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# the Baobab Tree

Journal of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California, Inc. / Vol. 22 No. 1-2 / Winter-Spring 2017 / ISSN 1543-4125

*Manifest of Negroes, Mulattoes, and Persons of Color, taken on board the Nathaniel Satchel of Georgetown, whereof John G. Denny is Master, burthen Four hundred fifty five 1/2 Tons, to be transported from the Port of Alexandria for the purpose of being sold or disposed of as Slaves, or to be held to service or labor.*

Number of Entry.	NAMES.	SEX.	AGE.	HEIGHT.		Whether Negro, Mulatto, or Person of Color.	Owner's or Shipper's Names and Places of Residence.	Consignees names, and places of Residence.
				Feet	Inches.			
1	Hand Butler	Male	58	5	9	Black		
2	Wibey	Female	26	5	3	White		
3	Calvin	"	17	5	7	"		
4	Bozell	Male	16	5	11/4	"		
5	Wentworth	"	15	5	1/2	"		
6	Ann	Female	11	4	5	"		
7	Gaith	Male	10	4	1/2	"		
8	Wibey Ann	Female	9	4	1/2	"		
9	Bozell	Male	7	4	1	"		
10	Bozell	"	5	3	1/4	"		
11	Bozell	"	4	3	1/4	"		

**Georgetown  
Memory Project**

Patricia Bayonne-Johnson  
AAGSNC Member

Before the article “272 Slaves Were Sold to Save Georgetown. What Does It Owe Their Descendants” by Rachel Swarns in the *New York Times* drew worldwide attention to Jesuit slaveholdings on April 17, 2016, the Hicks family, my maternal line, had known we were descendants of Jesuit slaves since 2004. The connection between the Jesuit slaves sold in 1838 and living descendants was discovered

as the family was making plans for a reunion in New Orleans. It is fair to say that we were among the very few people outside of the Georgetown University community who knew that the Jesuits were big-time slaveholders. I know one descendant of a Jesuit slave who grew up in Maryland knowing her family's connection to the Jesuits and slavery. But for the Hicks family, this was a shocking

revelation. I had been researching my enslaved family on and off for twelve years when the story broke, and I was never contacted by anyone who was researching Jesuit slaves—not even Georgetown University.

In 1838, the Jesuits of Georgetown University sold 272 slaves to Jesse Batey and Henry Johnson. Batey and Johnson owned plantations

Image courtesy of Georgetown Slavery Archive, slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu



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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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## Are You a Missionary?



Photo courtesy of M. Howard Edwards

**M. Howard Edwards**  
President, AAGSNC

attendees to learn about their families or how to learn even more. The library even provided volunteers to help guide the attendees. In all, it was a very successful event. The day as designed and administered by the Outreach and Education Committee produced some additional memberships, but we need even more.

“Where do I start?” you may ask. Mentor someone. Start with the young, maybe middle or high school students. Entice them with great stories from your own family history. If you have trouble coming up with an arresting story from your own family history, find a good mystery story with interesting family history content. If they can, use this foundation for a class project, a brief show and tell presentation, or a story to spice up a history class lesson with a point of personal interest. If the student’s parents can be engaged, all the better. Count on the addictive nature of genealogy to propel the student’s interest in his or her family. Since students talk, it is not unrealistic to expect other students to launch (or drift) into their own adventures into family history.

This note is a plea for each member of the society to become a missionary. If each of our members elects to do some missionary work and in addition mention to friends, family, associates, church members, and students that we are in the family history business, this would go a long way toward growing our membership and increasing our capacity to help many others with their research.

The church is not the only organization that needs missionaries; AAGSNC needs them too. Back in the day, *Roots* (Can you believe the book was in 1976? The TV series was 1977.) was purported to be the nation’s prime motivator to do family history research. So missionary work was not needed so much to grow the membership of genealogical organizations. People sought them out to get help with their research problems. In the 40 years since, ardor seems to have cooled. Surely, genealogy is still rated a top hobby in America, but it ain’t what it used to be. Today, according to FamilySearch.org, it is second behind gardening in popularity. In February, our Membership Chairman reported that our membership was holding steady at about 140, with an increase anticipated pending the mailing of the annual renewal reminder. That is not bad, but it is not the kind of critical mass we would like to provide serious assistance to help families determine and record their histories.

During Black History Month, with the outstanding cooperation and support of the Oakland FamilySearch Library, AAGSNC put on its annual Black Family History Day, when the library opened on Sunday for more than sixty

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## 2017 Calendar of Events

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

### September 16

Braggin' and Lyin' / Brick Walls

### October 21

SF Bay Area Black Churches

### December 16

Annual Christmas Party

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

## Solano County

## Discussion Group

## 2017 Calendar

Meetings will take place from 1:00–3:00 p.m. on the second Saturday of the month from September–November at Solano Community College, Fairfield Campus, Building 400 1st Floor.

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

# Learning to Verify Family Information

*You can't take everything you are told at face value*

## Veola Wortham

AAGSNC Member

A good researcher is skeptical—not willing to accept just any information for the sake of convenience. A violation of this principle is illustrated in this story.

My goal was to learn more about my grandfather Tilmon Barnett, Sr. and the children he was said to have had with a woman prior to his marriage to my grandmother. I already knew of one, whose name was Willie Dean Barnett. When I began as a new researcher in 2013, I ran across someone else's family tree and contacted her. She happened to be Uncle Willie's granddaughter. She informed me that Uncle Willie's mother was Della Sanders. She said that in addition to her grandfather (my Uncle Willie) that Della Sanders had given birth to two other children by Tilmon—Pinkie Lee Dowell and Sammie Barnett.

Researching the Della Sanders family was a great challenge due to many inconsistencies. Prior to Uncle Willie's death in 2011, I had been in his company a number of times over the years. In addition, he and I were in contact by phone and birthday and Christmas cards. In all the years that I knew him, he never mentioned his mother, Della Sanders. Nor did he tell me that my grandfather was also the father of two of his other siblings. As far as I know, he never told my dad about Pinkie Lee or Sammie. I thought this was strange in light of what his granddaughter had told me. Yet I took what she said as fact. Consequently, I put both Pinkie and Sammie in my family tree as the biological children of Tilmon Barnett. That was a mistake, and little did I know then that that would be a source of confusion and frustration.

I was baffled and dissatisfied clear up until December 2016, because I could not make sense of what I had accepted

as truth. No matter how I tried, I could not find any information about Sammie beyond the 1920 census. I found information in my searches regarding Pinkie, but it was inconsistent. Why was she Pinkie Lee Dowell after first being Pinkie Lee Sanders? In the 1910 census, Pinkie's surname was Sanders, the same as Della's former spouse (Hensley Sanders). Was Hensley Sanders actually Pinkie's father? Why was she not named Pinkie Barnett if she was Tilmon's child? In the 1920 census, she appeared as Pinkie Dowell, the name initially provided by Uncle Willie's granddaughter. Where did the name Dowell come from? So Pinkie was problem number one.

Problem number two concerned Sammie. In the 1920 census, his name was Sammie Barnett; that was the only time the name Sammie Barnett was found in any record. I looked for a birth record, marriage record, anything. No information about him whatsoever. The granddaughter had told me that Sammie owned a popular barbeque restaurant in San Marcos, Texas. I thought this piece of information might aid in my searches. It did not. From time to time I persisted, using various tactics, looking for documents, and always ran into a dead end. Finally, I decided in December 2016 that something was wrong and that I needed to rework the entire family, with particular emphasis on Pinkie and Sammie. My efforts continued for the next few days.

Determined to get to the bottom of these problems, my probe required that no stone would be unturned. First, where did the name Dowell come from? In the 1900 census, Della and her children resided in the Charley Harbert household in Lockhart, Caldwell County, Texas: dwelling number 119, family number 121. Neighbor George Dowell, his wife, and five children were in dwelling 112, family 114. It seemed reasonable that George Dowell was more likely the



Tilmon Barnett, Sr.

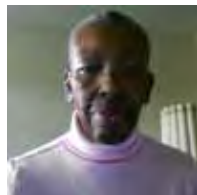
biological father of Pinkie. I decided that he was, and I deleted her as a child of Tilmon Barnett. Problem number one was solved!

Next I addressed problem number two. The 1920 census shows Sammie Barnett, born in 1903. This was the only time the name Sammie Barnett surfaced. As already stated, all of my searches turned up negative results. I was soon to discover that I was searching for someone who never existed. I found Della's death certificate and examined it. She died 20 December 1975; the certificate stated that she was the daughter of Jeffrey Gray and Sally Brawley. So her maiden name was Gray. I noted that the informant on her death certificate was someone named Sammie L. C. Hardeman. Who was he? And what was his information regarding Della based on? My task then was to find out who Sammie L. C. Hardeman was. He had to be someone who was well acquainted with her and her history.

Researching Sammie L. C. Hardeman provided an abundance of information. A number of U.S. Social Security and Claims Indices and other documents revealed his identity. Finally, I was on the right track! He was born July 6,

1915 (not 1903), the son of Della Gray and her spouse Jim Hardeman. His World War II Army enlistment records show that he enlisted March 13, 1944 and that he was married. His wife was identified in another document as Leonora D. Williams; they had a child named Edward L. C. Hardeman. The 1940 census shows Ernest Sanders residing in San Marcos, Texas with his wife and two children; his sister, Pinkie Lee Dowell; his mother, Della Sanders; plus nephews Edward Hardeman (born about 1935) and Johnnie Lee Hardeman (born about 1937). Sammie L. C. Hardeman died October 31, 2003 and was buried in a military cemetery. For whatever reason, Sammie was erroneously identified as a Barnett in the 1920 census. Sammie was clearly not the child of Tilmon Barnett, and I removed his name from my family tree just as I had Pinkie's. Problem number two was solved!

I learned an important lesson from this research. In 2013, as a beginner, I was in a hurry to learn about my family. The lesson was to go slowly. Dig deep. Look for pertinent documents that either confirm or reject your hypothesis before going on. A number of errors and misinformation were in the census reports concerning this family, something that is not unusual. I knew that, but I was blinded by what was told to me by someone I thought might have learned the family history first-hand. A good researcher is careful to verify information. Had I assumed this frame of mind at first, I could have saved myself a ton of time and frustration.



**Veola Wortham** is a native of Texas, residing in California almost fifty years. Her research efforts primarily focus on Caldwell, Gonzales, and Fayette counties. Some of her maternal family names are Ellison, Jones, Dickerson/Dickersen, and Spruill; some of her paternal names are Barnett, Dukes, French, and Spencer. As a relatively new researcher, she welcomes help and is willing to help others. You can reach her at [veola.barnett@gmail.com](mailto:veola.barnett@gmail.com).

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# Georgetown Memory Project

continued from cover

Manifest of Negroes, Mulattoes, and Persons of Color, taken on board the *Katherine Jackson* of Georgetown, which sailed for New Orleans, on the 13th of November 1838, to be transported from the Port of Georgetown for the purpose of being sold or disposed of as Slaves, or to be held to service or labor.

Number of Entry.	NAMES.	SEX.	AGE.	HEIGHT. Feet. Inchs.	Whether Negro, Mulatto, or Person of Color.	Owner's or Shipper's Name and Place of Residence.	Consignee's name, and place of Residence.
1	Thomas Butler	Male	20	5-7	Black		
2	Biby	Female	26	5-2	Brown		
3	Elizabeth		17	5-7			
4	James	Male	12	4-7			
5	Martha	Female	10	4-2			
6	Ann	Female	11	4-8			
7	Gabe	Male	10	4-4			
8	Biby Ann	Female	9	4-7			
9	Biby	Female	7	4-1			
10	Lo An	Female	3	2-9			
11	Mary	Female	11	5-10			
12	John Lewis	Male	3	2-9			
13	Thomas	Male	17	5-10			

Image courtesy of Georgetown Slavery Archive, slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu

on Batey's Maringouin Plantation, which was later known as West Oaks Plantation under the ownership of the Woolfolk family.

