



From the Baobab Tree

Quarterly Newsletter of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California

OBJECTIVES of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California:

- To enlighten and enrich self-worth and self-esteem of African Americans through genealogical research and interest.
- To promote interest in genealogy, biography, and related history among 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 materials and make such material available to all.
- To promote and maintain ethical standards in genealogical research and publications.

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African American Genealogical Society
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Oakland, CA 94602-0985



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



The 2nd Annual West Coast Summit on African American Genealogy

“Honoring the
Legacy of our
Fathers”

June 14-15, 2002
Sacramento Convention Center
Sacramento, CA

- West Coast Summit on African American Genealogy
- Experiences of a Beginning Genealogist
- De Witt Co.,TX: Marriages of People of Color 1847-1883
- An Interview with Genealogist Tony Burroughs
- Family Reunions: Reconnecting and Celebrating Your Roots

Message From the President ...



Since the last issue of *From the Baobab Tree*, the AAGSNC continues to make great strides forward. The following list showcases a few of the activities that the AAGSNC has completed:

- Protection of the AAGSNC domains (.net and .org).
- Web site update by Webmaster, Jim Neal to a new format that makes navigation through the website easier, especially for those new to Internet use.
- Jamila Sloan's presentation on Genealogy and the Internet.
- A Black History Month Celebration on **Family History Fundamentals**. This celebration included information for: (1) Beginners – "Basic Forms and Terms," facilitated by Barbara Dunn; (2) Intermediate – "Research Plans and Resources," facilitated by Lisa Lee; and (3) Advanced – "Slave Genealogy Prior to Emancipation," facilitated by Jackie Stewart and me.
- Presentation of an appreciation plaque to Sam Golden for his years of service as AAGSNC Treasurer.
- A field trip to the remolded LDS Oakland Family History Center (FHC) at Temple Square. On this field trip "veteran" AAGSNC researchers assisted those new to genealogy and those with research problems.
- The mailing of meeting announcements by Gwen Booze'.
- Barbara Dunn's presentation for beginners at the Oakland Museum of California's Black History event entitled "*Tracing Your California Roots*." Ms. Dunn was given a \$100 honorarium by the Oakland Museum of California for her

presentation, which she generously donated, to the AAGSNC.

- Attendance at the opening ceremony of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland (AAMLO) and Electra Price's presentation. In addition, Ms. Price has been teaching classes at AAMLO for beginning genealogists.

Future AAGSNC plans include an **October Family History Day Workshop**, a "show and tell" meeting entitled "What I Did Last Summer," and a Founder's Day Luncheon. To make these activities and AAGSNC even more successful, your Society needs the participation of all its members.

Think for a moment about why you joined AAGSNC. Did you join because you wanted to enjoy the activities offered? Did you join because you desire support in your research efforts? Did you become a member because you want to share your finds?

Show your commitment to the AAGSNC. Commitment means taking an active part to make the AAGSNC even stronger and better. Call us at (510) 496-2740, ext. 4144 or e-mail us at baobabtree@aagsnc.org and join a working committee, if you have not already done so. Increased participation in your AAGSNC will enhance your ability to make new genealogical connections with fellow researchers, as you travel through this territory called African American genealogy.

Juliet E. Culliver Crutchfield
AAGSNC President 2002

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This entire newsletter was created on an Apple Titanium 400, using QuarkXPress, Photoshop, and Excel.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Please type or print)

Date: _____
 Last Name: _____
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_____	_____
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Membership Categories and Annual Fees

Regular Member (single, 17 and older)	\$ 25.00
Youth (16 and younger)	\$ 15.00
Family (Individual + spouse)	\$ 35.00
Organization	\$ 45.00
Life Membership, Individual	\$200.00
Life Membership, Family	\$300.00

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Make check payable to: **AAGSNC** and mail to
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you can join the AAGSNC online at www.aagsnc.org

The **AAGSNC Online Store** is now open for business. We carry a full line of genealogical books and videos, Family Tree Maker software (PC only), AAGSNC-branded products (tote bags, magnifiers, coffee cups, and mouse pads).
www.aagsnc.org/store

Tied in with Amazon.com, our Online Store can meet all of your reading needs. The AAGSNC receives a portion of all book sales purchased from Amazon.com, but you must use the link from our store in order that we receive the credit.



