

P3 BLACK HISTORY MONTH AND AAGSNC
Workshops, Black Family History Day, and Panels make for a busy February.

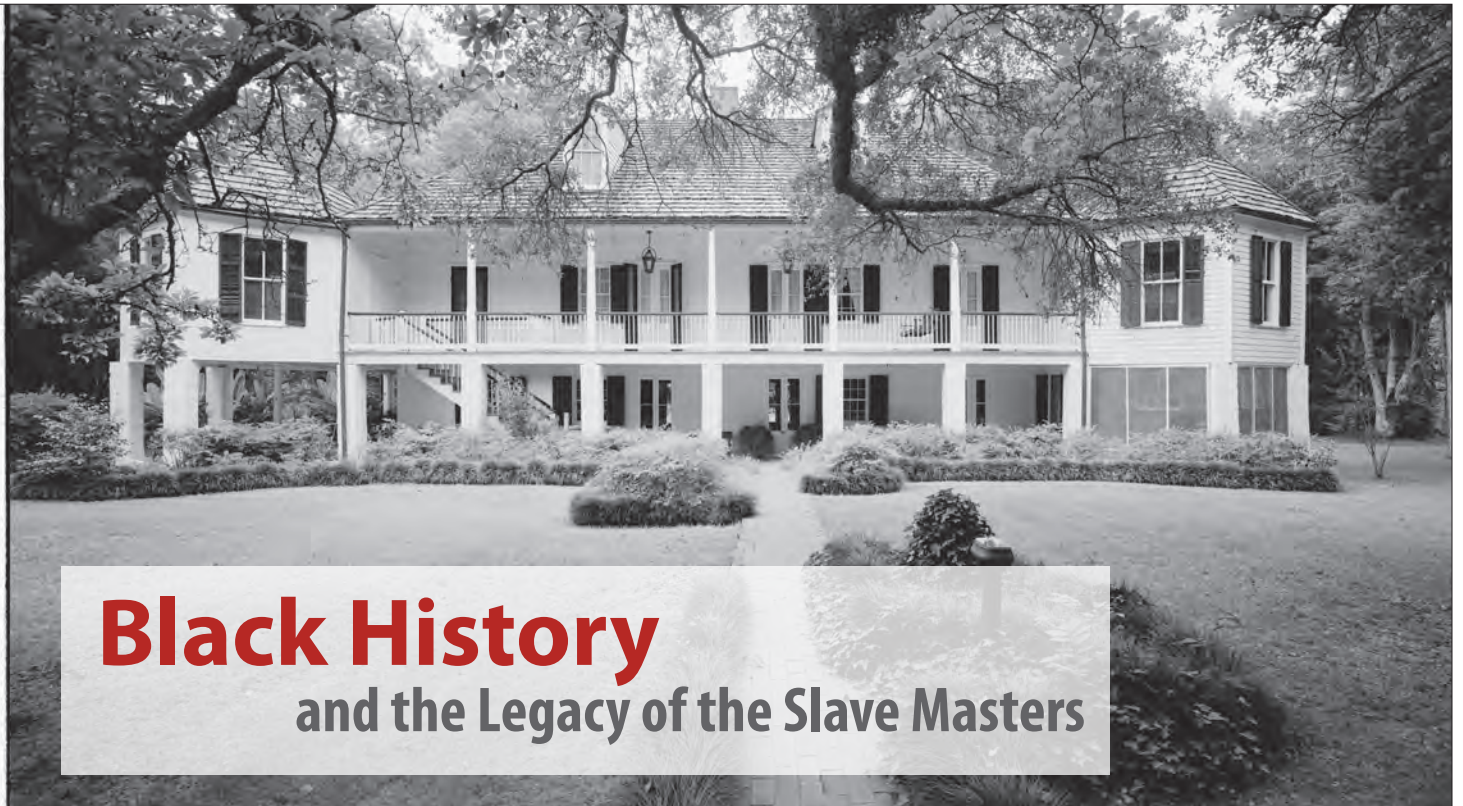
P4 YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!
A number of leadership positions are available. Which one will you take?

P6 WE WEREN'T TAUGHT HOW TO SMILE
Part one of a two about an immediate family who came together to fight Jim Crow.

P8 AFRICAN AMERICAN RESEARCH SEMINAR
Researchers from the Bay Area and beyond travel to Sacramento to hone their genealogy skills.

the Baobab Tree

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Black History and the Legacy of the Slave Masters

by Peggy S. Lloyd
Archival Manager, Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives

February is Black History Month. Though many would prefer to forget it, the history of slavery is part of that legacy, and it is among us to this very day in the names carried by many African-American families in our country, our region, and many areas of the United States where people have migrated who have their roots in southwest Arkansas.

Not all the people who emerged from slavery took the names of their most recent slave masters. They may have taken the name of a former slave master or opted for another name, but, in fact, many did keep the name of the slave master with whom they were associated at that time. One of the names that is prevalent today in the black community in our area

is "Muldrow" or "Muldrew" or even "Muldro." What is the story of this name? Where did it come from? Why is it so prevalent in our vicinity?

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African American Genealogical Society
of Northern California (AAGSNC)

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



The Branch

Words from the Society President and Journal Editors

Black History Month and AAGSNC



Photo courtesy of M. Howard Edwards

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

And what a month it was!

The month really started out in January with a signing and sale of the book *Gather at the Table*. This was done with the cooperation of the authors Thomas Norman De Wolf and Sharon Leslie Morgan and the collaboration of the San Francisco Museum of the African Diaspora. This was a successful fundraising event and introduced the society to a slice of the public not normally reached.

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The ever enterprising and hard-working Outreach and Education Committee arranged a mind-boggling series of events to showcase the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California. We must tip our hat to Nicka Smith, Committee Chair, and her committee of Alvis Ward, Felicia Addison, Patrice Anderson, Diana Ross, Upperton Hurts, and Jackie Stewart.

Out With the Old...in With the New

by **Annette Madden and Janice Sellers**
Editors, *The Baobab Tree*

For the last two years, I have served as the editor of the *Baobab*. It has been a learning experience for me, a personal journey filled with frustration, exhaustion, exhilaration and joy. I am a better person for having done it and in many ways will miss it. In these two years, the *Baobab* itself has become better, in no small part due to my coeditor, Nicka Smith. Her contributions have been tremendous. Without her layout skills, editorial capacities, and technical expertise, the journal would not be the beautiful and informative organ of the society it has become. I am beyond grateful for her partnership. I must also thank those who have served on both the journal committee and the editorial group: Vernester Sheeler, Lois Freeman, Frances Johnese, Patrice Anderson,

Jackie Stewart, Lenora Gobert, Carole Neal, Melvyn Gillette, and Dera Williams. They have all helped to move the *Baobab* forward. And thanks are also due to M. Howard Edwards, the society president and the journal's liaison with the Executive Committee, for his continual support and encouragement. If I left anyone off the list, the fault is entirely mine and I beg your forgiveness.

And now the *Baobab* takes another step forward, moving into the capable stewardship of Janice Sellers. Janice's extensive background in editing and publishing will serve to continue improving the journal. I am very appreciative of her willingness to take on this task.

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2015 Calendar of Events

April 20

More Than Vital Facts: Researching Social History

May 18

People on the Move: Tracing the Migration of Your Ancestors

June 15

The Family Reunion Planner's Primer

September 21

Research Presentation, Braggin' and Lyin' Session

October 19

Beyond the Census, Part I

November 16

Beyond the Census, Part II

December 21

Annual Holiday Party

For more info on our events and meetings, please visit www.AAGSNC.org

The Leaf

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

Your Society Needs YOU!

The lifeblood of a society such as ours is our volunteers. They chair the meetings, keep the books, contribute articles to the journal. Nothing happens without them. Several volunteer opportunities are available now, and we urge you to consider taking on one of them. The positions available and their duties, as per the by-laws, are:

Corresponding Secretary (Officer)

Send out proper notice of all meetings. Notify officers, committees, and delegates of any special meetings as necessary. Mail the Society journal. Assist in any Society mailings as requested by the officers and committees. Conduct the correspondence of the Society. Maintain a Society correspondence file. Be responsible for gathering the Society's mail and distribute it to the proper officers and committees.