Two significant discoveries in the research of the Jesuit slaves were made in April 2004: Thomas Mulledy, the seller, was a Jesuit priest; and the Jesuit Plantation Project (JPP). The Jesuit Plantation Project was records of White Marsh, St. Thomas Manor, Newtown, and St. Inigoes plantations which were digitized by students of American Studies at Georgetown University. The documents consist of a bill of sale for 64 Negroes (November 10, 1838), slave transfer, biographical data of the 272 slaves, the ship manifest, diaries of Br. Mobberly, a chronology, and a bibliography. It was online from the 1990's until 2015, when it was taken down. It was hidden in plain sight. At the start of the Georgetown Memory Project, I was the only one who had a copy of this approximately 100-page document, because I download and print everything. I prefer working with paper, so I was able to provide copies of the document to Rachel Swarns of the *New York Times* and to professional genealogist Judy Riffel when she was hired to do research (see below).

127 Elizabeth Butler . . . . . 17 5-10

128 Bridget Butler . . . . . 14 5-10

129 Thomas Butler . . . . . 12 5-10

130 James Butler . . . . . 10 5-10

Examined & found correct  
New Orleans Dec 6<sup>th</sup> 1838

“Manifest of Negroes, Mulattoes, and Persons of Color” for the *Katherine Jackson*, November 13, 1838. The list begins with thirteen members of the Butler family; the final two members of the family are near the bottom of the list, numbers 127 and 128.

in Louisiana, and about 200 of those slaves were sent to their plantations in Iberville, Ascension, and Terrebonne parishes. Some of the slaves remained in Maryland, and some ran away.

At the time of the sale, the Butler family, my ancestors, were enslaved on St. Inigoes Plantation in St. Mary's County, Maryland. The family consisted of Nace Butler, born about 1787, his wife, Biby, born about 1793, and 14 children: Nace, born about 1818, ran away; Suckey, aka Susan, born about 1827; Bridget, born about 1821; Caroline, born about 1824; Basil, born about 1825; Martha, born

about 1827; Anne, born about 1828; Gabe, born about 1829; Biby Ann, born about 1831; Henry, born about 1832; Thomas, born about 1833; Mary, born about 1835; John Lewis, born about 1836; and Lo An, 3 months, born 1838. The family structure and birth years come from Jesuit documents, as opposed to being based on the groupings and ages shown on the ship manifest.

Sixty-four of the Jesuit slaves were sold to Jesse Batey, and most of the Butler family members were included in that sale. Henry Johnson purchased the slaves on behalf of Batey. They were placed

Jesuit slaveholdings were not secrets. A number of books, theses, and manuscripts have been written by Jesuit priests and others, including *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717–1838* by Thomas Murphy, S.J., 2001; *Splendid Poverty: Jesuit Slave-Holding in Maryland, 1805–1838* by Emmett Curran, S.J., 1983; and *The Slaves of the Jesuits of Maryland*, M.A. Thesis in History at Georgetown University, by Peter C. Finn. There is even an unpublished manuscript, *The Thomas Mulledy Papers*, by Thomas Mulledy, S.J., the priest who sold the slaves downriver.

I was in New Orleans celebrating my aunt's 90th birthday when I was contacted by Richard Cellini, an alumnus of Georgetown University, on November 16, 2015. He was searching

for descendants of Jesuit slaves when he found my blog, African Roots, and an article about my third great-grandparents Nace and Biby Butler, who were enslaved on St. Inigoes Plantation. Richard predicted that there are 12,000–15,000 living descendants of the 272 slaves in the 1838 sale, based on a statistical model developed by a scientist at MIT to predict how populations grow and produce descendants.<sup>1</sup> Catholics keep good records; the Jesuit slaveholdings were not secrets, so they knew the names of the slaves or where to find them. University folklore said that the slaves perished without leaving a trace. In his 30+ years of association with the university Richard had heard this tale numerous times, too many to count, and set out to prove it was wrong. I agreed to work with Richard when he formed the Georgetown Memory Project (GMP) and told me the goals: identify the people sold in 1838; locate their living descendants; acknowledge them as members of the Georgetown family; honor their sacrifice and legacy.<sup>2</sup> GMP is an independent group funded by friends, allies, and alumni who aligned with the Georgetown slaves and their living descendants.

From the very beginning of the GMP, I was interested only in researching my line, the Butlers. I soon learned that was an impossible task because the Jesuit slaves intermarried, and I am related to several of the enslaved families, such as the Scotts, Hills, Hawkins, Harrises, and more. Judy Riffel, a professional genealogist who lives in Baton Rouge, was hired to research the rest of the slaves who were part of the 1838 sale.

I recruited six members of Eastern Washington Genealogical Society (EWGS) and formed the Butler Team to assist me in researching my line. As the new president of the society, I knew I couldn't do it alone and run the society, too, so I asked volunteers at the Spokane Public Library for assistance. The Tuesday Gals, as we are affectionately called, volunteer on Tuesdays in the genealogy section of the library. When I asked them if they would help me research my ancestors, they were up for the challenge. One volunteer said that she would pay me to participate in this project. We have had

many research projects, but this was the first one involving slave research. The Butler Team members are Carol Anderson, Pat Ayers, Janette Birch, Barbara Brazington, Mary Holcomb, Juanita McBride, and Dolly Webb. Janette, a member of EWGS but not a library volunteer, asked to join when she heard us enthusiastically talking about the project.

My first task was to assign the Butler family members to the volunteers. The family had sixteen members: Nace and Biby Butler and their fourteen children. I prepared folders for each member of the family and included a few pertinent documents, such as the 2008 article I wrote, "Jesuits' Slaves in the Family"; profiles of the slaves; and a copy of the 1838 bill of sale of 64 Negroes. I kept the folder for Mary, my direct ancestor, and handed out the rest of the folders randomly. At first we worked independently, because we approach problems differently, but when it was time to analyze our data we collaborated.

This project was not as difficult as most slave research projects are. First, the Jesuit slaves had surnames. The surnames are believed to be those of the rich parishioners who donated the slaves to the Jesuits. Although the surnames were not found in the JPP records (except for a few, such as those of my family), the "Manifest of Negroes, Mulattoes and Persons of Color" on board the *Katherine Jackson* of Georgetown had surnames for all the slaves, and they were in family groups. The Butler family is the first family on the list, beginning with Nace Butler and ending with #13 Lo An or Joan Butler, the infant. No records for the infant have been located after the date of the manifest, and it is thought that she died at sea. Second, most of the family was kept together, as stipulated in the conditions of the sale, with the exception of two of the Butler children: Susan (Suckey), #127, and Bridget, #128, were listed as "on



Photo courtesy of Patricia Bayonne-Johnson

The Butler Team. Seated L to R: Pat Bayonne-Johnson, Juanita McBride; standing L to R: Dolly Webb, Mary Holcomb, Pat Ayers, Carol Anderson, Barbara Brazington. Not pictured: Janette Birch.

own" along with two more of the 130 slaves. The later whereabouts of Susan and Bridget are not known. Last but not least, the freed Jesuit slaves remained in the area where they had been enslaved. A descendant told me I am related to most of the people in Maringouin, the birthplace of my great-grandmother Rachel (Butler) Hicks and grandfather Nace Hicks.

This article is a sequel to "Jesuits' Slaves in the Family", which was published in the Summer 2008 issue of *The Baobab Tree*.

## Endnotes

1. "Beyond the 272 Sold in 1838, Plotting the National Diaspora of Jesuit-Owned Slaves", April 29, 2018, <http://features.thehoya.com/beyond-the-272-sold-in-1838-plotting-the-national-diaspora-of-jesuit-owned-slaves>.
2. Georgetown Memory Project, <http://www.georgetownmemoryproject.org/>.

Photo courtesy of Pat Bayonne-Johnson



**Pat Bayonne-Johnson** is a past vice president and lifetime member of AAGSNC. She is her family historian. Pat descends from six people who were enslaved by the Georgetown Jesuits. She is president of Eastern Washington Genealogical Society. She can be reached at [Pbj24@aol.com](mailto:Pbj24@aol.com). The blog where she discussed her discovery of the Jesuit slave holdings is <http://www.africanroots-pbj.blogspot.com/>.

# Slavery, Freedom, and the Babilonias of Puerto Rico

## Rico: Re-visioning Family History, Part 1

Research reveals a complex history of ownership, survival, and social obligations

Ellen Fernandez-Sacco, Ph.D.  
Contributor

Both sides of my family come from Puerto Rico, and as my maternal line has the fairly rare surname of Babilonia, I began researching it first and discovered it has ties to slavery. My ultimate goal now is to reconstruct the complete family lineages and histories. This project includes two underresearched families in the northwest with the Babilonia surname, the Babilonia Font and Babilonia Efrese lines.

Slavery in Puerto Rico has a long history, extending from the 15th century and officially ending in the 19th century. On 22 March 1873, the Spanish National Assembly abolished slavery, compensated slave holders, and required the formerly enslaved to sign contracts to continue working for another three years; the newly freed had no political rights for five years.<sup>1</sup> Slavery's economics had shaped family history by the opportunities and restrictions brought by changes in laws and through the social systems that supported it.

### A Little Geography

Much of my research involves several municipalities in the northwest: Aguadilla, Moca, San Sebastián, Isabela, Hatillo, Arcibo, and ultimately San Juan. What the documents collected on the Babilonias show so far is that over a 120-year period, members of these families moved from areas of the northwest to the northeast in search of different opportunities for employment. For the Babilonia Font and Babilonia Efrese families, this meant moving to find work as agricultural laborers or, for women, in the service sector.

Moca, founded in 1772, is located at the end of a *cordillera*, a small mountain range that sweeps from west to east along the northern portion of the island, an area well suited for coffee



Municipalities where members of the Babilonia Font and Babilonia Efrese families moved between the 1820's and 1940's are underlined. (Cropped map of Municipalities, Wikimedia.org. Original image: USA Puerto Rico location map.svg; NordNordWestderivative work: Kmusser (talk) - USA Puerto Rico location map.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9823278>. Accessed and modified 26 August 2016.)

and sugar cane cultivation. Next, consider the location of Barrio Cruz, where the family history began. This is a rural area subdivided by small and large plantations, only a couple of miles from the municipal center, called Pueblo. Moca is bordered by five other municipalities, three of which are key in this family history: Aguadilla, Isabela, and San Sebastián. The port of Aguadilla, through which many

migrants arrived during the early to mid-1800's, lies about five miles west of Barrio Pueblo. In 19th to mid-20th century Puerto Rico, a *barrio* (ward) was a rural area subdivided by small and large plantations; today a *barrio* can contain housing subdivisions and some farms.

Moca began as an *hato criadera* in the 1600's, a ranch where animals such as horses, cows, and pigs were raised to support the needs of the militia. By the 1800's, the shift to an agricultural economy still required animal husbandry, and the work of raising subsistence crops and those for export along with animals was done with both slave and free labor.

A number of plantations in northwest Puerto Rico were involved with raising the luxury crops of coffee, sugar, and tobacco for export. In Moca, land ownership involved growing export and subsistence crops with small numbers of enslaved persons and laborers called *peones*, the two of which provided the labor. Often the historical record reduces both groups to mere numbers, with some details surviving in parish and notarial documents.

At this socioeconomic level, these laboring families pose numerous



Map of Moca barrios



challenges for the genealogist, and the relationships are constrained by status, controlled and overshadowed by landowners, administrators, and law. Overall, the Babilonias are a good example of how these family networks functioned despite the challenges of surviving on the margins of society or thriving because of them.

Many Babilonias lived in the *barrios* of Pueblo, Cruz, Voladoras, and Naranjo in Moca. These large and small plantations were a few miles from Barrio Pueblo, Moca's municipal and administrative center. Yet the landscape of the area, full of small rivers and creeks, proved difficult to traverse. As a result, the lands bordering other counties could often be more convenient for registering vital records, and families appear in more than one municipality. The Babilonias owned plantations in half of barrios Pueblo, Cruz, Voladoras, and Naranjo and held small numbers of people in bondage in the mid-19th century.

