and have enough contrast to show up well in black and white. All photos and documents must have credits 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).

# Web Notes

*Resources, stories, and other things found while wandering the Web*

## Janice M. Sellers Editor, *The Baobab Tree*

Note: All URL's are valid as of the date of publication.

Sydney Howard Gay's *Record of Fugitives*, about the Underground Railroad, is digitized and free online [http://www.slate.com/blogs/the\\_vault/2015/09/21/history\\_of\\_the\\_underground\\_railroad\\_sydney\\_howard\\_gay\\_s\\_record\\_of\\_fugitives.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_vault/2015/09/21/history_of_the_underground_railroad_sydney_howard_gay_s_record_of_fugitives.html)

Free Yale online course on Civil War [http://videlectures.net/yalehist119s08\\_blight\\_lec01/](http://videlectures.net/yalehist119s08_blight_lec01/)

Archive of Booker T. Washington items given by him to his former teacher <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/archive/201402A19.html>

Appraisal of *Dancing for Eels* painting and essay about the story behind the painting <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/archive/201006A44.html>, [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/fts/washingtondc\\_201006A44.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/fts/washingtondc_201006A44.html)

Black Americans at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915 <http://www.ppie100.org/this-is-our-fair-and-our-state-african-americans-and-the-panama-pacific-international-exposition/>

Short 1929 movie of performance by group of young black boys <http://mirc.sc.edu/islandora/object/usc%3A21333>

Current status of Africatown, Alabama <http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/american-slaves-origins-live-on-in-alabamas-africatown/ar-BBkRPHu>

Interactive map of West Oakland cultural and historical sites <http://www.citylab.com/tech/2015/09/a-youth-driven-interactive-map-of-rapidly-changing-west-oakland/406981/>

Video of unveiling of statue in Florida for Medal of Honor recipient Melvin Morris

<http://www.floridatoday.com/media/cinematic/video/27350867/video-medal-of-honor-recipient-statue-unveiled/>

Slave cemetery saved in Georgia <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=95256&page=1>

The longest wooden bridge in Georgia was designed by freed slave who was engineering genius <http://www.exploresouthernhistory.com/redoak.html>

Soldiers of the 56th USCT, buried as unknowns, have names restored to them at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, Missouri <http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/african-american-union-army-soldiers-died-their-way-home-war-then-history-lost-their-names>

Photos of historic black community of Lincoln, Nebraska preserved and donated <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/lost-and-found-again-photos-of-african-americans-on-the-plains-4344450/>

Site with digitized North Carolina slave narratives <https://northcarolinaslavenarratives.wordpress.com/>

92-year-old woman returns to Raleigh, North Carolina, to get library card denied to her 72 years ago <http://www.addictinginfo.org/2015/07/05/92-year-old-woman-finally-gets-the-library-card-they-said-she-couldnt-have-video/>

Oregon was founded as a "white Utopia" <http://www.liberalamerica.org/2015/09/07/wont-believe-state-founded-white-utopia/>

Rhode Island Episcopal diocese establishing museum about trans-Atlantic slave trade <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/24/us/rhode-island-church-taking-unusual-step-to-illuminate-its-slavery-role.html>

From slave to celebrated chef in Charleston  
<https://www.yahoo.com/food/from-slave-to-celebrated-chef-the-surprising-124093808331.html>

Appraisal of William Aiken Walker painting of former slave in South Carolina, c. 1880  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/season/19/birmingham-al/appraisals/william-aiken-walker-oil-painting-ca-1880-201403A21>

Slave artifacts unearthed by researchers in South Carolina  
<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/05/150508153031.htm>

An anthropology college student in Virginia finds slave ancestors nearby  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/she-went-to-college-to-study-anthropology-and-found-her-slave-ancestors-nearby/2015/09/23/3e6a683e-5c9a-11e5-8e9e-dce8a2a2a679\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/she-went-to-college-to-study-anthropology-and-found-her-slave-ancestors-nearby/2015/09/23/3e6a683e-5c9a-11e5-8e9e-dce8a2a2a679_story.html)

Former Negro Leagues player brings personal game items to *Antiques Roadshow* for appraisal  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/archive/201403T05.html>

Oral histories of black players during first 25 years of integrated Major League Baseball are being collected  
<http://www.latimes.com/sports/la-sp-baseball-black-history-20150927-story.html>

Library of Congress blog post about black musician Sherman Holmes  
<http://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2015/04/the-sherman-holmes-project/>

Perspectives on racial identification from someone who learned as an adult she is 1/4 black  
<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jun/15/bliss-broyard-father-black-roots-race-ethnicity-rachel-dolezal>

The economics of U.S. government-sponsored residential segregation  
<http://www.epi.org/blog/from-ferguson-to-baltimore-the-fruits-of-government-sponsored-segregation/>

Infographic with factoids about economic history of blacks in the U.S.  
<http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/make-it-right/infographic-40-acres-and-a-mule-would-be-at-least-64-trillion-today>

A short history of how color film began to account for darker skin tones  
<http://digg.com/video/color-photo-racism-skin-color>

The only black man pictured on the Havana, Cuba mural of important historical people of the city  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claudio\\_Brindis\\_de\\_Salas\\_Garrido](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claudio_Brindis_de_Salas_Garrido)

Review of book *Race to Revolution: The U.S. and Cuba during Slavery and Jim Crow*  
<http://repeatingislands.com/2015/04/10/new-book-gerald-hornes-race-to-revolution-the-u-s-and-cuba-during-slavery-and-jim-crow/>

Ghana's "right of abode" open to persons "of African descent in the Diaspora"  
<http://www.ghanatrade.gov.gh/images/products/laws/GHANA%20IMMIGRATION%20SERVICE%20RIGHT%20OF%20ABODE.pdf>

Japan's biracial Miss Universe 2015 motivated by discrimination  
<http://naturallymoi.com/2015/05/japans-half-black-miss-universe-talks-being-motivated-by-discrimination/>

Records of Moravian missions in U.S. Virgin Islands, including information about enslaved population, to be digitized  
<http://virginislandsdailynews.com/news/moravian-archives-to-digitize-v-i-records-1.1875110>  
<http://www.mcall.com/news/local/mc-bethlehem-moravian-slave-archives-20150516-story.html#page=1>

Historical places relating to slavery placed on map of Dutch colonial empire  
<http://mappingslavery.nl/en/>

A former slave who became a ward of Queen Victoria  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sara\\_Forbes\\_Bonetta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sara_Forbes_Bonetta)

**The Baobab Tree is published four times each year and is provided to all members of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California (AAGSNC) as a benefit of membership. 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 March 15 for the Spring issue, June 15 for the Summer, September 15 for the Fall, and December 15 for the Winter.

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 suitable for publication include:

#### Manuscripts/Articles:

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

#### Abstracts:

- Census transcriptions (federal, state, city, and county)
- 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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