Fundraising Committee Chair

Develop activities throughout the year that will generate income for the Society.

Program Committee Chair

Develop an annual program and administer its execution throughout the year.

Publicity Committee Chair (effective June)

Ensure that the Society and its activities receive suitable publicity.



An additional duty of each of these positions is belonging to the Executive Committee, which is composed of officers and standing committee chairs. The Executive Committee serves as a planning body and advisory group to the President and meets before each monthly general meeting.

If you have any interest in any of these positions or need more information about them, please contact the society president, M. Howard Edwards, at president@aagsnc.org.

Genealogy 101

Say what!?!? How interviewing relatives can be the key to getting further in your research.

by Annette Madden
Editor, *The Baobab Tree*

For some of us, the thought of interviewing people can be a bit intimidating. But with a little planning and preparation, it can be an enjoyable and informative experience, both for the interviewer and the interviewee.

First, the “don’ts”:

- No ambush interviews. Don’t just show up at Aunt Lula’s house, tape recorder or camcorder in hand, and expect a warm welcome.
- Don’t push. Trying to force someone to answer questions they do not want to answer will feel like an interrogation and only cause them to shut down.
- Don’t contradict. Cousin Susie’s version of a family story contradicts what your mother told you. Just get the information. Telling someone they are wrong is another good way to end an interview abruptly.
- Don’t interrupt. Your subject may wander off topic, but let them finish and then gently guide them back.

Now for some “do’s”:

- Make an appointment ahead of time and be on time. Prearrange beginning and end times that your interviewee is comfortable with.
- Ask them to have on hand any documents or pictures they are willing to share with you. You can suggest items you might be interested in, such as family bibles, birth and death certificates, obituaries, etc. Prearrange permission to scan or photograph them.
- Arrange beforehand how you will record the interview. Some people won’t mind a tape recorder, but may object to video. Others may not want to have any recording devices at all. In this case, you will have to write down as much as you can, and then as soon as you leave, take the time to write down everything you can remember. Ask if you can call back at another time to verify that you have captured the information correctly.
- Come prepared with a list of questions as a guide, but don’t be afraid to let your subject wander off topic. Some of the best information will be obtained this way, things you might never have thought to ask. If you want some help with questions, Google “genealogy interview questions” and several lists of suggestions will pop up.

- On several interviews, I have taken my mother, who knew the interviewee well, along with me. On those occasions all that was required of me was to let them talk and occasionally throw in a question. I learned things I would never have found out just by being a fly on the wall for their conversation.
- Make sure your questions are open ended, requiring more than a “yes” or “no” answer.
- As soon as possible, transcribe the interview. Share a copy of the transcription with your subject, not only as a courtesy, but to make sure you did not misunderstand something.
- Be sure to send the interviewee a thank you note expressing your gratitude for the interview.
- At any family gathering, be prepared with a pen and notebook, or a recorder. Lots of family information is shared at gatherings such as these.

Some suggested questions to get you started:

- What is your birth name?
- When and where were you born?
- Did you have a nickname? Who gave it to you?
- What is your mother’s/father’s name? Where was he/she born?
- What are your grandparents’ names? Where were they born? What did they do for a living? Did you know them? What were they like?
- Did you grow up on a farm or in the city? What was that like?
- Did your family do anything special on Sundays?
- How did your family celebrate various holidays?

Don’t wait to interview your relatives. It is a good practice to start with your oldest relations and then work down the list to include younger ones. Happy interviewing!

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. Email her at amadden45@hotmail.com.

We Weren't Taught How to Smile

The story of how a brave family risked their lives to ensure the rights of all in America

by Nicka Smith

Layout Editor, *The Baobab Tree*

It's morning and the flames have stopped in Lake Providence, Louisiana. As the dew drips from each side of the charbroiled cross, a family emerges from its three-room home, relieved that the hooded marauders are gone and peacefully sleeping in their beds. Today, the fight will continue, come segregationists or the rising Mississippi.

Nearly 300 miles away, a group gathers in a kitchen in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward. As they strategize and mobilize, their copper-skinned leaders challenge all gathered at the table for freedom. The youngest among them take the message to heart as evidenced by numerous arrests for breach of peace.

No stronger pedigree is found. They are descendants of former slaves, raised among the cotton fields of the Louisiana delta, in the chokehold of Jim Crow whose hands continually tightened and released their grip, removing air and giving it like a respirator. The quilt that sews them together is resilient—chock full of powerfully vibrant multicolored squares and rectangles, a visual representation of their spot on the front line of justice, equality, and the pursuit of lives unrestricted.

A sticker that reads "Disabled, but able to vote" adorns the door of the Registrar of Voters office in East Carroll Parish, Louisiana. It's ironic, considering that for nearly 100 years, the majority of the citizens in the parish were unable to vote merely because they had more melanin in their skin than those in power. Perhaps black skin was a disability in that sense, but it still didn't give black people such as Louis Balfour Atlas, Sr., a right to do anything but work, pay property and poll taxes, and live a life without the real benefits of citizenship.



Louis Balfour Atlas, Sr., father of Rev. Francis Joseph Atlas, Sr. and Cora Mae Atlas Thompson. Maternal grandfather of Alice, Shirley, and Jean Thompson.

Atlas was born during Reconstruction. Education was his cornerstone and it was firmly girded by self-sufficiency, hard work, and a vigor for discussing politics. Despite his grandfather, father, and uncles each being considered three-fifths of a person nearly a decade before his birth, each of them rose from slavery a registered voter, were continually selected for the parish police jury, and were elected as officers for the Colored Republican Party in the parish. But not even personal and business dealings with United States Senator Joseph E. Ransdell could prevent the swift change that signaled the demise of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow.



Rev. Francis Joseph Atlas, Sr., son of Louis Balfour Atlas, Sr., voting rights martyr.

"I think it was something that was passed down. My grandfather only had an eighth grade education. That was a lot for someone born right after the Civil War. He had everything—land, a home, a family—even sent his children to Tuskegee [Institute] and paid taxes, but he didn't have a vote," said Barbara Sewell, granddaughter of Atlas.

Atlas' strength, steadfast nature, and interest in politics are remembered and memorialized by his descendants and relatives, particularly his son, Rev. Francis Joseph Atlas, Sr., daughter, Cora Mae Atlas Thompson, and granddaughters, Alice Thompson, Jean Denton Thompson, and Shirley Thompson. In all, nearly 30 members of his family were involved in some form of indirect or direct resistance against segregation across the United States.

Photos courtesy of Regina Mason

One of eleven siblings, Rev. Atlas was the only one not to flee their delta home during the great migration of African Americans from the South. He took up his father's trade, farming, even though he had opportunities to leave East Carroll after receiving an education in plastering and brickmasonry. A master agrarian, the tall and stoic Rev. Atlas followed in his father's footsteps and sent all 12 of his children to college, with many obtaining advanced degrees.

In 1948, Rev. Atlas, along with a group of other African Americans in East Carroll, began to challenge the Registrar of Voters by making repeated attempts to register to vote. This was prompted by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the *Shelley vs. Kramer* case, which ruled that courts could not enforce racial covenants on real estate.ⁱ As they organized, whites in the area and at the state level took notice. This was especially the case after they formed a local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Roadblocks such as literacy tests and finding qualified voters to vouch for you were set up. Even after trainings, more meetings, and lots more rejections, the group was not able to get a single new African American voter registered. Fifteen years elapsed and the group, which included Rev. Atlas' first cousin, Nancy Russell Nervis, then filed a suit against the parish registrar of voters. Two witnesses were chosen to testify in front of a grand jury in New Orleans on September 27, 1960, Rev. John H. Scott and Rev. Atlas. The night before his testimony, Rev. Atlas gathered his thoughts as he laid his head on a pillow at 1931 Tupelo Street in New Orleans. It was a pillow owned by his sister, Cora.

"Some children grew up with their parents working at home or having an interest in sports. This made them choose what they were interested in. For our family, it was politics, so that's what I wanted to do," said Jean Denton Thompson.