### **Miguel Babilonia Polanco y la otra cara de la historia (and the other face of history)**

Miguel Babilonia Polanco (1743–1823), the ancestor of the Babilonia family in Puerto Rico, came from Mallorca, Spain sometime in the 1760's and is my 3rd-great-grandfather. Twice married, he had twenty children, who have left hundreds of descendants on the island. He arrived in northwest Puerto Rico during the island's transition from a military colony to an agricultural, plantation-based economy.<sup>2</sup> Slaveholding was an integral part of the island's labor force.

While Babilonia's precise occupation is unknown, historian Luis Díaz de Soler, in *Historia de la esclavitud negra en Puerto Rico* ("History of Black Slavery in Puerto Rico"), noted that Mallorcans manufactured ordinary linen for the clothing of slaves in Puerto Rico and that much of it was obtained via illicit trade with the British Antilles.<sup>3</sup> Despite earlier observations that slavery was numerically of minimal importance to the Puerto Rican economy in comparison to other islands in the Caribbean with slave populations, the fact remains that slavery still shaped the island's economic and social

relationships and defined identity within a racially stratified society. Given that he held no military post, it is likely that Miguel Babilonia Polanco was involved in the linen trade between Mallorca and Puerto Rico. As a *peninsular* (Spanish born), it was not whatever wealth he possessed but his origin that made him an attractive partner for a wealthy *criolla* (Puerto Rican born) family tied to the founding of the municipality of Moca. Regardless, two centuries after the founding of the Babilonia family, descendants from all branches are interested in this history.

Surviving notarial documents for Miguel Babilonia Polanco's sons and daughters establish that he and his family were involved in slavery, having sold, purchased, or freed those they held. I traced my line back to Miguel about a decade ago, and I heard echoes of this history from family members. My great-grandfather Alicides Babilonia Talavera boasted of his slave-holder status from the porch of his home during the 1940's and 1950's. This struck me as odd, as he was born in 1860, just thirteen years before slavery was abolished on Puerto Rico. A cousin, now deceased, told me that when she was a young girl in the 1930's, she knew a very light-skinned woman named María who was a former slave of the family. Long ago, my mother blurted out that there were two Babilonia families, and that hers wasn't the black one. The saddest narrative was told to me by another cousin, who related an oral history over a century old, of a family of nine children and parents who left the plantation and escaped over the cordillera to Isabela to escape being violated by the owner, who was a Babilonia. Their reputation was bad, remembered simply as "*Los Babilonia eran malo*" ("The Babilonias were bad news"). These oral histories preserve bits of a larger, harrowing history tied to my family, retained in memory beyond the mid-20th century.

### **Slavery Accounts and Archival Resources**

Published personal accounts of the slave experience in Puerto Rico are rare. One oral history of slavery in Moca survives in Díaz Soler's *Historia de la esclavitud negra en Puerto Rico*. Díaz Soler



Ambrosio Alicides Babilonia Talavera, Moca, circa 1950's

interviewed Leonicia Lasalle and her daughter in 1946 about their experiences under bondage.<sup>4</sup> I was fortunate enough to meet one of Leonicia's descendants, Virginia Arocho, while doing research on *mundillo*, the practice of handmade lace. This industry has a complex history, also tied to race and social status.

The challenges of researching individuals under slavery in Puerto Rico are many, since tropical conditions are not conducive to preservation in general, and also in part because some people pilfered documents to keep certain identities unknown. In addition, the records themselves are spotty. Antonio Nieves Mendez published an 1826 slave census that appears in the appendices of his history of Moca.<sup>5</sup> Few *Registros de esclavos* (slave registries) for Moca survive, and the volume of the 1872 Slave Registry for the third district, which would contain entries for Moca, is missing. As these records were created just prior to abolition, they can be key resources when working beyond the civil



Virginia Arocho Rodriguez (1921–2007),  
Moca, Puerto Rico, 2005

registers that begin in 1885. An indexed microfilm version for other districts for 1872 is now on Ancestry.com. I am in the process of transcribing an 1870 *Registro de esclavos* for Moca, some 350 certificates, available on microfilm from the LDS Family History Library.<sup>6</sup> The original records are at the Archivo General de Puerto Rico in San Juan, but the recent financial problems of the government may extend restrictions on access to their collections.

Another useful source is the series of *Protocolos Notariales* (notarial records) at the Archivo General, of which only a few documents out of many volumes have been transcribed. These contain wills and sales of slaves, which can list individuals by name, age, and physical characteristics. I worked backward and forward in time, using earlier death records from civil registration, draft records, and census records to compare to the information from the notarial records to find more information on Babilonia relatives.

Carmen Cardona Perez, a professional lace maker, mentioned in an interview that she was descended from Nicolas Babilonia Hernandez (1858–1908) of Barrio Cruz, Moca, and his wife, Matilde Font, whose family members were *pardos* (literally “browns”), of mixed ancestry.<sup>7</sup> Carmen’s oral history spanned three generations within an agricultural

area of Moca once subdivided by haciendas and smaller plantations, some owned by members of the Babilonia family and those they intermarried with. In Barrio Higuey, Aguadilla was another Babilonia family, the Babilonia Efrese, of African descent with connections to Curaçao and Venezuela. By the early 20th century, the main branches of the Babilonia Font and Babilonia Efrese families resided in the neighboring municipalities of Aguadilla, Moca, and San Sebastián, and in subsequent decades areas of San Juan, in northeast Puerto Rico. My goal is to learn how these families connect to the family of Miguel Babilonia Polanco.

Some descendants of Miguel Babilonia Polanco and his first wife, María Mendez Gonzalez, and second wife, Benita Lorenzo de Acevedo y Gonzalez, held small numbers of slaves. Together with land ownership, slave holding in small numbers constituted the bulk of personal wealth for many agriculturalists in Moca over the course of the 1800’s. Ties to different owners are revealed as documents permit, through inheritance or outright sale.

After the abolition of slavery in 1873, people formerly held in slavery worked as *jornaleros* (day laborers), sharecroppers, *labradores* (farm workers), or artisans. Women frequently continued working as servants, cooks, or *lavanderas* (laundresses) for the landowning classes, or in their homes as part of a service industry. These jobs sustained the families and were augmented by different skills and trades. Most of the members of the Babilonia Font and Babilonia Efrese families are found working in these sectors by the time of the first U.S. Federal Census of 1910.

After slavery, employment opportunities for men were restricted, and records show families of color were often headed by single women employed in service. For men, work as an *agregado* (sharecropper) meant a family could live on part of a farm under oral agreements for work; work as a *jornalero* meant moving to different municipalities in search of work. In either case this labor was seasonal, and there would be a lack of income for a period of

time, an arrangement which made it difficult to support a family. Women of color therefore frequently maintained single-parent families to support their children, many of whom carried a single, maternal, surname. Marriage also may not have been a priority for many women, as they endured relationships that ranged from the coercive to the consensual. A comparison of civil registration documents to census records can reveal various living arrangements and relationships that shed light on nontraditional family structures.

Still, the survival of these women through difficult times both before and after abolition is a testament to their strength. We can see this in the records for Matilde Font, wife of Nicolas Babilonia Hernandez. After her husband died in 1908, she continued working as a laundress to support her family, and this income was supplemented by the work of her children as laborers in sugar-cane fields.<sup>8</sup> As the growth of the San Juan–Santurce metropolitan area created more jobs during the early 20th century, she then moved east to Santurce. Matilde’s children also lived in Aguadilla and Moca and moved according to their need for income. In 1930, her daughter Regina Babilonia Font worked as a *despiladora*, which entailed stripping the stems out of tobacco leaves in a tobacco-processing factory.<sup>9</sup>

Matilde Font came from a woman-headed household. She was one of three children of María Marta Font (1838–1901). María Marta Font’s mother, Marcelina Font, was born in Africa sometime about 1820 and survived the Middle Passage. She was baptized just months before the birth of her daughter, María Marta.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, Marcelina’s parents are listed as *desconocidos* (unknown) in her baptismal record. She was held in bondage by Feliú Font, an *hacendado* (plantation owner) in San Sebastián, a municipality on the eastern border of Moca. Font’s ownership is apparently how she and numerous Fonts came to have the surname. Among people of color, the bonds of family, whether through blood or experience, are reflected in events such as enslaved persons serving as godparents to other enslaved infants at their baptisms.

## Limits on Archival Records

Researching the enslaved in Puerto Rico bears many similarities to researching enslaved ancestors stateside. In comparison to the white populace, limited records were kept on people of color and children born out of wedlock, which, for the genealogist, means this is time-consuming research. Often details are scarce, an intended lack that underlines the dominant culture's designation of these individuals' ineligibility for social recognition. In turn, this social status affects the number of records and their completeness, and research is further compounded by the various record losses that have occurred over time. For instance, earlier records in the civil register from the early 1900's tend to list only one surname, even when both parents are named in the document. Depending on the municipality, birth records bear *ilegítimo* (illegitimate) in large letters, or notations that read *sin segundo apellido* (without a second surname). Other municipalities list racial identifications beneath names. In this way the state called out those who fell beyond the traditional ideal of family and male/female roles. Add to this context the movement to find work that could include different opportunities of varying duration in various locations, and the result is that I consulted records for at least seven municipalities. Much of the process involved collecting records along the known surnames, first in the census and second in the civil registration, which I then analyzed for details and patterns. I began with the men who carried the name Manuel Babilonia.

## Three Manuel Babilonias

Three individuals named Manuel Babilonia are mentioned in early documents in the municipalities of Moca and Aguadilla. A comparison may yield some clues to relationships.

1. Manuel Babilonia Acevedo (born ~1804), son of Miguel Babilonia Polanco and Benita Lorenzo de Acevedo y Gonzalez, both of Barrio Cruz, Moca. Benita Lorenzo de Acevedo was the second wife of Miguel Babilonia Polanco. He, along with some of his

children, held small numbers of enslaved people and owned a plantation in Moca.

2. Manuel Babilonia, husband of Joséfa Hernandez and father of Nicolas Babilonia Hernandez. The Babilonia Font family has its origin in Barrio Cruz, Moca, with Nicolas Babilonia Hernandez and his wife, Matilde Font.

3. Manuel Babilonia (born ~1804), husband of Manuela Holandesa of Moca and father of Juan Enrique Babilonia Holandesa. The Babilonia Efrese family began in Barrio Higuey, Aguadilla, with Juan Enrique Babilonia Holandesa's marriage to María Cleofe Efrese Reina.

## Manuel Babilonia #1

The full name of Manuel Babilonia #1 was Manuel Miguel Narciso Babilonia Acevedo (circa 1804–before 1885). The first-born son from the second marriage of Miguel Babilonia Polanco, the progenitor of the Babilonia family in Puerto Rico, Manuel Babilonia Acevedo was involved in the purchase and sale of enslaved persons, as shown in various notarial records now at the Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR). Among them is an 1847 *Relación de Haciendas y Estancias* (Account of Plantations and Farms), an agricultural census that inventoried the owners, farms, plantations, and number of workers across Moca.<sup>11</sup> Manuel Babilonia Acevedo owned Maravilla, a farm in Barrio Pueblo, and his siblings owned other properties.<sup>12</sup>

In 1847, Manuel's brother, Juan Babilonia Acevedo, owned a very small 4-acre farm named Palmar in Barrio Cruz, largely pasture, but had no enslaved people working the land. Several brothers owned plantations. Francisco Babilonia Acevedo administered Buena Vista, a large hacienda in Barrio Pueblo (five slaves, one *peón*) and owned another hacienda, Dolores, in Barrio Centro (seven slaves, five *peones*). Pedro Babilonia Acevedo owned a hacienda in Barrio Cruz, Moca; sister Venancia Babilonia Acevedo owned Las Brujas in Barrio Naranjo (one slave).<sup>13</sup> As the 1847 *Relación* supplies only numbers rather than

names, in order to identify the enslaved one has to consult the 1849 *Cuaderno de Altas y Bajas de Moca* (Logbook of High and Low [Population] of Moca), the 1826 *Relación de esclavos constantes en el Partido de Moca* (Report of Slaves in Moca District), and the series of Protocolos Notariales at the AGPR, along with any available parish records.<sup>14</sup>