MEETINGS

Meetings are held the *third Saturday* of every month, at 1:30 pm, at the Oakland Public Library, Dimond branch, located at 3565 Fruitvale Ave, Oakland, Ca. There are no meetings during the Summer hiatus (July and August). Guests and visitors are always welcome to attend these open meetings. From 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm, following the general meeting, we provide one-on-one genealogical training and assistance to members only.

NEWSLETTER

From the Baobab Tree is published quarterly (in March, June, September, and December) by the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California (AAGSNC) and is provided free to all members. Additional copies and past issues may be purchased for \$10.00 per copy.

- Membership categories are Regular \$25, Youth (16 and younger) \$15, Family \$35, Organization \$45, Life Membership - Individual \$200, Life Membership - Family \$300.

- The AAGSNC accepts no responsibility for statements of fact or opinion made by contributors. Deadlines for submission of material for publication in *From the Baobab Tree* are: February 25 for the March issue, May 26 for the June issue, August 26 for the September issue, and November 25 for the December issue.

- Correspondence on editorial matters, submission requests, or permission to reprint articles may be obtained at no cost by written request to the editor (newsletter@aagsnc.org).

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you know you don't always get a chance to work on every line – you never know when you'll have time to work on a particular line. Right now I'm working on my South Carolina line, but I should be working on my Pennsylvania line because that's the line where I've had the most success. I got the will where my ancestor was freed in 1806. The will was written in 1795, and he was born in 1781. I said I was going to work on that line, plus I was invited to write an article on that line for the Pennsylvania Genealogical Society Quarterly. But, I made a major breakthrough with my South Carolina line last year, so I ended up working on it instead.

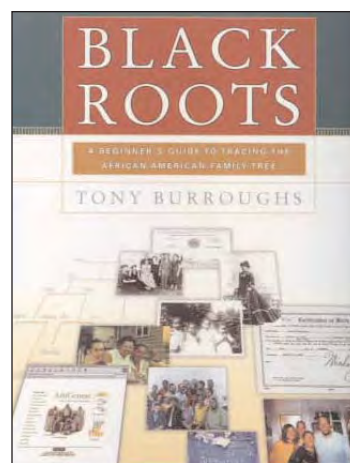
HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR YOUR LECTURES?

Sometimes I'll have an idea and I'll think, "this would be great for a lecture," or for an article. From there I'll start to jot down initial ideas, maybe do a brief outline, and then when I'm not thinking about it, ideas just start to come. My best ideas come when I'm not thinking about it

and all of a sudden ideas just start to flow. I keep pads of paper everywhere, so when the ideas start coming, I jot them down and then try to transfer them into my computer when I can.

I was trying to decide what's going to be my next book and I had all these ideas. Some of the books, I've worked on – some have titles, some a list of chapters, I've written various parts of others, so they're in various stages. In coming to the decision to do my next book, I needed to review all these ideas I have. You want to know how many I came up with? I have three file folders, one for articles, one for lectures, and one for books. When I went through the one for books, I had 55 book ideas. Unbelievable!

Genealogists are chosen – we don't choose it, it chooses us.



You may purchase Black Roots from the AAGSNC online store at: www.aagsnc.org/store.htm

Experiences of a Beginning Genealogist

by Annette Madden



Annette Madden is the author of the book *In Her Footsteps*, which provides capsule biographical sketches of over a hundred black women around the world from the Queen of Sheba to cancer researcher Jewell Cobb, and reveals not only their lives, but their lasting influences on the lives of others. Madden worked on this project for two years while she was working for the publisher, Conari Press. She joined the AAGSNC in 2000 and has been researching her family's history for two years.

Living in Oakland, CA, with her 23-year-old son, James, and her husband, Tim (a general contractor), she runs her husband's office while working on her second book. This follow-up to *In Her Footsteps* will cover many unsung and forgotten black men, such as photographer James VanDerZee, inventor Elijah McCoy (the "Real McCoy") and Russian general Abram Hannibal, ggf of Alexander Pushkin.

Ms. Madden may be reached at amadden45@yahoo.com

Genealogy is like an Easter egg hunt combined with a jigsaw puzzle. You have to hunt down the pieces, and then put them together correctly to form a picture of your family's history. The process is often filled with trial and error, false leads, and frustration. But it is worth every bit of it when I finally find the documentation that makes another piece fall into place.

Two years ago when I started this grand obsession called genealogy, this is what I knew: my mother and father were from Tulsa, Oklahoma. In fact, all the relatives I knew of were from or in Oklahoma. So I grew up with the idea that my family was from Oklahoma and I expected to find all of them there. It never entered my mind that they could have come there from somewhere else. And I could probably name no more than fifty people, if that many, to whom I knew I was related.