Cora was Rev. Atlas' younger, spunky, and much shorter sister. A mother of seven, she refused to allow her children to refer to anyone, especially whites, as sir or ma'am. The archives of the New Orleans *Times Picayune* are littered with articles about the exploits of her, her husband, John Henry Thompson, Sr., and three of their aforementioned daughters. They opposed a new stop and frisk ordinance in New Orleansⁱⁱ, filed suit against the city for failing to employ residents of the Lower Ninth Wardⁱⁱⁱ, and flew to the nation's capital to push a \$400,000 urban renewal grant request to the Department of Housing and Urban Development following Hurricane Betsy^{iv}. For anyone else, the previously noted amount of action would be enough. This wasn't the case for the Thompsons.

The Thompson sisters were first a part of the junior chapter of the New Orleans NAACP. They didn't find enough action there. One night, they watched a television appearance by Rudy Lombard, first national vice chairman of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE). Yes, he was handsome, but he was talking action. This was just what they longed for.

Fall was study time in high school and college. Spring was the season for picketing. Canal Street, Woolworths. Picket. Be harassed. Stop. Head to St. James Episcopal Church for food and rest. Go home. Come back to the church. Pick up stored signs. Back to Canal Street. Picket. Get arrested. Meet back at the Castle's on Conti Street to strategize.

On May 24, 1961, Jean, the middle of the sisters, took a risk. One of only two women, she could be considered crazy by many to desire to integrate a segregated Trailways bus station in Jackson, Mississippi, after spending days in Montgomery, Alabama, pleading with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to do the same and even he wouldn't dare attempt the feat. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy arranged for their safe and nearly uneventful arrest following previous rides where buses were burned in Anniston, Alabama, and riders were beaten in Montgomery, Alabama. Rev. Cordy T. (CT) Vivian, Rev. James Lawson, and Bernard Lafayette were among those in that third group during the Freedom Rides of 1961. Even being slapped unconscious by a prison administrator wasn't a deterrent.

**"...He had everything—land, a home, a family—even sent his children to Tuskegee [Institute] and paid taxes, but he didn't have a vote."
- Barbara Sewell**

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Jean Denton Thompson's mug shot from her arrest during a CORE Freedom Ride on May 24, 1961 in Jackson, Hinds, Mississippi.





All photos courtesy of Sharon Styles

8th Annual African American Seminar

The 8th Annual Sacramento African American (AA) Seminar, "Celebrating 150 Years of Emancipation, 1863-2013," was held on March 9th at the LDS Eastern Avenue, Sacramento. This year's seminar included new and exciting topics, with something for everyone. The 2013 AA Seminar committee members were Linda Bradley, Program; Karen Burney and Kathy Knight, Advertisement; Sharon Styles, Food; Jackie Chauhan and Lynette Williams, Syllabus; and Barbara Tyson, Meetings Hostess.

Twenty-two genealogy classes ranging from beginning and intermediate to advanced research were offered. Some of this year's seminar presentation topics were:

- Let Freedom Ring! The Emancipation Proclamation and Finding Your Slave Ancestors Before and After It
- Freedmen's Bureau Records: A Gem in Our Own Backyard
- My Research and the Life of Dr. Nettie Asbury
- Monticello Connection
- New Sources of Military Records
- Back Away from the Computer – You'll Find More Offline
- Online Historical Black Newspapers

Presenters were from the Sacramento area, as well as members of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California (AAGSNC.) AAGSNC members presenting included Juliet Crutchfield, Melvyn Gillette, Annette Madden, Vernester Scheeler, Janice Sellers, Nicka Smith, and Lynette Williams.

Keynote speaker Regina Mason gave an informative and impressive presentation detailing how her persistent research led to uncovering and substantiating William Grimes as her enslaved 3rd great-grandfather. William Grimes was a pioneering autobiographer who wrote the first fugitive slave narrative in American. Regina detailed the steps she took to successfully substantiate her research findings. Regina's husband, Brandon Mason, read several sections from Regina's book that portrayed life events of William Grimes during his enslavement and after emancipation.

An added feature of the seminar this year included seven creative displays:

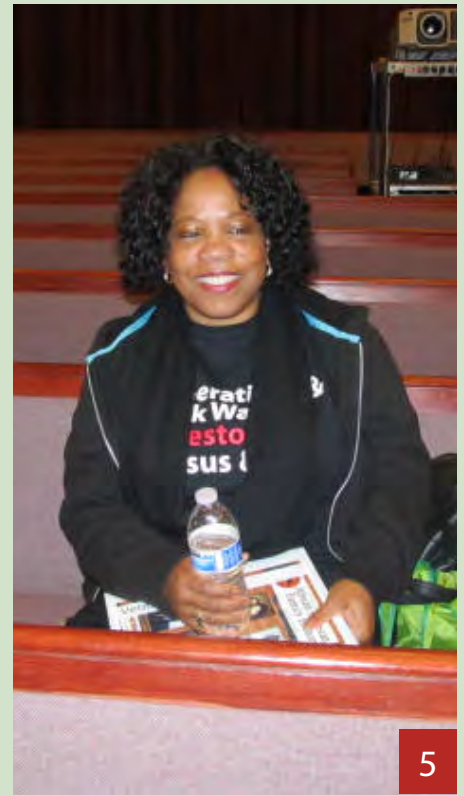
- Handmade quilts, family pictures, trunk, etc.
- Natchez, Mississippi fire
- Emancipation
- African American books
- 23andMe
- Historical African American newspapers
- Allensworth (a former African American town in California)



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1 - Sharon Styles and Regina Mason with her book, *Life of William Grimes*.

3 - Regina Mason speaking with participants.

6 - Karen Massier opened the program by leading "Lift Every Voice."

8 - Barbara Tyson shows off a map.

2 - Annette Madden during one of her presentations.

4 - Nicka Smith in between presentations.

7 - Left to right: Mr. Sparks, Carl Davis, Darius Trapps Chabala, and Brandon Mason take a pause.

9 - Allensworth Historical Site display.

5 - Vernester Sheeler waits for one of the larger workshops.

More Branches on the Utsey Family Tree

How time, diligence, and DNA added a full branch to a genealogy

by Vernester Sheeler
Member, AAGSNC

During the early phase of my family research project, one of my father's favorite first cousins, Carrie Mae Utsey Mayes of Cleveland, shared a memory from her early childhood. We were talking about different family members when she mentioned a name, Mrs. Lizzie B. Pool, which I had not heard before. She talked about this family, which lived in a large brick house in Malvern, Arkansas. The owner of the house, Mrs. Pool, had two sons, Austin and McKinley Ootsey, who are relatives of the Utsey family of Camden, Arkansas.

Carrie's father was my grandmother's older brother, George "Shorty" Utsey. Uncle Shorty died before Carrie was born. Shortly after her 4th birthday, her mother, Aunt Mary Jane, married Charlie Primm. Uncle Charlie worked as a truck driver for a company that traveled from town to town to cut and haul timber. One of his assignments took him to Malvern and he took his family with him. Malvern was a growing town at that time, mostly known for manufacturing bricks during the mid 1930s, primarily because of the natural deposits of clay. Today Malvern proclaims itself the "Brick Capital of the World."

Aunt Mary Jane and Uncle Charlie rented a room from Mrs. Pool, a hairdresser who sold burial insurance. At the time, most black families did not own homes, much less brick ones. Hamilton, Mrs. Pool's husband, worked at the local lumberyard. Hamilton and Mrs. Pool owned the largest brick house in town, which was located at 701 Page Street (west of Main Street). According to Carrie, the house had a large wraparound porch with a big yard.

Carrie remembers playing in the yard one day while her mother visited with Mrs. Pool on the porch. Mrs. Pool said to Aunt Mary Jane, "Your daughter is related to my children." Carrie said that Mrs. Pool's comment did not mean anything to her at the time because she was just a child, and family relationships are not usually important to seven-year-old little girls.

Without additional information or possible contacts, I filed the information in my ever growing "to do" file. One

married Mose Gossett and moved to Malvern. Mary and Martha's daughters live within a few miles of each other in Detroit. Cousin Martha and Aunt Mary Jane knew each other from Camden, so when Uncle Charlie moved his family to Malvern they reconnected. Carrie told me about her visits and play dates with the Gossett cousins: Mose Jr., Dorothy, Elese, and Annie Mae. She remains in close contact with them today.