*To be continued . . .*

## Endnotes

1. Dra. Ivonne Acosta, "Abolition of Slavery", *Encyclopedia of Puerto Rico*, 2014; <http://www.encyclopediapr.org/ing/article.cfm?ref=06102001> (accessed February 26, 2017).
2. Ellen Fernandez-Sacco, "Don Miguel Babilonia Polanco (1743–1813) and his Descendants: From Mallorca, Spain to Moca, Puerto Rico", *Hereditas* 16:1, 2015, 6–47; [https://www.academia.edu/20109422/Don\\_Miguel\\_Babilonia\\_Polanco\\_1743-1813\\_and\\_his\\_Descendants\\_From\\_Mallorca\\_Spain\\_to\\_Moca\\_Puerto\\_Rico\\_Hereditas\\_16\\_1\\_2015\\_6-47](https://www.academia.edu/20109422/Don_Miguel_Babilonia_Polanco_1743-1813_and_his_Descendants_From_Mallorca_Spain_to_Moca_Puerto_Rico_Hereditas_16_1_2015_6-47) (accessed February 26, 2017). Also Antonio Nieves Mendez, *Historia socio-economica y cultural de Moca 1772–1900*, Moca, Dominican Republic: Ediciones Aymaco, 2004, pages 65–70.
3. Luis Díaz Soler, *Historia de la esclavitud negra en Puerto Rico*, Río Pedras: Editorial Universitaria, Universidad de Puerto Rico, page 165.
4. *Ibid.*, pages 153–154, n. 92 198.
5. Nieves Mendez, *Historia socio-economica y cultural de Moca*, "Tabla XIII: Relación de Esclavos constantes en el Partido de la Moca, con especificaciones de sexos, edades y propietarios. Año de 1852" [note at end has date of Dec 29, 1826], pages 368–378.
6. Secretaría del Gobierno Superior Civil de Puerto Rico, *Registro de esclavos, 1867–1876*, Caja 4: Mayagüez, San Germán, Moca, Aguadilla, Aguada, Isabela, San Sebastián, y Lares, 1870. LDS Family History Library film 1511797.

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# Database Decision: Work Locally, Share Globally

*You are better served by having a family tree in a database on your computer at home than online*

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**Richard D. Rands**

Contributor

All the hype in recent years urging us to maintain our genealogical data at an online Web site reminds me of election time: lots of promises but little substance.

It is one thing to share a copy of our immediate, documented family tree on a well managed Web site. It is a different thing to rely entirely on a remote, browser-based application to hold the results of our hard work. Popular browser-based data management applications do a nice job of making a family tree look attractive, with pretty screen layouts and wide availability, but if you need to do anything more sophisticated, you are out of luck.

The most effective way to develop and manage your genealogy information is to use one of the popular database programs now available, such as *Ancestral Quest*, *Family Tree Maker*, *Reunion*, and *RootsMagic*. All these programs run on your own computer, allowing you to work locally. Later, after you have reached the point where you wish to share your information on the Web, you can easily upload a portion of your database to share with others.

As I work with people who are just starting on their family history, I typically see that they have a box of miscellaneous documents, letters, photographs, and perhaps a couple of albums. The principle concern is to organize the basic family history details as quickly and as easily as possible.

As we dig through the material from the top of the box to the bottom, it is extremely rare that the family history presents itself in neat, lineage-linked, chronological order. The best way to work systematically through a collection

of inchoate items is to extract the genealogical details as you go, entering them into a database as independent records, connecting them as the links are revealed.

After we have gathered everything we can, and have a better view of the overall picture of the family, we can organize it into a more complete family tree. It is not easy to build an online family tree in the current browser-based applications when they require that we progress directly from one generation to the next in chronological order. Connections of some branches of the tree may not be clear from what information is available. Instead, we should enter all the data in a database so we can readily see where our research should focus. Having everything we know about our family history clearly organized in a readily accessible, flexible format, with options to fix mistakes easily, we can use the database to organize the information: insert missing family members; add source documentation; print lists of possible errors; and see the holes, dead ends, and inconsistencies. This will significantly add to the pleasure of creating a well organized family history. As far as I can see, none of the browser-based applications provides these features.

The genealogy programs available for running on your local computer or a FamilySearch Center computer have been around for as long as 30 years. Many have had multiple upgrades, and, more significantly, were developed by experienced genealogists.

This leads me to the next reason I feel strongly about working locally and sharing later. The software programs from which we can choose are all full of useful features that make it easy to maintain and polish our family information, help with our research, and

produce great-looking charts and reports to show off our work.

For example, suppose you discover you have used an inconsistent spelling of an oft-used place name. The locally run genealogy programs give you a find/replace feature similar to what you see in office software, which makes it a breeze to quickly locate all of the incorrectly spelled place names and replace them with the correct name. The same is true for incorrect surnames. In an online database, you may have to find the incorrect records and make the corrections one record at a time.

Suppose you are planning a trip to the state where many of your ancestors came from, and you would like to make a list of everyone in your database who was born, married, or died in that state. The program on your local computer will make that process a simple matter. An online program typically won't do it at all.

What if you would like to give your grandparents a list of every one of their descendants in your database, sorted by birthdates, so that they will have a reminder of when to send out birthday cards to all their kids, grandkids, and great-grandkids? Not only will the genealogy program on your own computer do that, but it will even print a monthly calendar with the names printed on the appropriate days.

Other helpful reports you can usually get from a local software program include a list of your dead-end (end-of-line) individuals, unlinked records, duplicate individuals, citations linked to source records, and many more. You may be able to print out a pedigree chart and a family group chart from an online application, but you will not have the flexibility and number of reports available from a local program.

Some software programs have powerful search features that can be combined with a flexible custom report generator. You can combine a relationship search with a data field search to select very specific subsets of your list of names. A simple search for an individual or a family is a piece of cake if you are using a genealogy database on a local computer.

It is safe to say that if there is a useful feature that will facilitate managing your family history database, you probably will be able to find it in at least one of the programs you can run on a personal computer, whether you use a PC or a Mac.

Finally, the most important aspect of having your data on your own computer: You have 100% control and ownership of the data. No one else can or will change it, unless you allow them access to your computer. At any time, you can select all or a portion of your database to upload to a Web site where others can look at it, but you will know that what you have on your machine is yours.

This article is reprinted with permission of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group. It was first published in *PastFinder*, November 2010, pages 1–2, and is just as relevant today as it was then.

Photo courtesy of Richard Rands



**Richard Rands**

is a professional genealogist residing in Mountain View. He has more than 50 years of experience working on his own family history

and helping others trace their ancestors. A graduate of UC Berkeley with a BS in Operations Research and an MBA, he has worked for Hewlett-Packard, Tandem Computers, and the Tech Museum and retired as CEO of Computers for Marketing Corporation in San Francisco. Richard is currently president of the Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group and the proprietor of Brute Force Genealogy.

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7. Interview by author with Carmen Cardona, November 2007, Moca, Puerto Rico.

8. 1910 U.S. Federal Population Census, Puerto Rico, Moca, Barrio Cruz, Enumeration District 349, page 17B, lines 34–40; NARA roll T624-1772.

9. Fernandez-Sacco, “Don Miguel Babilonia Polanco (1743–1813)”, “Appendix 2: “Babilonia Hernandez & Babilonia Efrese families of Moca & Aguadilla”, page 37. Also 1930 U.S. Federal Population Census, Puerto Rico, San Juan, Barrio Santurce, Enumeration District 21, page 37B, lines 88–90.

10. María Marta Font, Bautismos Parroquia San Sebastián Martir de S.S., Libro Num. 5, Años 1825–1839, Folio 103. “*Fue bautizada el 25 de noviembre de 1838. Tenía 22 días de nacida. Hija natural de Marcelina Font, esclava de Feliú Font.*” Marcelina Font, Bautismos Parroquia San Sebastián, Martir de San Sebastián, P.R., Ver Libro Número 5, Años 1825–1839, Folio Número 40. “*Marcelina Font fue bautizada el 22 de enero de 1837. Natural de Africa, de padres desconocidos. Esclava de Don Feliú Font. Padrinos: Celestino Medina y Rosa Medina.*” Rafaela Font served as godparent to a son of Marcelina Font: Pedro Domingo Font, Bautismos S.S., Ver Libro Número 5, Años 1825–1839, Folio 19. “*Dice al lado de la página: esclavo. Pedro Domingo fue bautizado el 4 de junio de 1836. A los 15 días de nacido. Hijo natural de Marcelina Font, esclava de Don Feliú Font. Padrinos: Eugenio Cruz y Rafaela Font, esclava de Feliú Font.*” I wish to thank Maria Toledo for sharing her transcriptions of the Font records from the San Sebastián parish books with me.

11. Fernandez-Sacco, “Don Miguel Babilonia Polanco (1743–1813)”, “Appendix 3: Enslaved persons purchased, sold

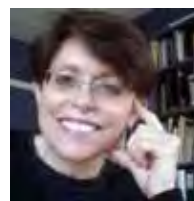
or inherited by Babilonias during the Nineteenth Century”, pages 38–39. List of thirteen individuals located in Caja 1444.

12. Nieves Mendez, *Historia socio-economica y cultural de Moca*, “Relación de haciendas y estancias del pueblo de Moca, 1847”, “Pueblo”, page 158.

13. *Ibid.*, “Relación de haciendas y estancias”, “Cruz”, page 159.

14. Ellen Fernandez-Sacco, “El Cuaderno de Altas y Bajas de Moca, 1849”, *Hereditas: Revista de Genealogía Puertorriqueña* 9:2, 2008, pages 71–103. The original document is at the Archivo General de Puerto Rico, Fondo de Gobernadores españoles, Serie Censo y riqueza, Caja 15, Moca, AGPR. The 1826 *Relación de esclavos constantes en el Partido de Moca*, from Caja 509 (along with other relevant tables), is transcribed in Antonio Nieves Mendez, *Historia de un pueblo: Moca, 1772–2000*, Antonio Nieves Mendez, 2008. Most records from the Fondo de Gobernadores españoles are available via NARA or by rental from an LDS FamilySearch Center. The volume of the 1872 *Registro de esclavos* for District 3, of which Moca is a part, is missing.

Photo courtesy of Ellen Fernandez-Sacco



**Ellen Fernandez-Sacco** is interested in the interconnections between genealogy, visual and material culture, and social history, seen through

a larger framework of colonial relationships. Her genealogical work is grounded in extensive archival research and oral histories. Her doctorate is in Art History (UCLA, 1998), and she has written articles on the history and development of American museums, art practice, genealogy, race, and the history of *mundillo*, traditional Puerto Rican lace making.

# What Legacy for David Henry Driver<sup>1</sup>?

*One document or label need not define the entire legacy of an individual*

**Janis Minor Forté**  
Contributor

In studying the lives of our family members, genealogists investigate a variety of records. One record source is legal files in the courts of an individual's birth and residence counties. Housed in darkened rooms on dusty shelves, these musty old documents recorded the legal transactions that governed our ancestors' lives. Review and analysis of the documents enrich our understanding of their lives and expand our research. In addition to the typical genealogical searches for the last will and testament, property inventory, and distribution, court records also hold legal documents that cover a multitude of other actions. These proceedings contribute to the body of evidence that defines the person's legacy. One's legacy is what you leave behind—not just real and personal property but also the legacy of memory, personality, and relations. What will be remembered of you? From orphan's court to civil court, from real estate holdings to marriage dissolution, in order to thoroughly appreciate a person's legacy, competent researchers must familiarize themselves with the range and scope of proceedings and documents. Discovering the legacy of the life of my maternal grand-uncle David Henry Driver incorporated such an inquiry. The scope of this case study included a review and analysis of court petitions, vital records, personal files, and other source materials. This study presents an expansion of my understanding of him and my rationale for conclusions about his legacy.

## Before Death

In a storage warehouse of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois is a large brown file folder that has grayed with age. This folder contains the 1942 through 1946 court transactions and adjudications in the case of Dave H. Driver. Inside are legal documents attesting to the final years of my grand-uncle's life. The acid-filled papers in the

folder are fragile and almost crumble with a touch. On the front of the folder, stamped in large bold block lettering, is the word INSANE.<sup>2</sup> On July 23, 1942, following mental competency examinations by two psychiatrists, a judge made this adjudication. What precipitated this declaration? What were the levels of family involvement? Would this label be his life legacy? To give clarity to these issues I needed to examine a variety of factors in his life. This court file would be but one source in that review.

## Early Life

Born to parents who were former slaves, David Henry Driver was the second child and first son of William Goodrich P. and Sallie S. (Campbell) Driver of Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee. While his birth year later would come into question, David was enumerated in the 1870 Federal Census in Memphis City as 2 years old. In this count of the population, he resided in a household of individuals who would later be confirmed as his parents and other kin.<sup>3</sup> Over the next two and a half decades, his sibling group would expand to include eldest child Virginia, born 1865; Rebecca, born November 8, 1874; William, born June 25, 1876; Sarah, born September 1879; Mattie, born January 18, 1882; Edgar, born April 15, 1883; Hattie, born February 1884; Mary, born April 8, 1886; a stillborn infant, born April 7, 1887; Eleanor, born March 8, 1889; John, born November 3, 1890; Charlie, born May 17, 1893; Melissa, born October 1894; and an unnamed baby, born November 20, 1895. Of these fifteen children, five died in childhood.

The 1880 census records the growing family still residing in Memphis but now as a nuclear two-parent unit where David, age 7, is the oldest of four children.<sup>4</sup> Between 1880 and 1894 the Driver family resided in a variety of dwellings in the “colored” middle-class section of the city. The 1892 Memphis City Directory records David residing

at 449 Clay Street and working at the Memphis Steam Paper Box Company.<sup>5</sup> Following an 1894 land purchase, father William Driver, a “brick contractor”<sup>6</sup>, built the family's permanent home at 686 Georgia Avenue.

According to family information, David and his father just didn't get along. The stories suggest it was because they were so much alike, as both were very headstrong, extremely domineering, and aggressive.<sup>7</sup> These traits in the same household culminated in personality boundary and authority clashes between father and son. Not yielding to his father's sternness and autocratic nature, David left home. The 1894 Chicago City Directory records him residing in the Windy City at 3348 State Street and working as a porter.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps he went in awe of the staging of the previous year's World Columbian Exposition.<sup>9</sup> But David did not remain in Chicago.

In the 1905 Minnesota Territorial State Census, David was enumerated in the 4th precinct of the 4th ward in Duluth and was employed as a waiter.<sup>10</sup> He soon moved again. The 1909 St. Paul, Minnesota City Directory recorded him residing on St. Peter Street. His youngest brother, John, lived with him. For the 1910 census he remained in St. Paul, where he and wife Anna indicated they had been married for ten years and that this was a first marriage for both. The census indicated that Anna had had no children. David was employed as a bartender in a saloon, while Anna was a cook with a private family.<sup>11</sup> By 1916 David had returned to Duluth, where the city directory recorded him as a boarder residing on 2nd Avenue.<sup>12</sup> This registry listed a Cora Driver at the same abode.

On September 11, 1918 in Duluth, David completed his World War I draft registration. On this document, he indicated he was age 45 and that his birth date was May 24, 1873. He resided at 102 North 1st Avenue. In signing the draft card, he affirmed



Sallie Driver with David, William, Elena, Charlie, and John

that he was of medium height and stout build with brown eyes and black hair, and that he had all of his limbs. Based on this document, David had evidently remarried, as the registration card indicates that his wife's name was Cora.<sup>13</sup> (Research did not reveal if his first marriage ended by divorce, death, or desertion.) Further investigation revealed he worked for Augusta Anctil, owner of the barber shop located in the basement of the Lonsdale Building.<sup>14</sup> David remained in Duluth through the 1920 federal census, where he was recorded as still residing at the 1st Avenue location. He was still employed in a barber shop, while wife Cora worked as head usher in a theater. From the above information, David's life appeared to be progressing normally, with no indication of malady or illness.

## The Letters

Uncovering the residence movements and life changes of Grand-uncle David was not limited to searches in government documents and city directories. A series of letters written by his brother nearest in age, Dr. William A. Driver, between 1921 and 1923

reveals not only David's locations but also insight into his physical and psychological condition. The collection of letters was part of the estate of David and William's sister, Mary (Driver) Houston Clark. These letters and other documents were gifted to me in 2001 by the successor administrator of her estate.

In these letters, brother William, in Chicago, communicated to their aging father and a sister in Kansas City his interactions with his brother and his concerns for

David's mental and physical health. The letters establish David's residence in Chicago, where William had lived since completing medical school there. The letters demonstrate William's affection for and emotional attachment to David. Most of the letters were written on the doctor's prescription pads, but two are on small plain note sheets. All are handwritten, some as short as the double-sided prescription page and others as long as six pages. In the case of two of the letters, pages are missing, and one has a small hole in a page. William always referred to his older brother by his childhood nickname of Davie. In a letter written February 15, 1921, Dr. Driver wrote to their father, "It was my good fortune to meet Davie in the street Sunday. He was coughing but looked big fat and well dressed. He took a prescription from me. I think he will come to see me when the medicine is out."<sup>15</sup> From this, I sense that while David appeared prosperous, William was concerned about his health. While not specifying what the medicine was for, his writing the prescription "in the street" suggests that he had prior knowledge of his brother's medical issues. Further, when Dr. Driver used the phrase "my good fortune", it possibly implies that David had been estranged

from his kin. This phrasing also suggests that William's relationship with his older brother was fragile, as he appears cautious in his approach to David.

Six months later, on August 22, 1921, Dr. Driver was more upbeat as he wrote their father a long letter, covering several topics but including only a simple sentence about his brother: "Davie is well."<sup>16</sup> One month later William was able to write their father, "Davie is well, he called at the office yesterday. I was busy and did not get to talk to him." From this letter, there is a sense that David may have been too impatient to await a visit with his busy physician brother.

The next letter preserved is dated March 15, 1922, when Dr. Driver wrote their sister Mary that "Davie was in to see me last week but I'd left the office. He phoned the house asking about Sarah's whereabouts. He's sent a letter to Cleveland which returned which alarmed him . . ."<sup>17</sup> (Mrs. Sarah [Driver] Fransioli Curry was their then oldest living sister.)

Later, in a March 24 letter, William wrote their father that "Davie is doing better physically. I persuaded him . . . to give up smoking."<sup>18</sup> I noted that Dr. Driver specified that his brother's physical condition is better. This leaves innuendos about his mental condition. From this correspondence I sense the doctor was quite anxious about his brother's well-being.

In a long undated letter written before their father's April 1922 death, William wrote about his concerns for David to their sister Mary. "Davie told a lady of whom he rented a room that he was moving from my house because I did not have 'meat' with my meals. That was a year ago. I call on him every time I get a letter that should interest him but he never visits me except when he is ill or needed reinstatement in his Post Office job. It was my pleasure to call on him Christmas. He was not in. I left greetings. Davie does not understand and I am not yet intelligent enough to make him understand. I told him I wanted him to drive with Anna and me to Kansas City by automobile. It is my hope to have a family reunion and

renew our family ties. That should be done annually in order to keep up the proper spirit. Davie will understand he must understand. I know we all can understand. I am ashamed of myself that I have not been to (hole in paper) Papa in all this time that has elapsed since the last time that I have done so little to help you with him.”<sup>19</sup> In this passage, William used the word “understand” four times in relation to Davie, but he didn’t state why he sought Davie’s understanding. It is obvious that Davie was experiencing some distress relative to his kin, but what distress, we don’t know. From this letter and others, I noticed that as extensively as William writes of David, there is never a mention of David’s wife, Cora.

In an undated letter, William wrote his Kansas City family that “[i]t has not been my good fortune to see David for over a month. He stopped at my house a week and moved because I did not give him a key until he demanded one. I have not seen him since[.] He was employed in the post office when I saw him. Bud

Day told me he saw him a few days ago. He was well.”<sup>20</sup> This informational letter from Dr. Driver lets us know that David was maintaining contact with family and was employed. During this segregated era, for blacks to hold positions in the post office was considered prestigious.

Almost a year following their father’s death, on March 3, 1923, William wrote to his sister Mary, “Dave. I’ve not seen for a long time.”<sup>21</sup> According to the Chicago Street Directory, at this time, David resided at 3737 Giles, which was only a few city blocks away. David was still employed as a postal clerk. In these several letters that Dr. Driver wrote, David was the only sibling for whom he expressed this degree of concern.

From the letters I know that David moved from Duluth to Chicago about 1921. The 1921 to 1923 letters written by his brother document his Chicago residency. Various city directories further confirm that residency. Later, the 1930 federal census indicates that David, wife Cora, and youngest brother John resided

at 5801 South Calumet, where, during this early part of the Depression, David was paying \$60.00 monthly for his rented apartment. In another sign of his prosperity, the census also recorded that he owned a radio. This census states that David was a laborer in the post office, while his brother John was a postal clerk.<sup>22</sup>

### Birth Year Discrepancies

There should be no dispute about David’s birth year. Some mystery surrounds the correct year of his birth, however. While he was identified on the 1870 census of Memphis City as a 2-year-old in the home of his parents, decades later, in 1932, David Henry Driver applied for and received a typed Certificate of Birth from the Memphis Health Department.<sup>23</sup>

While some of the information on this delayed birth certificate was correct, some critical pieces of information were wrong. First, the certificate indicated that when he was born his parents

**Documents Indicating Birth Year of David Driver**

Document	Age Indicated	Birth Year on Document	Computed Year of Birth	Comments
1870 U.S. Census	2 years	—	1868	Date on census page is May 25.
1880 U.S. Census	7 years	—	1873	
1905 Minnesota State Census	34 years	—	1871	Census states that David was born in Kansas.
1910 U. S. Census	40 years	—	1870	David was married to Anna.
W. W. I Draft Registration	45 years	May 24, 1873	1873	David was married to Cora. The registration card was signed September 11, 1918.
1920 U.S. Census	46 years	—	1874	
1930 U. S. Census	55 years	—	1875	David was 19 at first marriage; wife Cora was 18 at her first marriage. He’s 56 and she is 59. This suggests David first married in 1894 and Cora first married in 1889.
Delayed Birth Certificated Created December 13, 1932	Born	May 24, 1873	1873	States that at time of his birth, his parents resided at 447 Linden, Memphis; he was his mother’s first-born child; and Rachel Braxton was the midwife. The first two items are definitely not accurate.
1942 Cook County Probate file, adjudication	—	—	—	See court file.
Illinois Death Certificate, August 15, 1944	71 years	1873	1873	Informant was John G. Driver, David’s youngest brother.



resided at 447 Linden.<sup>24</sup> The city directory did record them at this address, but not prior to 1876. Second, the document's assertion that David was the first born of his mother is invalidated by the 1870 census enumeration of older sister Virginia. Other documents citing the number of children born to this mother also dispute his being the eldest. Additionally, the various changes in his birth year would make him younger than two of his siblings, making him the fourth born rather than the second. Another piece of information that questions the credibility of the certificate is the typed "signature" of the attending midwife, Rachel Braxton. While I was able to document that this midwife did, in fact, deliver several of Sallie's children (and probably also delivered David), it was not possible for her to have given evidence in person for this document. Rachel Braxton died in Memphis on April 4, 1892—forty years before David received the certificate.

The table to the left shows that David's birth year changed with every document created. I am unsure why David applied for a birth certificate in 1932. Perhaps it was to prepare for retirement. If so, he would have been better off using his original birth year. In my study, I rely on the 1870 census for the birth year.

### Court Proceedings

There was no family oral history related to the deterioration of grand-uncle David's mental health. I first learned of his illness from the records in the Circuit Court of Cook County. The exact reason for this deterioration is unknown. The letters authored by his brother contain clues to his future incapacity. After 1923 no letters were preserved, however. On April 7, 1927 Dr. William A. Driver was killed in Chicago in an automobile accident. His sudden death must have had a serious impact on his older brother. David continued to reside in Chicago.