In 1991, Carrie traveled to Detroit to attend the Utsey Family Reunion. Cousin Elese introduced Carrie to her first cousins, the Brown sisters: Clotilde, Gloria, Jeanette and Patsy. Cousin Carrie suggested I contact the sisters to gather information about their families for the family tree. Initially, I was hesitant to reach out, not knowing how receptive they might be to talk to a total stranger asking personal questions about family relationships. Carrie encouraged me by saying, "They are your family and they are all very nice." So, with that, I placed the call.

The sisters were very helpful and gracious. Talking to them helped me identify and connect several of the missing branches of the family tree. They shared family stories and contact information for additional family members. When I mentioned my search for family photos, Gloria and Patsy suggested I contact Cousin Elese. They said she grew up in Arkansas and had several pictures. I enjoyed the conversation and we promised to stay in touch.

Following Gloria and Patsy's recommendation, I contacted Cousin Elese and enjoyed a delightful conversation with her. She promised to pull out some pictures and send them to me to copy.



Photo courtesy of Vernester Sheeler

Left to right (back): Doris Smith, the author, Austin "A.V." Ootsey, George Ootsey. Left to right (front): Veronica Porter and Vera Ootsey.

of the lessons I learned early was to examine and store every piece of information, irrespective of how small you may think it is, because you never know when it might become a big lead.

In 2006, while preparing for the 2007 Utsey Family Reunion in Kansas City, Missouri, I followed up on a lead from Carrie to contact family members living in Detroit, Michigan. My great-uncle Henry Utsey had fourteen children, which included twin girls, Mary and Martha. Mary Ophelia moved to Detroit during the 1930s. She met and married John Rockefeller Brown, a tenant in the boarding house where she lived. Her twin sister, Martha Elnora,

During the conversation, she shared information about her Aunt Lizzie and her cousins, Austin and McKinley. She asked if I was in contact with them. I explained that I had heard about a possible connection to Aunt Lizzie and her sons from Carrie. However, I did not have very much information. Else explained that Mrs. Pool and Aunt Lizzie were the same person! She shared that she knew both Austin and McKinley. According to Else, McKinley, also known as "Mack", would visit her mother whenever he visited Malvern. Else said that if she were traveling and she had a layover in St Louis, she would take a taxi to Mack's house to visit. According to Else, both Aunt Lizzie and Mack died in St Louis, but she could not remember when. This information represented another family clue to add to the puzzle. I did not know what to do with this information so I again tossed it into the "to do" file.

Sometime later, Patsy shared a memory about attending a funeral with one of her mother's sisters, Ruth Utsey Allen. Patsy told me about seeing her cousin Austin for the first time. Patsy said she and Aunt Ruth were going into the church, when Aunt Ruth spoke to a young man walking by. "Hey, Austin," Aunt Ruth said, and Austin waved back and made his way into the building. Patsy remembers that, she turned to Aunt Ruth and asked, "Who is Austin?" Aunt Ruth replied, "That is Papa's other family, now come on, gal!" Unfortunately, children were not encouraged to ask questions when Patsy and Carrie were growing up. Patsy never saw or learned any more about Austin.

While researching Arkansas records I came across a death notice for an Austin Ootsey. The information I had about him was limited to the snippets of information I had collected from Carrie, Patsy, and Else. They pronounced the name the same way that we all pronounce U-T-S-E-Y. Curious about the name on the death notice and in spite of the different spelling, I could not make a family connection without more information. At a loss, I filed the record in my "to do" file.

A month after the 2011 family reunion, I logged onto the Utsey Family History Facebook page to see if there were comments about the reunion. A photo of a young man appeared on my home page under the header "People You May Know." The name on the photo was Mike Ootsey. My first thought was, "I do not know you, go away. I am too busy trying to identify the last Utsey slaveholder. I do not have time to waste on you. Be gone!" With that, I dismissed Mike as a potential contact and reached for the delete button. Then I noticed something familiar about his face. I cannot tell you specifically what it was in his face that was familiar to me. The spelling of his last name was different, but he still seemed



Austin Virginia Ootsey, Jr with Bill Utsey, April 2012, Hot Springs Village, Arkansas.

Photo courtesy of Vernester Sheeler

so familiar. At this point, I did not remember I had a death notice for Austin Ootsey. Then I noticed that Mike listed his residence as Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Pine Bluff is a 75-mile drive from Hot Springs, where I meet my Utsey cousins twice a year. It is also a 75-mile drive to Camden, my birthplace. I could not resist the urge to take a closer look, so I decided to send Mike a message. I have since learned that Facebook looks at the names of your friends and compares them to the names on their friends list to suggest people who may have mutual contacts with you.

I wrote to Mike, "Hello, Mike. I am curious about your name. Can you tell me who your family members are? Where are they from? The name is very close to my family name...Utsey. I am curious to know if there is a possible link. Please share your thoughts."

On October 15, 2011, I received Mike's response. He wrote, "My dad is George Ootsey. My grandpa had changed the name, as it was once spelled Utsey. I have an aunt named Marion and an uncle named Austin. I also have a brother, Ray Ootsey, and we had a family reunion [of the descendants of William McKinley Ootsey] in August 2011. You can talk to other family members if you want more information about it. I know the name came from Germany. My great grandpa changed the name." The reunion took place in Little Rock. Over the next few weeks, Mike and I exchanged a series of messages to try to find possible family connections without success. He suggested I contact his Aunt Marion, who lives in Tacoma, Washington. She was much more familiar with the family history, he said. I emailed Marion, but I did not get a response. Mike offered to contact his uncle Austin and his sister, Valecia Fields, to find out if they would be willing to talk to me. He said that his sister had been trying to research their family history.

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More Branches on the Utsey Family Tree

continued from page 11

Form DH-414--30M-10-12-81226-C-McB.

CERTIFICATE
(USED FOR BIRTH WHICH OCCURRED PRIOR TO 1914)
STATE OF ARKANSAS
STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

1. PLACE OF BIRTH
County of Hot Springs
Township _____
Inc. Town of _____
City MALVERN (No. _____ St. _____ Ward) 146

2. FULL NAME OF CHILD AUSTIN VIRGINIA OOTSEY
(ALL DATA IN CERTIFICATE MUST BE AS OF DATE OF BIRTH OF THIS CHILD)

1. Sex M If Plural Births _____ 4. Twin, Triplet, or other NO 6. Premature NO 7. Legitimate? YES 8. Date of Birth August 13, 1904
2. Number in order of birth 1 Full term YES (Month, Day, Year)

| FATHER | | MOTHER | |
|--|---|---|--|
| 1. Full Name <u>William McKinley Ootsey</u> | 15. Full Maiden Name <u>Lizzie Belle Huston</u> | | |
| 14. Residence <u>MALVERN, ARK.</u> | 19. Residence <u>MALVERN</u> | | |
| 11. Color <u>BLACK</u> | 20. Color <u>BLACK</u> | 12. Father's age <u>24</u> years (At time of this birth) | 21. Mother's age <u>23</u> years (At time of this birth) |
| 13. Birthplace <u>OUCHITA COUNTY, ARK.</u> | 22. Birthplace <u>HRKADELPHIA, ARK</u> | | |
| 14. Occupation <u>MINISTER</u> | 23. Occupation <u>Housewife</u> | | |
| 27. Number of children born to this mother up to and including this child <u>2</u> | | Total number living at time of this birth (including this child) <u>2</u> | |

Document courtesy of Vernester Sheeler

Birth certificate of Austin Virginia Ootsey, Sr., born August 13, 1904 in Malvern, Hot Spring, Arkansas.

In the meantime, excited and anxious, I waited to learn more. One night while exploring Facebook to connect with new family members, I noticed that Mike's sister, Valecia, was friends with my cousin Willie Raymond Hardy. A high school photo of a young man reported to be Willie gave me the perfect opportunity to contact him for verification and to inquire about his connection to Valecia. I forwarded the photo to Willie with a note to ask for help in identifying the man in the photo. A few days later, I called him to follow up.