Another factor that could have contributed to David's diminished mental health is the October 1941 death of his wife, Cora. Her *Chicago Defender* obituary reports she was a native of St. Louis, Missouri and a member of Chicago's prestigious Pilgrim

Baptist Church. Cora's death certificate indicates she died from rectal cancer, apparently following an extended illness.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the ending of their twenty-five year marriage caused his mental breakdown to commence. The culmination of these events might have been the catalyst for her husband's "nervous breakdown."

The Probate Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County holds the legal documents germane to David's hospitalization. On the outside of the faded court file folder in bold lettering is stamped INSANE. Inside, a document titled "Petition for Appointment of Conservator" indicates that following examination by two psychiatrists, on July 13, 1942, Dave H. Driver was "adjudged insane" and, having been declared a "ward of the state", had been previously committed to Illinois' Manteno State Hospital. The specifics of mental competency "Cuase [sic] No.167\_ \_ \_" are closed to the public forever.

In petitioning the court to become his guardian, John G. Driver, Dave's youngest brother, provided the court with an inventory of Dave's personal property. In requesting that he be named conservator for his brother, John testified that Dave "has moneys due him from various persons and banks and he now has certain money on deposit in a Postal Saving Account."<sup>26</sup> Satisfying the court's inquiry, John was appointed conservator.

David Henry Driver remained "incapacitated" at Manteno State Hospital until his death on September 15, 1944.<sup>27</sup> Following that, brother John was appointed the administrator of the Estate of Dave H. Driver. In a probate court hearing on September 9, 1946, John provided the court with additional genealogical information in his testimony regarding proof of heirship. In his sworn testimony, John identified Dave's parents and siblings. He also affirmed to the court which of these siblings were deceased with descendants. (Which provides another mystery: For some reason their nephew, William A. Driver, Jr., the only child of deceased Dr. William A. Driver, was not included in the list of heirs.) John testified that Dave had been married twice but never had children. Discrediting the information

on the 1932 delayed birth certificate, John's court testimony affirmed that their mother had fifteen children and that Dave was not her first born.

### A Headstone Marks His Grave

David was laid to rest with services performed by the respected Metropolitan Funeral Home, then located at 4445 South State. In the September 4, 1944 issue of the *Chicago Defender*, the Metropolitan Funeral Parlors weekly obituary column reported, "David H. Driver, born in Memphis, Tenn., brother of John G. Driver . . . services was conducted in our chapel on Aug. 15."<sup>28</sup> Laid to rest in the Maplewood section of Burr Oak Cemetery, Worth, Illinois, his headstone identifies him as "Husband David Henry Driver."

### His Legacy

David was of a generation born to former slaves. Among his several siblings, he had two brothers who repeatedly demonstrated their love and concern for him. One brother, Dr. William A. Driver, preceded him in death but immortalized him in letters. These letters reflect a sense of their closeness. They also provide possible clues to Davie's impending mental illness. Youngest brother John G. Driver was the furthest away in age but the closest in spirit. It was John who assumed the role of conservator, caring for his brother's affairs during his incapacity and later as administrator of his estate.

The legacy of a person is determined by significant events and elements in his life—it's what he's remembered for. During the course of his life, David Henry Driver lived in three states. Perhaps these travels were his way of seeking an understanding of his life. When death came to David at age 76 years, his guardian and devoted younger brother John did what was best for his brother. He even ordered the removal of wife Cora from her original interment to lie next to her husband. David Henry Driver, though married twice, left no descendants. The harsh word stamped on the front of the folder in the probate court is not the life legacy

of David Henry Driver. His legacy is in the memories of his siblings and their descendants. Somebody needs to know he was here.

This article was first published in the *Illinois State Genealogical Society Quarterly Journal*, Winter 2011 (Volume 43, Number 4), pages 206–212, and is reprinted with permission. In 2013 the article won 1st prize in the Articles category of the International Society of Family History Writers & Editors writing contest.

## Endnotes

1. David Henry Driver was also known as Davie, David H. and Dave H. Driver.

2. Dave H. Driver, Probate, Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, file #41-P-5380.

3. Sallie Driver household, 1870 U.S. Census, population schedule, Tennessee, Shelby County, Memphis City, post office Memphis, page 320, dwelling 1005, family 1418, National Archives micro-publication M593, roll 1563; Ancestry.com, accessed March 20, 2011.

4. W. M. Driver household, 1880 U.S. Census, population schedule, Tennessee, Shelby County, Memphis City, E.D. 16, sheet 6, line 39, dwelling 43, family 49, National Archives micro-publication T9, roll 1280; Ancestry.com, accessed March 20, 2011.

5. *Dow's City Directory of Memphis, for 1892*, Volume XXX, Memphis, Tennessee: Harlow Dow, 1891, page 439.

6. G. P. Hamilton, *The Bright Side of Memphis*, Memphis, Tennessee, 1908, page 119.

7. Interview with Inez (Cummings) Hutcherson, niece of David Driver, conducted by Janis Minor Forté on August 16, 1999. Notes of interview in possession of the author. Mrs. Hutcherson is now deceased.

8. The Lakeside Directory, Annual Directory of Chicago, Chicago: R. H. Donnelly, 1894, page 501.

9. Christopher Reed, *"All the World Is Here!": The Black Presence at White City*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington, Indiana, 2000.

10. David H. Driver, Fifth Territorial Census of Minnesota, 1905, population schedule, St. Louis County, E.D. 8, Duluth, Ward 4, Precinct 4, sheet 19, #719, Minnesota Historical Society, Minnesota State Population Census, Microfilm, Reels 155; Ancestry.com, accessed March 20, 2011.

11. David Driver household, 1910 U.S. Census, population schedule, Minnesota, Ramsey County, St. Paul City, E.D. 61, dwelling 3, family 3, National Archives micro-publication; Ancestry.com, accessed March 22, 2011.

12. *R. L. Polk and Co.'s Duluth Directory 1916*, Volume XXXV, Duluth, Minnesota: Duluth Directory Co., 1916, page 289.

13. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918, M 1909, Roll: 167543, Draft Board 3; Ancestry.com, accessed March 4, 2011.

14. *R. L. Polk and Co.'s Duluth Directory 1918*, Volume XXXVII, Duluth, Minnesota: Duluth Directory Co., 1918, page 185.

15. Letter from Dr. William Driver, Chicago, Illinois to Mr. Wm. G. P. Driver, Kansas City, Missouri, February 15, 1921; in possession of the author (the great-grandniece of Dr. Driver).

16. Letter from Dr. William Driver, Chicago, Illinois to Mr. Wm. G. P. Driver, Kansas City, Missouri, August 22, 1921; in possession of the author.

17. Letter from Dr. William Driver, Chicago, Illinois to Mary Driver Houston, Kansas City, Missouri, March 15, 1922; in possession of the author.

18. Letter from Dr. William Driver, Chicago, Illinois to Mr. Wm. G. P. Driver, Kansas City, Missouri, March 24 [year obscured]; in possession of the author.

19. Letter from Dr. William Driver, Chicago, Illinois, to Mary Driver Houston, Kansas City, Missouri, undated; in possession of the author.

20. Letter from Dr. William Driver, Chicago, Illinois to unknown recipient, Kansas City, Missouri, undated; in possession of the author.

21. Letter from Dr. William Driver, Chicago, Illinois to Mrs. Mary Driver Houston, Kansas City, Missouri, March 3, '23; in possession of the author.

22. David H. Driver household, 1930 U.S. Census, population schedule, Illinois, Cook County, Chicago, E.D.16-194, sheet 17A, line 45, family 312, National Archives micro-publication, T626, roll 146; Ancestry.com, accessed March 22, 2011.

23. David Henry Driver, delayed certificate of birth, file 9526, December 13, 1932, State of Tennessee, Memphis Health Department, Shelby County Health, Memphis.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Cora Driver, Death Certificate No. 18068, 1941, State of Illinois, Department of Public Health, Division of Vital Statistics, Chicago; ProQuest database, Chicago Public Library, accessed March 20, 2011.

26. Dave H. Driver, Circuit Court of Cook County, Probate Division – Insane-Incompetents, file #79-394-42P-5380, Cook County Clerk's Office, Chicago, Illinois.

27. David Driver, death certificate File No 483, 1944, State of Illinois, Department of Public Health, Division of Vital Statistics, Register No. 483.

28. David H. Driver obituary, *Chicago Defender*, Chicago, Illinois, September 2, 1944, Metropolitan Funeral Parlors column, page 16, column 3; ProQuest database, Chicago Public Library, accessed March 20, 2011.



Photo courtesy of Janis Minor Forté

An award-winning writer, editor, and publisher, **Janis Minor Forté** has lectured at national genealogy conferences. She

teaches a variety of lectures featuring methods and technology. She is experienced in African-American slave-era research and family history. A founding coordinator of the Midwest African American Genealogy Institute, Janis is a retired child welfare administrator with a Master's degree from the University of Chicago. She can be reached at [fortejm@yahoo.com](mailto:fortejm@yahoo.com).

# Black Indian Slave Narratives

Researching slave ancestors among the Five Civilized Tribes

Veola Wortham  
AAGSNC Member

**Title:** *Black Indian Slave Narratives*  
**Editor:** Patrick Mingos  
**Publisher:** John F. Blair  
**Publishing date:** 2004  
**ISBN:** 0-89587-298-6 (paperback)

*Black Indian Slave Narratives* consists of twenty-seven interviews of personally named former slaves of African descent within the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole). All except one of the twenty-seven narratives are clearly credited to the field workers of the Works Progress Administration (WPA); the one exception is credited to the Oklahoma Historical Society Slave Narrative Collection. The interviews were conducted in the 1930's, although a few were not specifically dated. Interviews took place in Arkansas, Indiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas.

The editor points out that historians have failed to acknowledge that a significant number of slaves were American Indians, captured and sold into slavery. “[T]he line between blacks and Indians in the nineteenth century was hardly as wide as many had thought.” Slaves were of many colors.

American Indians adapted the European plantation system; they ran their farms as the Southern white plantation owners did, which required the use of slaves—black and their own indigenous bloodline as well. Slaves under this system were of mixed race. By the time the indigenous peoples were forced on the “Trail of Tears” to Oklahoma, they had already acquired a large number of slaves, whom they took with them to their new location. Like their white counterparts, they mated with their black slave women and enslaved their own black children as well.

The interviews revealed significant differences between how the Indian slave owners treated their slaves as



compared to their white counterparts. Indeed, some Indian slave owners treated their slaves cruelly. But, in general, slaves belonging to Indians were treated more humanely. Many of the interviewees said that their masters never whipped them. Some slave owners were said never to sell a slave, while some did sell and sometimes lent out slaves. Slaves always had plenty of “good food” to eat and relatively acceptable shelter. Slaves were tended to when ill. Almost each and every interviewee spoke in loving terms of their former masters. Many said that they wished that slavery had never ended, because they were better off as slaves.

Slave children among the Indians often received special care. They were usually not allowed to do any heavy work. When they reached the age of about 14, they were allowed to feed the livestock. Older girls often helped with the cooking and carried milk and water. Orphaned children were usually taken into the owner's household and cared for. One mistress said to an inquirer, “He is the son of my husband and a slave woman, but we are rearing him.” It was common for children to call the mistress “mama”, whether or not they were orphaned; the term “mammy” was reserved for the biological mother.

From the interviews, it is apparent that food was always plentiful. The slaves made use of wild game, nuts, berries, etc. Nowhere in these narratives did I read that the master laid claim to the slaves' catches. Infrequently, slaves enjoyed spare ribs and chitlins. Cooking was done in the fireplace.

Interviewees reported issues regarding wars. Some of the Indians fought for the Confederates, but only after they learned that slavery was an issue. Others fought for the Union. Still others, regardless of the stakes, just tried to stay out of

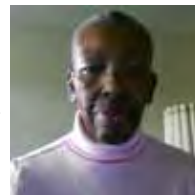
the way and temporarily moved their families and slaves to Kansas. Upon their return to Indian Territory, their homes had been burned and everything destroyed. The war was stressful to all five nations, regardless of which side they had taken.

Before and after the Civil War, there were wars *within* as well as *against* nations, such as the Green Peach War and the Crazy Snake Rebellion. Among the Cherokee, for example, the “big feud” referred to the “Pins” or “the Pin Indians.”

[Note: The “Pins”, or “Pin Indians” as they came to be called, were an offshoot organization made up of the militant branch of the Keetoowah Society, a secret society within the Cherokee Nation dedicated to preservation of the “old ways.” Whereas the Keetoowah Society was dedicated to “the white path of righteousness”, the Pins followed the “Red Path, the path of war and Blood revenge.” The Pins chose the United States flag as their symbol and wore crossed straight pins on the left lapels of their hunting jackets. That is where the name Pins comes from.]

This is an informative book that sheds light on the lives of slaves. In addition to the names of the persons interviewed, there are hundreds of other named slaves, relationships, and circumstances, an important resource for someone trying to find an ancestor. Each of the twenty-seven narratives is in chapter form, making reading time manageable.

Photo courtesy of Veola Wortham



**Veola Wortham** is a native of Texas, residing in California almost fifty years. Her research efforts primarily focus on Caldwell, Gonzales, and Fayette counties. Some of her maternal family names are Ellison, Jones,

Dickerson/Dickersen, and Spruill; some of her paternal names are Barnett, Dukes, French, and Spencer. As a relatively new researcher, she welcomes help and is willing to help others. You can reach her at [veola.barnett@gmail.com](mailto:veola.barnett@gmail.com).

# 2017 Sacramento African American Family History Seminar

*Paula Madison's search for her Chinese grandfather*

**Sharon Styles**  
Contributor

Paula Madison stepped to the lectern, seized the attention of the audience, held them captive for an hour, and left the crowd wanting more. Madison was the keynote speaker for the 12th Annual African American Family History Seminar on March 11, 2017 at the LDS Church in Sacramento. Madison described her journey of discovery while searching for her long-lost Chinese grandfather, Samuel Lowe.

Madison's book and documentary, both titled *Finding Samuel Lowe*, reveal family history in China, Jamaica, and Harlem. Although these works highlight her Chinese-Jamaican ancestry, they are universal stories of love, loss, pain, determination, sacrifice, family, hope, and ultimately triumph.

Sacramento Vice Mayor Rick Jennings II provided the official welcome and morning address for the seminar. Jennings also discussed his family history and what has motivated him to spend more than thirty years researching his genealogy.

AAGSNC members participated in every aspect of the seminar. Dr. Juliet Crutchfield, Dr. Karen McCord, Janice M. Sellers, Jackie Stewart, Alvis Ward, and Michael Willis were instructors at the workshop. Sharon Styles served as committee cochair. Vernester Sheeler and Howard Edwards presented an AAGSNC display in the exhibit area. Barbara Tyson provided a large display of genealogy-related books.

For more information on Paula Madison or to purchase her book, visit <http://findingsamuellowe.com/story/>.

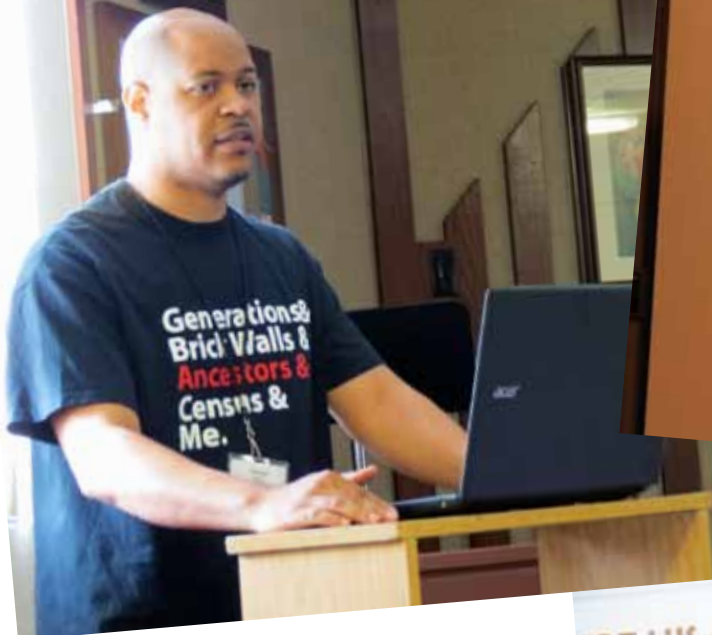
When available, information about the 2018 seminar will be posted on <http://www.aafhs.com/>, or call (916) 275-8084 for updates.



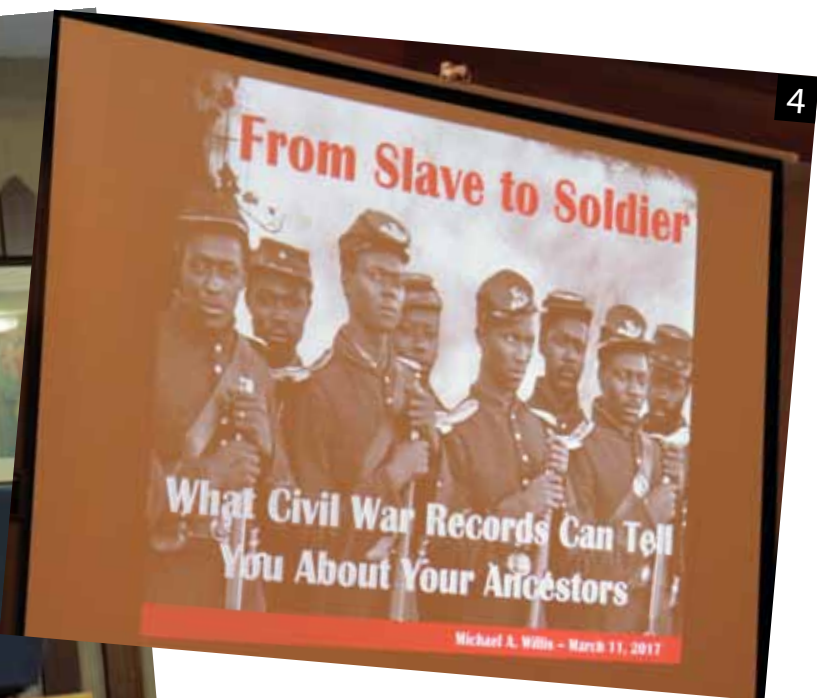
**Sharon Styles** is a resident of Sacramento, California. She began researching her family in 2007. Now that she is retired, Sharon plans to continue researching her roots. Fortunately, her parents, four grandparents, and great-grandparents all came from the same little town of Marlin, Falls County, Texas. Sharon

is a member of AAGSNC, AAHGS, Central Texas Genealogical Society, and St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church Library Ministry, which hosts a genealogy seminar each year. She researches the surnames of Paul, Sneed, Shaw, Thomas, Broadus, Bailey, Johnson, Mozee, and Curry.

3



4



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1. Paula Madison speaking at seminar
2. Paula Madison and Committee Cochair Sharon Styles
3. Instructor Michael Willis
4. Michael Willis' presentation title screen
5. "We Also Served: African Americans in the Military" by Lisa Daniels
6. Instructor Sam Starks
7. Vernester Sheeler speaks with a guest at the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California table

# AAGSNC Vietnam Veterans Honored

*Commemorating the Vietnam War and Those Who Served*

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

A variety of activities and ceremonies are being held around the country during 2017 and 2018 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, under the auspices of the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration. The primary purpose of the commemorative events is to thank and honor Vietnam War veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice.

Ceremonies were held at the Hayward Veterans Memorial Building on January 28 and April 1, 2017 by the American Legion, Hayward Veterans Post 870, coordinated by AAGSNC member John White. He and AAGSNC President M. Howard Edwards were honored during the ceremony by receiving their 50th Vietnam Commemoration Pin and Presidential Proclamation. I am honored to present their photographs



John White (left), U.S. Navy



M. Howard Edwards, U.S. Army

in *The Baobab Tree* and personally thank them for their service during the war.

To learn more about the Vietnam War Commemoration and other events that were held, visit <http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/>.

## AAGSNC 2016 New Members

*Welcome to the family*

The African American Genealogical Society of Northern California welcomed the following new members in 2016. May you all make progress with your research and find family members who share your passion.

Billy Alexander  
Agatha Briscoe  
Katheryn Crayton-Shay  
Merlin Edwards  
Marissa Gholston-Lee  
Linda Jack  
Paulette Johnson

Lawrence Kennedy  
Rashida Lee  
Wilbert Lee  
Cedric Long  
Matha Maltbia  
Martin Mitchell  
Nicole Pollard  
Gloria Riley

Evelyn Smith  
Rose M. Smith  
Inga Thomas  
Alex Trapps-Chabala  
Delores Turner  
Nakeia Warren  
Enevia Wilson



# The Leaf

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

### Have You Renewed Yet?

If not, your AAGSNC 2017 membership dues are overdue. You should have received a renewal notice, but if you haven't, or you can't find it, send a message to [membership1@aagsnc.org](mailto:membership1@aagsnc.org), and Membership Chairman Upperton Hurts will be happy to oblige.

We appreciate our members and their support. We hope you will renew your membership for 2017. Please join us for another great year of *The Baobab Tree*, 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. Members whose dues were not received by March 1 have been dropped from formal communications.

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).

### AAGSNC Executive Committee 2017 Meeting Notes

#### Oakland FamilySearch Library January 21, 2017

Present: President Howard Edwards, Jackie Chauhan, Gerry DeBerry, Diana

Ross, Janice M. Sellers, Jackie Stewart, Michael Willis, Alvis Ward, Dera Williams

The meeting was called to order at 12:45 p.m.

#### Reports

**Treasurer:** Gerry DeBerry

The 2017 budget was approved. The balance forward is \$6,436.00.

**Programs:** Jackie Stewart

Jackie presented and welcomed Michael Willis as the new program committee chair. Outgoing chair Annette Madden verified that all meetings for the remainder of 2017 have been scheduled with programs and turned the committee over to Michael.

**Membership:** Upperton Hurts

There are currently 147 members.

**Website:** Gerry DeBerry

Some updates and clean-up of old information has been done. There was supposed to be a migration. Gerry will check on that. We are still using 2.5.

**Outreach & Education:** Alvis Ward

AAGSNC should have received payment from the San Francisco Public Library for two presentations.

**Publicity:** Alvis Ward (interim)

Alvis sent out a publicity blast for volunteers for the Youth Ancestry project and for Black Family History Day on February 12. Go to EventBrite to register for BFHD and to be a volunteer. LDS staff will also assist as volunteers.

The program calendar was corrected online.

Some of the FamilySearch Library staff have been getting the independent African American Research Workshop confused with AAGSNC meetings. Alvis would like to rename the research group after Electra Price.

**Journal:** Janice M. Sellers

The fall issue is online. Janice had expected to hand out the print copies of the 20th Anniversary issue but they were not yet available. They will be mailed next week.

**Historian:** Jackie Chauhan

Jackie has completed a summary of information for the 2015–2016 year. She read some of the highlights that she will share at the general meeting. She also made a list of archived journals.

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

#### Oakland FamilySearch Library February 18, 2017

Present: President Howard Edwards, Jackie Chauhan, Upperton Hurts, Carol Miller, Diana Ross, Dera Williams, Michael Willis

The meeting was called to order at 12:45 p.m.

#### Reports

**Vice President:** Carol Miller

We will finalize the election of board members at the general meeting.

## **Membership:** Upperton Hurts

There were 157 members at the end of the year. Because we are still in the renewal period, we do not have an accurate count. Upperton sent out 60 renewal notices.

## **Programs:** Michael Willis

Michael has met with Annette and gotten clarification on what the position entails. There is no change in programming thus far. He will not be at the March and September meetings. He will look into a calendar update.

## **Journal:** Janice M. Sellers

The fall issue of *The Baobab Tree* was distributed by e-mail and postal mail and was well received. The winter issue is anticipated for late February. The journal committee has changed to a new printer.

## **Historian:** Jackie Chauhan

Jackie is working on the five-year summary history that is due this year, 2017. Discussion ensued about whether the previous summary was a five-year summary done by someone else.

## **Other Business**

Diana asked about signage for AAGSNC now that we are at the FamilySearch Library. There were suggestions about where to put signs.