Willie confirmed that the young man in the photo was indeed him. He said, "I decided against the senior class photo and I left for school early that day. Later that morning, my sister found me on the campus, handed me a tie and sport coat with a message from our mother to have the photos taken." Willie and I shared a couple of other family stories, laughed, and talked for about twenty minutes. Before I hung up the phone, I shared the experience of finding Mike on Facebook and the unusual spelling of his last name. Willie said he did not know Mike or anything about the spelling of the last name. I asked if he knew Valecia Fields and explained that she was Mike's sister. He said, "Yes, I know her. She is a very nice young woman. I met her during my tenure as state representative, and she was a lobbyist. She worked to promote educational and community service projects and I would recommend allocation of funds for many of the programs she supported."

A few days before Thanksgiving 2011, I received a Facebook message from Mike to ask if I had spoken to his aunt Marion or his sister, Valecia. He explained that if I still needed a contact, his Uncle Austin was coming to Little Rock to spend the Thanksgiving holiday. He suggested it might be a good time for me to connect with him. I forwarded my phone number and asked him to call me on Friday, as I would be working from home. I waited the entire holiday weekend, but I never received a phone call. Frustrated and disappointed,

I decided to give up and let it go. My thought was that I already had enough on my plate, as I was still working to find the last slaveholder. Therefore, I turned all of my efforts toward solving the mystery centered on how the Utsey family members arrived in Arkansas.

One Sunday morning in early December 2011, I received a telephone call from my cousin Melissa Utsey of Little Rock. Melissa's mother, Phyllis Copeland, and Willie Raymond are first cousins. Melissa had reached out to me earlier in the year to ask how we are related. I explained that her second great-grandfather Harvey Utsey and my great-grandfather Elmo were brothers. I shared that their father's name was Cincinnati Utsey, and I talked about my work to document our family history and my research to identify the last slaveholder. I encouraged her to call me or refer others to me who might have questions about our family lineage, which is what had prompted her call. She asked, "Vee, are we related to a George Utsey (Ootsey), from Camden?" I said, "Yes, I am sure we are related to all of the Utseys in southeast Arkansas. Tell me more about him and I can tell you exactly how we are related." She explained that she had not met him. She said that she was waiting for a return call to gather some additional information and that she would call me back. In the meantime, my curiosity was piqued. While I waited for Melissa to call back, I noticed that Valecia was on Facebook and available to chat. I sent her a message to ask if it was possible to speak directly. She responded immediately and asked if we could schedule time to chat at 8:00 PM (CST). She explained, "I am in the middle of a big kitchen project." I agreed and waited patiently until 6:00 PM (PST). I called Valecia at 6:00 PM sharp. I introduced myself and started to explain the reason for my call, when she asked me to hold on. A few moments later, she returned to the call and with her she had her Uncle Austin on the line. We talked for almost two hours.

Valecia shared an interesting story. She was the chairperson for the August 5 – 7, 2011, Ootsey Family Reunion in Little Rock. On the day of the banquet, she and her father's first cousin Diane Ootsey Brown of Baton Rouge went to the city bakery to pick up the cake. Diane is Mack's granddaughter. The young woman behind the counter commented, "My family is having our family reunion this weekend in Hot Springs Village. But we spell our name U-T-S-E-Y." Valecia admits she was curious and asked for a contact name and number to inquire about the reunion. She spoke to my cousin, Shemic Utsey. Shemic gave Valecia my cell phone number. When she got back to the car, Valecia shared the story with Diane. She said that she really wanted to come over to find out "who are you people, but I was so busy with the reunion I could not find a way to slip away."

Austin said he prefers to be called "A.V." A.V. shared that his parents were Rev. Austin Virginia and Marie (Wilson) Ootsey, and his grandmother was Lizzie Pool, known to him as Mother Ootsey. He said, "My grandparents were divorced and Mother Ootsey subsequently married Mr. Pool, so most people called her Mrs. Pool." A.V. said that he and his brother often talked about the fact that their father never talked about his father. A.V. never knew his grandfather, and his grandmother never talked about him either. A.V. said he learned from his father that he has many cousins in the Camden area.

During the conversation, I told A.V. and Valecia about my family history project and all about my travel adventures over the past seven years. I shared the story of how I started this amazing journey and how I had been able to find my way to the two of them. I told A.V. and Valecia the story of how Patsy first saw Austin. We talked about Else's memories of her visits to McKinley's house in St. Louis and his visits to her mother's house in Malvern. I invited them to share this amazing journey with me. Finally, I told them about 23andMe's Roots to the Future project, and I asked A.V. if he would consider participating. I explained the process and to my surprise, he agreed to join the study.

I was able to get two people from the known branches of my extended family to submit DNA samples with me and two potential family links participated with the project. My grandmother's first cousin, William "Bill" Utsey of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, submitted the first DNA sample. Bill is the grandson of Cincinnati Utsey, my second great-grandfather. Bill's father, Julius, was Cincinnati's youngest son. Eddis Mae Hunter Johnson of Camden submitted the second DNA sample. Miss Eddis Mae's grandmother is Cincinnati's younger sister. I used the third kit to submit my own sample. My great-grandfather Elmo "Nuck" Utsey was Cincinnati's tenth child. Ron Eutsey of Kennesaw, Georgia, agreed to submit a specimen also. Ron's family is originally from Alabama. A few years ago, Ron and several members of the Eutsey family conducted research that led them to Bill's younger brother, James, and me. Austin "A.V." Ootsey, of Austin, Texas, submitted his DNA sample and a few weeks later, he received the results. He contacted me to review the findings. I used the 23andMe Family Inheritance advanced tools to compare my DNA to A.V. and Bill's samples. This tool compares your DNA bit by bit to identify what segments you share with close and distant family members. Interestingly, A.V. and Bill's DNA samples match 167 centiMorgans (cM) over six segments, which suggests they share the same great grandparents. A.V. and I share 117 cM over three



Photo courtesy of Vernester Sheeler

Austin Virginia Ootsey, Sr.

segments. We are still actively working to gather information about his grandfather.

CONT. ON THE NEXT PAGE

McKinley William Ootsey's social security application (SS-5).

| FORM SS-5 BUREAU DEPARTMENT GENERAL REVENUE SERVICE | | U. S. SOCIAL SECURITY ACT APPLICATION FOR ACCOUNT NUMBER | |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1. NAME <i>William</i> (EMPLOYEE'S FIRST NAME) | | <i>McKinley</i> (MIDDLE NAME) | |
| <i>3128 Marnise</i> (STREET AND NUMBER) | | <i>Place, St. Louis</i> (CITY AND STATE) | |
| 2. BIRTH DATE <i>34</i> (MONTH) | | <i>1902</i> (YEAR) | |
| 3. BIRTH PLACE <i>William OOTSEY</i> (FATHER'S FULL MAIDEN NAME) | | 4. BIRTH STATE <i>Missouri</i> (STATE) | |
| 5. PRESENT ADDRESS <i>522 LOCUST STREET, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI</i> (STREET AND NUMBER) | | 6. CITY AND STATE <i>St. Louis, Missouri</i> (CITY AND STATE) | |
| 7. SEX: MALE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FEMALE <input type="checkbox"/> | | 8. COLOR: WHITE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEGRO <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 9. REGISTERED WITH THE U. S. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, GIVE NUMBER OF REGISTRATION CARD <i>710</i> | | 10. SIGNATURE <i>William M. Ootsey</i> (EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURE AS USUALLY WRITTEN) | |
| 11. DATE SIGNED <i>Nov, 25-1936</i> (DATE) | | 12. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER <i>488-01-69</i> | |

Document courtesy of Vernester Sheeler

More Branches on the Utsey Family Tree

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Photo courtesy of Vernester Sheeler

Left to Right: Valecia Fields with her dad, George Ootsey, and the author, April 2012 in Hot Springs Village, Arkansas.

In the meantime, I have gathered several pieces of information about A.V.'s grandmother, Elizabeth "Lizzie Bell" Austin Ootsey Pool. The paper trail confirms that Lizzie and William Ootsey married and had two sons, William McKinley and Austin Virginia Ootsey, Sr. The Arkansas Certificate Used for Birth Which Occurred Prior to 1914 for Austin Virginia Ootsey lists the father's name as William McKinley Ootsey. William's birthplace is Ouachita County, his age at the time of Austin's birth was 24 years old, and his occupation was listed as a minister. The document verifies that Austin is the second child born to William and Lizzie Belle Austin, a 23 year-old housewife. Lizzie lists her birthplace as Arkadelphia. Austin's birth date is August 13, 1904, and his birthplace is Malvern.