We need a cheaper version of the schedule/calendar or meeting reminder for the FSL. We have plenty of color calendars but we will also use black and white copies.

Michael was asked to look into the request of funeral home obituaries of Hudson Funeral Home. He researched GenealogyBank and Newspapers.com. He has had good luck with GenealogyBank. Obituaries from the *Oakland Tribune* were missing from 1953 to 1964. Upperton heard that boxes of obituaries were thrown away. Apparently, it is a seldom requested service.

## **Black Family History Day**

What worked:

Volunteers do not have to be versed in genealogy.  
Adequate time was allowed for new researchers.  
We could use more experienced mentors.

What didn't work:

Not enough time on computers.  
Need more mentors with technical expertise.

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

## **Oakland FamilySearch Library March 18, 2017**

Present: President Howard Edwards, Upperton Hurts, Diana Ross, Janice M. Sellers, Dera Williams

The meeting was called to order at 12:45 p.m.

\*There was not a quorum. Meeting topics that required votes were discussed but tabled for future decisions.

## **Reports**

### **Membership:** Upperton Hurts

About 140 members are paid to date. The cut-off date for renewal of membership is today, March 18, 2017. We received a life membership subscription. Should we acknowledge lifetime memberships? President Edwards will write a letter of thanks.

### **Journal:** Janice M. Sellers

*The Baobab Tree* winter issue will tentatively be out by the end of the month.

### **Other Business**

The secretary was asked to make an addendum to the executive minutes about the board election vote taken during the general meeting.

Howard asked if AAGSNC should contribute to the furniture fund of the

soon to be renovated Dimond Library. All present agreed that we should contribute \$100.00. **\*Vote tabled**

Should we continue meeting at the FamilySearch Library permanently after the renovation of Dimond?

**Pros:** We have an excellent research facility at our fingertips, free parking.  
**Cons:** No food. Janice countered that we are permitted to have food in the classroom.

We would like to see what the new Dimond Library offers and we haven't been required to pay for meeting space. The general opinion was that until they start charging for now we should stay at Dimond. **\*Vote tabled**

Should we go back to having a Black Family History Day in October? Janice said the October attendance was consistently less than in February. She has numbers in her blog and will check. A discussion ensued about the amount of effort it takes to put together. Nicka Smith does not think it was worth having two every year. We need to give more time for research at BFHD, which was also noted at the last Executive Committee meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

## **Oakland FamilySearch Library April 15, 2017**

Present: President Howard Edwards, Jackie Chauhan, Gerry DeBerry, Upperton Hurts, Diana Ross, Janice M. Sellers, Alvis Ward, Dera Williams, Michael Willis

The meeting was called to order at 12:40 p.m.

\*There was no quorum at the March meeting. Topics that required votes were tabled after discussion.

## **Reports**

### **Treasurer:** Gerry DeBerry

Gerry has receipts for those who have renewed their membership, including those who paid through PayPal.



She paid storage for March and is still waiting for other committee receipts.

There was \$7,998 cash on hand at the end of the month. \$870.00 was from memberships.

**Membership:** Upperton Hurts

About 139 members are paid to date. Upperton sent out a notice on MailChimp to all who had not renewed, about 20 or 21 people.

Alvis and Upperton will be working on reconciling members from the e-mail blast and MailChimp.

A suggestion was made to call those members who have not responded. Members of the Executive Committee will reach out using a phone tree.

Howard sent out two letters to new lifetime membership members. We also need to reconnect with inactive lifetime members.

**Website:** Gerry DeBerry

Some items are missing from the online store. Pictures were sent for several items; Howard will resend.

The AAGSNC Amazon store needs to be re-established for us to get our purchasing percentage.

Several links have been fixed and the Website Committee is working to clean up everything.

**Publicity:** Alvis Ward (interim)

Monthly e-mail blasts are going out.

**Journal:** Janice M. Sellers

The *Baobab* winter and spring issues will be a combined double issue.

**Historian:** Jackie Chauhan

The annual summaries for 2015 and 2016 are now on the Web site.

## Other Business

Alvis Ward and Janice Sellers were invited to attend an interfaith event on April 29 at the Muslim Community Center in Pleasanton. There will be a genealogy table, and they want to include Jewish and African American groups.

Upperton has been told by members they are not getting the *Baobab*. Discussion ensued about not having members' postal mail addresses; for some we have only e-mails. Again, we should do a phone tree about membership and journal needs. The journal is online, but people also want hard copies. No decision was made on what to do.

The Dimond Library furniture fund agenda item from March was revisited. We discussed contributing \$100.00 to the fund but could not vote because there was no quorum. A vote was taken, and the amount was approved.

We revisited the question of whether we should make the FamilySearch Library a permanent spot for our meetings. We decided to keep our meetings at Dimond Library for the present.

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

## Oakland FamilySearch Library May 20, 2017

Present: President Howard Edwards, Jackie Chauhan, Gerry DeBerry, Upperton Hurts, Alvis Ward, Dera Williams, Michael Willis

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

## Reports

**Treasurer:** Gerry DeBerry absent; report delivered by President Howard Edwards

We have \$7,817.21 to date. According to Alvis we are owed about \$300 from the San Francisco Public Library.

## Membership: Upperton Hurts

About 141 members are paid to date. We still have about twelve members who have not renewed. Howard will call the first five and Upperton will do the next five. Dera will call the last two on the list.

**Journal:** Janice M. Sellers absent; report delivered by President Howard Edwards

Janice is still working on the spring issue of *Baobab*.

## Other Business

The partner of deceased AAGSNC member Angelo Andrews gave Janice a box of his research, and she in turn found a family member to send the materials.

Sharon Styles sent a thank you note to Howard regarding the AAGSNC members who participated as speakers at the genealogy seminar in Sacramento this past March.

Sharon Styles is proposing that Sacramento host a satellite chapter of AAGSNC. They will hold meetings at the FamilySearch Center in Sacramento, and Dr. McCord and Sharon Styles will cochair. A poll was taken at the March seminar, and the majority of respondees would like to be part of AAGSNC. Their only available meeting date is the third Saturday, the same as AAGSNC.

A discussion ensued. President Edwards said his concerns are about responsibility. AAGSNC would not control how they meet and what topics they will discuss, nor will there be any means of controlling the group's other activities. Would it be an arm of AAGSNC or a discussion group? What is their agenda? If they use our name in public appearances, we would be responsible for what they put out there. The Fairfield discussion group reports to Alvis on their activities. All are members, and some attend our meetings. It appears they want to use our infrastructure and not reinvent the wheel. Howard is turning the matter over to the Board to discuss and determine policy.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

## 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, events, and stories found while wandering the Web*

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

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

Part 1 of Nicka Smith's presentation on finding her ancestor John Lee  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbP9F44J9n4>

Links to talks and panel discussion at symposium on Confederate monuments  
<http://cwmemory.com/2017/02/26/a-symposium-on-confederate-monuments/>

18th-century black pioneer in music and politics  
<http://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/joseph-bologne-black-mozart>

18th-century U.S.-born slave who became a business and sports success in England  
<http://www.history.com/news/the-18th-century-black-sports-superstar-youve-never-heard-of>

Millard Fillmore Papers at Library of Congress include correspondence relating primarily to slavery issues  
<https://www.loc.gov/collections/millard-fillmore-papers/about-this-collection/>

The Beyond Kin Project encourages descendants of slaveholders to help research the enslaved  
<http://beyondkin.gegbound.com/>

Slave Dwelling Project to document and preserve extant slave buildings  
<http://slavedwellingproject.org/>

"Last Seen: Finding Family after Slavery" database of transcribed classified ads seeking kin  
<http://www.informationwanted.org/>

Recently published resources for researching Reconstruction era  
<http://cwmemory.com/2017/03/13/a-good-week-for-reconstruction-resources/>

Information about Colored Farmers' Alliance, begun in Texas in 1886 and which existed until 1891  
<https://lialouisecooke.com/2017/02/colored-farmers-alliance/>

Online photographs of 19th-century black women in public eye  
<http://blogs.loc.gov/picturethis/2017/03/portraits-of-nineteenth-century-african-american-women-activists-newly-available-online/>

History of black soldiers in World War I through National Archives photographs  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cS3sdnQp0IQ&feature=em-lss>

Powerful children's picture book about the song "Strange Fruit"  
<http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/230987/strange-fruit-picture-book>

Online information and resource guide regarding Black Power movement  
<https://www.nypl.org/events/exhibitions/black-power>

Online exhibit about Southland College in Arkansas, first institution of higher learning for blacks west of the Mississippi  
<http://digitalcollections.uark.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/Southland>

Yale University's donor and namesake supported slavery  
<http://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/the-dark-secret-of-elihu-yale/article17375815.ece>

Photograph of an identified former Georgetown slave  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/12/us/georgetown-university-slaves-life-campbell.html>

Georgetown employee learns ancestor was among slaves sold by the university  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/24/us/a-georgetown-employee-slavery.html>

Newly discovered photograph of Harriet Tubman purchased by Library of Congress and Smithsonian  
<https://goo.gl/ziz3yL>

Remains, likely of former slaves, discovered at University of Georgia construction site reinterred and commemorated  
<http://onlineathens.com/local-news/2017-03-20/uga-ceremony-honors-likely-slave-remains-removed-campus-construction-site>

Maryland manumission collection now held at museum  
<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/world/mind-boggling-trove-of-historic-papers-in-maryland-reveals-the-tortuous-paths-out-of-slavery>

Online exhibit about Underground Railroad in Fall River, Massachusetts  
<http://lizzieborden.org/exhibits/black-history-month-2017/#URR>

New York senior tends grave of slave who died in 1810  
<http://www.fox2detroit.com/news/us-and-world-news/239895541-story>

Researching forward in time from a deed of gift of a slave to a young girl  
<https://ncarchives.wordpress.com/2017/02/28/pc2124-slave-deed-of-gift-of-sam/>

Photographs documenting black history in Southern Appalachian Mountains  
<http://www.digitalinc.org/blog/may-day-to-marion-anderson-heritage-of-black-highlanders-photo-collection-shared-on-digitalinc/>

Digitized catalogs from Charlotte Mecklenburg black college  
<http://www.digitalinc.org/blog/yearbooks-campus-publications-from-charlotte-mecklenburg-library-offer-a-window-into-a-segregated-north-carolina/>

Black newspaper from Greensboro now digitized and online  
<http://www.digitalinc.org/blog/the-future-outlook-documenting-african-american-communities-in-greensboro-from-wwii-1970s/>

Yearbooks from Huntersville, North Carolina black high school online

<http://www.digitalinc.org/blog/african-american-high-school-yearbooks-from-huntersville-now-online/>

Information sought on black women's newspaper published in Oregon  
<https://www.theskanner.com/news/northwest/25509-professor-looking-for-details-on-historic-black-women-s-newspaper>

Female camp slave from South Carolina documented as receiving Confederate pension after the Civil War  
<http://cwmemory.com/2017/03/02/the-first-female-black-confederate/>

Memphis community comes together 100 years after a lynching  
<http://facingtoday.facinghistory.org/memphis-students-unite-their-community-100-years-after-a-lynching>

Excavation of Jefferson's Monticello estate to help teach about lives of enslaved there  
<http://www.archaeology.org/news/5331-170224-virginia-monticello-hemings>

Digital archive on segregated Southern "Carnegie Negro Libraries"  
<https://www.jbhe.com/2017/03/university-of-southern-mississippi-new-online-archive-on-rationally-segregated-libraries/>

Oldest slave cemetery in Atlantic in Canary Islands, dates from 16th century (in Spanish)  
<http://www.canariasenred.com/cientificos-confirman-que-el-cementerio-de-esclavos-mas-antiguo-del-mundo-atlantico-esta-en-canarias/>

Black women in French resistance in World War II  
<http://www.aaihs.org/from-concentration-camps-to-the-senate-black-women-in-the-french-resistance/>

Recognition of the Afro-Mexican community  
<http://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2017/04/paulette-ramsay-wants-to-highlight-the-importance-of-the-afro-mexican-diaspora>

Thanks to True Lewis for posting some of these links.

**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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