The couple lived in Louisiana for a short time, evidenced by the November 25, 1936, application for a Social Security account number submitted by their oldest son William McKinley Ootsey. He is fondly known as "Mack" by his immediate family. Mack lists his age on the application as 34 years old, and his birth date as October 07, 1902. Place of birth is Weams or possibly Neams, LA. The handwritten letters are difficult to differentiate. Mack lists his parents' names as William and Lizzie Bell Ootsey.

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President's Column

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In February, on a Saturday afternoon, in conjunction with the San Francisco Public Library and the San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society, an abbreviated Black Family History Day was held at the library. On the following day, Sunday, a full blown Black Family History Day was held at Oakland's FamilySearch Library with the full participation of membership volunteers. This event attracted over fifty registrants who signed up for assistance.

Volunteers Nicka Smith, Janice Sellers, Annette Madden, and Alvis Ward presented at five evening workshops at the FamilySearch Library throughout the month and starting in January. This resulted in additional income to the society and attracted some new members.

Four of our members—Nicka Smith, Jackie Stewart, Felicia Addison, and Annette Madden—served on a panel at the California Genealogical Society and Library.

The regular society meeting presentation was presented by former Program Committee Chair Jackie Stewart, who shared her personal journey in "Slave Research: A Case Study."

While all of this was going on, the Ancestral Project program was continuing with the students of Oakland's middle and high schools and juveniles at risk.

This month was an ambitious endeavor involving many of our members. If I missed naming anyone I apologize. The society, once again, should be proud of the contributions of those who served during the month and applaud their contributions to the success of the society.

Gather at the Table Book Review

The story of how a daughter and son of the slave trade joined forces toward healing

by Dera Williams
Recording Secretary, AAGSNC

Title: *Gather at the Table: The Healing Journey of a Daughter of Slavery and a Son of the Slave Trade*
Authors: Thomas Norman DeWolf & Sharon Leslie Morgan
Publisher: Beacon Press
Publishing Date: October 9, 2012

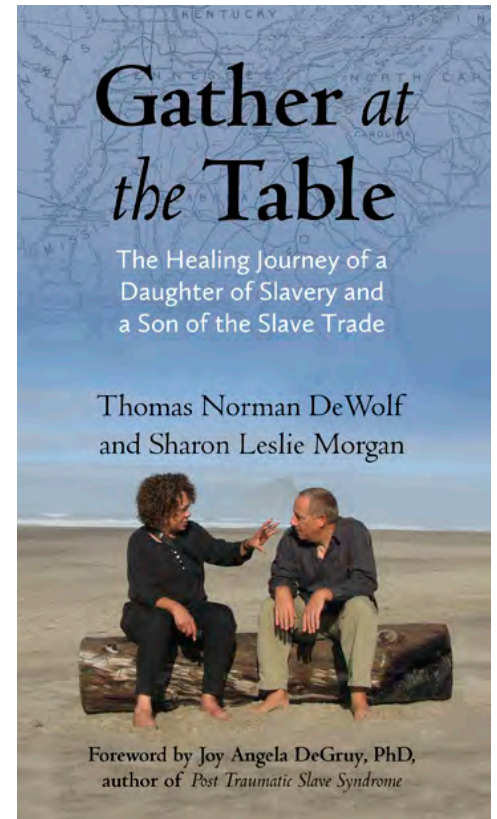
What could a black woman, a descendant of slaves, have in common with a white man who has known many privileges and whose ancestors were the largest slave traders in U.S. history? Sharon Leslie Morgan and Thomas Norman DeWolf, authors of *Gather at the Table: The Healing Journey of a Daughter of Slavery and A Son of the Slave Trade* make a valiant attempt to answer that question.

Some may call Morgan an angry black woman, but many would say she had the right to be. Her ancestors were the recipients of racism and harsh treatment. She herself grew up with issues of racism, identity issues, and discrimination. DeWolf, author of *Inheriting the Trade: A Northern Family Confronts Its Legacy as the Largest Slave-Trading Dynasty in U.S. History*, had always thought of himself as most whites do: without prejudice, unaware of his ignorance of injustices black people suffer on a day-to-day-to-day basis.

Gather at the Table began for the two as a social experiment at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, at a seminar titled Coming to the Table, where the descendants of slave owners and descendants of slaves would meet for a dialogue on how to

bridge the differences, misconceptions, and trauma that have plagued black and white people for centuries. Morgan and DeWolf may seem like an unlikely pair; their personalities are so disparate and at first they did not click. When they finally sat down to talk, the barriers of mistrust lifted and they agreed to chronicle their experience in healing. Over three years they journeyed throughout the U.S., the Caribbean, and overseas seeking, researching, interviewing, and documenting the how and why of racial discord. They saw firsthand how history can be manipulated while touring an antebellum house in Natchez, Mississippi. They were informed by the guides that sharecropping was a fair system, called slaves servants, and informed tourists that slaves were treated fairly.

Along the way, we learn the personal stories of DeWolf and Morgan: where they came from, their family histories, and life experiences with race. De Wolf was raised in Southern California in middle-class comfort and attended schools with black kids at a time when black pride was coming into fruition. He articulates that while he befriended black students, he was sometimes fearful of them. Morgan, like many African Americans, had parents who migrated from the south to raise their family; while it was in the North and not under the mandates of Jim Crow, Chicago had its own form of segregation in housing and education. She learned of the racism and injustices some of her ancestors had endured, which led her to question the sincerity of white people.



Though heart rending to read, this book should be considered mandatory reading in high schools and a required text for ethnic studies at universities. This is indeed a gift of the soul from two remarkable people attempting to change the tenor of our country that is so wracked in racism, especially in these times of tremendous backlash as a result of having the first black president. For this we thank them.

Dera Williams lives, works and plays in the Oakland/East Bay arena. She works in curriculum at a local community college by day. She is a writer who has been published in several anthologies and journals and is co-author of *Mothers Wit: Stories of Mothers and Daughters*. She writes fiction, nonfiction, memoir, articles, essays, book reviews, and academic writing. She is the family historian and storyteller. She has written a collection of childhood stories about growing up in her beloved Oakland. Email her at dwilliamsfrequent@gmail.com.

Black History and the Legacy of Slave Masters

continued from cover

There are answers to these questions at the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives in Washington. The name came from the British Isles. It is debatable whether it was originally Welsh or Irish. The name may originally have been McMuldrough or a similar variation that was altered over time to “Mulder”, “Muldrow” and “Muldrew.” It came to Arkansas from South Carolina.

The Hempstead County Muldrows were descendants of John Muldrow, Sr., who came to South Carolina from the province of Ulster in Northern Ireland about 1764. It seems likely that he was a man of some means and was prosperous in his new home in North America. By the late 1850s, his great-grandsons George Cooper Muldrow (1815-1874) and Warren Arthur Muldrow (1821-1858) were part of the influx of settlers into antebellum Arkansas from older parts of the South. They came to Arkansas with their slaves for the promising cotton economy. In the decade of the 1850s both the White population and the black population that was enslaved more than doubled in Arkansas.

Of particular interest is Warren A. Muldrow, a well-to-do planter who brought his slaves from his native South Carolina. He purchased lands west of Washington along County Road 307 (aka Academy Road), in the area now known as Grandview. He was a particularly large slaveholder who lived only a few months after his removal to Arkansas. He died at age 37 on September 6, 1858, late in the antebellum period—less than three years before the outbreak of the Civil War and less than seven years before the emancipation of the slaves.

The probate records of slaveholders can give us a great deal of information about the slaves, including their names, sex, ages and market value. Slaves in this era were considered chattel that could be bought, sold, and mortgaged or used as collateral. They were taxable along with real estate, livestock, carriages, gold watches and other forms of property. They fell under the heading of personal property and were listed separately from real estate in the 1850 and 1860 censuses. They had to be accounted for when estates were settled. The estate of Warren A. Muldrow was no exception. His estate papers included a slave inventory. The list is reproduced on the opposite page.

In the 1860 census, Martha Muldrow, the widow of W. A. Muldrow, listed the value of her real estate as \$19,840, a very sizable sum for the day. Her personal property, which included slaves, livestock, carriages and farming equipment, was a staggering \$80,260. She lived in a large household that included her children, a teacher “of the English branches” to see to the education of her children and an overseer and his family to tend to the matters of her plantation and her slaves. Her husband’s older brother had comparable real estate holdings valued at \$20,000 and personal property valued at \$5,000, which probably included some slaves but a small number compared to those held by his deceased brother’s estate.

The Muldrows were connected to the McFaddins, Nelsons, Witherspoons, Lloyds, and Greens. There is evidence that they all came out of the same Presbyterian church in the vicinity of Sumter, South Carolina. Before coming to Arkansas, they had been neighbors who may have also had connections of blood and marriage.

The Muldrow slaves and others would be freed in late May 1865 at the end of the Civil War when the Union Army rode into Washington. In the 1870 census, 38 individuals or heads of household were listed with the “Muldrow” name. Many of the slaves listed in W. A. Muldrow’s inventory appeared in the 1870 census. The number of Muldrows increased with time. From 1875 to 1904, black Muldrows by the name of Eliza, Hannibal, Henry, Landon, Ned, Norris, Parris, Reece and Thomas acquired lands in Hempstead County under the Homestead Act. Over time some altered their names to “Muldrew” or “Muldrow.”

Gradually, the white Muldrows died out or moved away. Many are buried in the Old Washington Cemetery along Highway 278. The black Muldrows/Muldrews/Muldros have also scattered, but many still remain in the region.

Today the name is still common in the black community of Hempstead County and Southwest Arkansas. It is a reminder of another era before that great pivotal point in American history—the Civil War. We began celebrating the Sesquicentennial—the 150th anniversary—of this watershed event in American history in 2011.

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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 its archeologists.

Slave Inventory of the Estate of Walter A. Muldrow - Washington County, AR - 1858

| Name | Age | Valuation |
|-----------|-----|------------|
| Daphney | 72 | \$5.00 |
| Jacob | 80 | \$5.00 |
| Susan | 22 | \$800.00 |
| Hannah | 30 | \$800.00 |
| Sambo | 27 | |
| Elizabeth | 2 | \$100.00 |
| Burgess | 26 | \$1,000.00 |
| Jinny | 50 | \$400.00 |
| Lucy | 2 | \$100.00 |
| Celia | 5 | \$200.00 |
| Amzi | 1 | \$100.00 |
| Menego | 18 | \$900.00 |
| Nisa | 15 | \$700.00 |
| July | 19 | \$1,000.00 |
| Rus | 14 | \$500.00 |
| Thomas | 10 | \$500.00 |
| Ginny | 23 | \$800.00 |
| Sidney | 28 | \$1,000.00 |
| Bina | 26 | \$800.00 |
| Newton | 36 | \$1,000.00 |
| Sarah | 4 | \$225.00 |
| Charles | 2 | \$175.00 |
| Fortune | 50 | |
| Old Nisa | 56 | \$5.00 |
| Pompey | 22 | \$1,000.00 |

| Name | Age | Valuation |
|-----------|-----|------------|
| John | 30 | \$100.00 |
| Amy | 75 | \$500.00 |
| James | 4 | \$200.00 |
| Titus | 11 | \$450.00 |
| Sidney | 5 | \$200.00 |
| Sylvia | 23 | \$700.00 |
| Lena | 41 | \$300.00 |
| Hampton | 21 | \$1,000.00 |
| Elia | 46 | \$500.00 |
| Antony | 26 | \$900.00 |
| Netty | 20 | \$700.00 |
| Margaret | 10 | \$450.00 |
| Doll | 11 | \$500.00 |
| Lydia | 75 | \$500.00 |
| Abner | 35 | \$1,200.00 |
| Jacob | 30 | \$1,000.00 |
| James | 6 | \$250.00 |
| Rachel | 5 | \$200.00 |
| Jack | 2 | \$100.00 |
| Dory | 23 | \$1,000.00 |
| Elly | 21 | \$1,000.00 |
| Doll | 17 | \$800.00 |
| Jerry | 25 | \$950.00 |
| Grandison | 24 | \$1,000.00 |
| Mary | 18 | \$825.00 |

| Name | Age | Valuation |
|------------|-----|------------|
| Fanny | 50 | \$50.00 |
| Ben | 38 | \$900.00 |
| Selina | 14 | \$500.00 |
| Samant | 10 | \$450.00 |
| Elsy | 10 | \$350.00 |
| Washington | 9 | \$100.00 |
| Kate | 27 | \$900.00 |
| Margaret | 6 | \$200.00 |
| Molly | 2 | \$100.00 |
| Appy | 39 | \$500.00 |
| Mike | 18 | \$800.00 |
| Jane | 15 | \$700.00 |
| Miltin | 26 | \$1,100.00 |

Those slaves not assigned values may have been sickly, crippled, or mentally incapacitated. Those with high values for their age may have had some special skills.

More Branches on the Utsey Family Tree

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I found a marriage record for Lizzie Ootsey and Henry (Hamilton/Hamperton) Pool dated April 11, 1906, in Hot Spring County, Arkansas. The 1910 U.S. Federal Census shows the family lived at 701 Page Street, west of Main Street. In addition, Hamperton Pool, 45 years old, was head of household and employed as a laborer at the saw mill. He is listed with his wife, 29-year-old Lizzie, and stepsons, William and Austin Ootsey. William's age is listed as seven and Austin is listed as five years old. I shared this information with Mike and explained that his grandfather, Austin, did not change the spelling of their last name, as he believes. The Pools divorced, as shown by court records dated September 15, 1927. Lizzie appeared in court after 21 years of marriage for the divorce hearing. Interestingly, Mr. Pool failed to appear in court despite being served with a process summons published for four consecutive weeks in Hot Spring County newspaper, and three notices. A deposition from two women, Clara Pettus and Emma Tate, in addition to Lizzie's deposition was sufficient to grant the divorce. The divorce decree outlines the judge's order to restore Lizzie to her first husband's last name per her request. Lizzie died at 82 years old on September 24, 1963, in St. Louis. The Certificate of Death states her birth date as February 6, 1881, and her parents' names as Sam and Matilda Austin of Arkadelphia.

Mack had two children, a son John Henry and a daughter Jewell Elizabeth Ootsey. Jewell lived with Lizzie in Malvern for several years before she decided to sell her house and move to Little Rock to live with Rev. Austin Ootsey and his family. According to A.V., the family lost touch with Jewell over the years. Mack died on May 12, 1975, in St. Louis, Missouri, at age 71. He is buried in Washington Park Cemetery, Berkeley, Missouri. A Baton Rouge newspaper, *The Advocate*, published John Henry's obituary on September 9, 2010. It reads, "A U.S. Navy veteran of World War II. John Henry was the owner and operator of Ootsey's Gospel Booking Agency, a gospel singer with the East Feliciana 5 Quartet, a choir director, actor and orator. He had six children: John Henry Jr., Diane, Helen, Golden, Shirley Ann, and Lillie. He died September 4, 2010, at age 83 in Baton Rouge."

I had the pleasure of meeting A.V., his younger brother, George, and members of his immediate family last April during my biannual visit to Hot Springs Village. We shared a lovely dinner and lively conversation shortly after my flight arrived in Little Rock. I invited Jim Neal, an AAGSNC member who lives in Little Rock, to join us for dinner. Jim is a graduate of Carver High School in Stephens, Arkansas, and the alumni association's webmaster. Following a lead related to the 1959 commencement address that Austin Ootsey delivered I joined the alumni group and browsed the website to find a copy of the program. Being quite

lucky, I found the program and printed a copy to share with A.V. and George. They were thrilled to have copies of the Annual Commencement program that shows their father, Rev. Austin Ootsey, delivered the Baccalaureate Sermon. We enjoyed a wonderful evening together.

I invited the Ootsey brothers and their families to join me in Hot Springs Village on Friday for dinner to meet members of the Utsey family. My cousin and traveling companion, Doris White of Hercules, California, and I played host. The guest list included the Ootsey brothers, A.V., George, and George's wife Vera; the Utsey brothers of Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Bill, and his wife Frances, his brothers, Delbert, James, and James' wife, Doris; cousin Anthony and his wife, Dawn Utsey of Hot Springs; and Edward Green of Malvern, Arkansas. Edward is Carrie's nephew and is one of George's childhood friends. Jim Neal, George's daughter Valecia Fields, and her mother, Veronica Porter from Little Rock, along with Percy and Diane Brown of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, rounded out the group. We had a wonderful time. We explored the various family connections, enjoyed a good meal, and spent time getting to know one another. James shared the story of how classmates introduced him to Austin Ootsey at a Carver High School basketball game. At the time, Austin was the pastor of St. James A.M.E. church in Stephens, Arkansas. The two commented on the different spelling of the name but were unable to make the family connection.

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Doris Utsey, Jim Neal, and Doris Jean Smith in April 2012 at Hot Springs Village, Arkansas.

Photo courtesy of Verester Sheeler

We Weren't Taught How to Smile

continued from page 7



Photo courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Shirley Thompson's mug shot during her CORE Freedom Ride in Jackson, Hinds, Mississippi, on June 6, 1961. It was just weeks following her high school graduation.

Jean followed up with a ride from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to Poplarville, Mississippi, on November 14, 1961. This time, she was joined by her older sister Alice. Jean and others left to integrate the Greyhound bus station cafe while Alice and another woman left to integrate a whites-only waiting room. Alice was arrested.

"They held court in a firehouse. We thought it was funny and country. They said they were going to lynch us. Nothing was funny then," said Alice.

Following in their footsteps, the youngest of the bunch, Shirley, left on a freedom ride from New Orleans to Jackson, Mississippi on June 4, 1961. She was the only woman, one of only two black riders, and just 18 years old. Her act of breach of peace landed her in the dreaded Mississippi State Penitentiary, known as Parchman Farm. Parchman was notorious for its chain gangs and its treatment of prisoners.

"A mob of cursing whites, shouting 'Kill 'em! Kill 'em' set upon five Negro Freedom Riders today and drove them from the Greyhound bus station. Although the three youths and two girls were mauled severely, none was seriously injured. They fled to safety at a Negro hotel after escaping their assailants in two taxis and a truck." —*New York Times*, November 30, 1961^v

Two weeks after her exploits in Poplarville, Alice was part of a group attacked after a ride from New Orleans to McComb, Mississippi. Alice says that Thomas Valentine, one of her fellow riders, still suffers effects from the beating he received that day. It's been more than fifty years.

CONT. ON NEXT PAGE



Photos courtesy of AtlasFamily.Org

Left: Alice Thompson, circa late 1960s. Right: Cora Mae Atlas Thompson, circa 1970s.

We Weren't Taught How to Smile

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Photo courtesy of AtlasFamily.Org

The only existing picture of 8 of the 11 children of Louis Balfour Atlas, Sr.. Back (left to right): Wesley James Atlas, Lawrence Atlas, Rev. Francis Joseph Atlas, Sr., Louis Balfour Atlas, Jr., and King Atlas. Front (left to right): Annie Ruth Atlas, Cora Mae Atlas Thompson, and Ethel Edna Atlas. November 1972, Lake Providence, East Carroll, Louisiana.

The sisters continued racking up arrests for integration activities and breach of peace in New Orleans and throughout the South. They were also active in the Freedom Summer of 1964, registering blacks in Mississippi to vote. Their father lost his longshoreman job because of their civil disobedience and was forced to leave the state to provide for his family. A sibling was also denied work and left on a reverse freedom ride. Sponsored by White Citizens Councils, these reverse rides would send Southern blacks to Northern cities where they were supposed to have housing and jobs waiting. Often, they were provided with only a ticket to a Northern location and nothing else.

While their uncle, Rev. Atlas, didn't suffer a beating, the emotional scars from the aftermath of his testimony were just as severe and raw. All for something taken for granted by others: the right to vote.

To be continued in the Summer 2013 issue of *The Baobab Tree*.

Nicka Smith is the chair of the Outreach and Education Committee and the co-editor of *The Baobab Tree* for the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California (AAGSNC). She's been researching her family since 1999 and is the great niece of Rev. Francis Joseph Atlas, Sr. and Cora Mae Atlas Thompson, and the first cousin once removed of Alice Thompson, Shirley Thompson, and Jean Denton Thompson. Email her at oande@aagsnc.org.

Endnotes

- i *Shelley v. Kramer* (Supreme Court of the United States) 100 U.S. 1 355 Mo. 814, 198 S.W.2d 679, and 316 Mich. 614, 25 N.W.2d 638, reversed. Accessed on December 12, 2012 via http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0334_0001_ZS.html
- ii James H. Gillis, "City Gives Nod to Stop-frisk Ordinance 6-0; Passage Follows Amendment Tries by Dupuy", *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), March 24, 1967, page 10.
- iii "Alleged Hiring Practice Is Hit: Suit Attacks Community Improvement Agency", *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), July 3, 1970, page 22.
"The action was filed by the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood Council, Inc., and Miss Shirley Thompson, a resident of the area who allegedly has been refused employment by the Community Improvement Agency." Atlas Thompson and her husband were founders of the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood Council.
- iv "Ninth Warders Fly to Capital; Will Push Urban Renewal Grant Request", *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), January 24, 1967, page 5.
- v Claude Sitton, "5 Negroes Beaten by Mississippi Mob; Riders Attacked in McComb - Crowd Shouts 'Kill 'em'", *New York Times*, November 30, 1961, page 1.

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- 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.

8th Annual African American Seminar

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Another new AA Seminar addition this year was a "Questions and Answers" panel held at the end of the day. Everyone met together in the chapel and the presenters answered questions from the seminar participants regarding their presentations and/or general genealogy questions. In addition, two 23andMe DNA kits and three copies of the book *Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave* written by the keynote speaker, Regina Mason, were raffled.

The seminar was well attended with first-time as well as returning participants. Positive evaluations and feedback along with numerous compliments were received from seminar participants about the program, Regina's keynote presentation, the genealogy displays and the various genealogy classes offered.

If you would like to be a presenter and/or a volunteer next year at the Sacramento 2014 African American Seminar please contact Linda Bradley by email at lbradlee2@aol.com and include "2014 AA Seminar" in the subject line.

More Branches on the Utsey Family Tree

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Cousin Elese remembers that Austin and Mack's father was her mother's half-brother. The challenge is that her mother had seven brothers and seven sisters. Elese is 85 years old and she simply cannot remember details of the relationships. I try not to press her too much because she gets anxious and flustered and says, "Child, I can't remember, I am so forgetful." To date, I have not been able to identify the seven brothers by name nor find documentation of a brother named William, but I am sure that I will find it someday. Perhaps Elese will even remember, but in the meantime, I am enjoying getting to know all of my new Ootsey cousins!

Stay tuned for more to come.



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.

Out With the Old...in With the New

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In With the New!

I'm very much an editor and not a writer, so you probably won't see much written by me after this. I've worked as an editor for almost 30 years now (yikes!) and am also an indexer and translator. I've worked on hard science, humanities, fiction, nonfiction, and things that fall somewhere in between. As for genealogy, I've been researching my own family for almost 40 years (double yikes!). I still have my original notes and letters from my first interviews with family members. I eventually branched out to researching extended family, then the family history of friends and coworkers, and finally decided to become a professional genealogist eight years ago. I figured I might as well, since I was spending so much time doing research anyway. I've been researching black family history for about ten years. I began with research for extended family, then began working on my own family, and now I have a sister-in-law whose family I've just barely scratched the surface of.

I am looking forward to serving as editor of *The Baobab Tree*. One of the things I enjoy the most about editing genealogy journals is reading the stories of people's discoveries and helping present them to others. I thank President Howard Edwards and the

board for supporting my application to be the new editor and journal committee chairperson. I know I can't possibly replace Annette, but I hope to maintain the work she had done and help grow the reputation of the journal while I am here.



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.

Email her at amadden45@hotmail.com



Photo courtesy of Janice Sellers

Janice Sellers is a professional genealogist who specializes in newspaper and Jewish research and has experience researching many other ethnic groups. She has been on the staff of the Oakland FamilySearch Library since 2000. Before becoming a professional

genealogist, she worked in publishing for many years as an editor, indexer, translator, and compositor. Email her at janicemsj@gmail.com

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.

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:

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- 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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