Since then, now I know that I have ties to Oklahoma, Texas, Mississippi, Arkansas and South Carolina. My family tree has over a thousand names and continues to grow. And I have connected with distant relatives in places as diverse as East Orange, New Jersey; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zachary, Louisiana; and Los Angeles, California.

It all started with an article in the March 2000 issue of *The Oakland Tribune*. The African American Genealogical Society of Northern California was hosting a presentation at the Oakland Mormon Temple. I coerced my sister into joining me and on a sunny Spring day, we joined several hundred others at the temple. I listened as people told of their adventures in family finding and was bitten by the

bug we have all come to know. I've always loved doing research, so this seemed like a natural fit. That day I found out that Electra Price volunteered at the Family History Center every Thursday evening. It took a few months, but I finally got there and introduced myself. Electra kindly inducted me into the mysteries of Soundex and census. I set as my first goal to discover all of my great great grandparents.

I started with 1920 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, since I knew both my mother and father were from there. No luck. No Pittses, no Maddens, no Danielses, no Johnsons. I could find no one. Hours of searching in vain. But my people were from Oklahoma! Where could they be? Had they eluded the census taker? I began to feel they were intentionally hiding from me (I know I sound paranoid, but surely we have all felt the same way about some elusive relative). I finally talked to my mother who told me that she remembered my dad's mother mentioning Arkansas. She also told me that her brother had definitely been born in Stroud, OK in 1921, but she wasn't sure where they were in 1920. My grandfather had worked for the railroad and they had moved around a lot and she herself wasn't born until 1925. But she also warned me that I might not find any information on her mother since she was private woman who didn't believe in giving information to strangers, and thus might not have answered any census questions. With these new leads, I bravely went back and began the hunt again. Sure enough, I found my dad's family, not in Oklahoma, but in Cadron Township, Faulkner County, Arkansas, just outside of Conway. And I had my first experience with the genealogical happy dance! I knew

that a door had been opened, never to be shut again. As my mother warned, I have yet to find her mother in 1920. I have just begun to try to find her in the 1930 census.

Reviewing the 1920 Census for Cadron township I noticed that my family members (the ones I knew of at the time — I have since found out that I am related to a lot more of the people in that township than I realized then) were all living within shouting distance of each other. This seemed very strange to me, as used as I am to families being scattered all over the county. I also noticed that the parents and older children had been born in South Carolina. South Carolina!? This was the first I had heard of that connection. Another piece to be put in the puzzle. Eagerly, I began to search the South Carolina census.

As a child growing up, I had many times seen my grandmother's bible. She died when I was nine. I remembered seeing the name Dolly Finley on the family tree. Who was this mysterious Dolly Finley? My grandmother wasn't around to ask and I had just never seemed to think to ask my mother. The family bible had long since been lost. In the 1920 Cadron Census, I found a Dolly married to J.D. Pitts, my great grandfather. Guessing this was my Dolly Finley, I looked for Finleys in South Carolina. In 1880, I found J.D. and Dolly living in Laurens, Laurens County, South Carolina. In 1870 I found Dolly living with her mother and father, Amanda and Berry, and her siblings. Again, the genealogical happy dance. I had now found my first set of great great grandparents.

The 1920 Cadron Census showed that my

Madden relatives were also from South Carolina. ‘Lo and behold, the Maddens were from Waterloo, Laurens County, South Carolina, just down the road a piece from Laurens.

Another hint from my mother was the maiden name of Lee Madden’s wife, Classy Crout, which I assumed was

blood tie to the slaveholding families. I have not yet begun my slave research, but I do have some hints as to where to start. One of the cousins I connected with on the internet shared family stories about Berry Finley. It was reported that he was the son of Hampton Finley (he was living next door to Hampton in the 1870 census) and that he inherited a house and 300

wagon, taking a year to make the journey.

Of course, when people got to Arkansas, things were not as promised, but there was work and there was land. Black people were still restricted, but not as fiercely as in South Carolina. People settled in and began new lives, my father’s people among them. I know life was not idyllic

then, but I have come to envy the apparent closeness of people. People, through blood ties or friendship, moved together, lived in close proximity and supported each other. That pattern continued even after they had moved from the farm to the city. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, my family left Cadron Township, many of them moving to Tulsa, Oklahoma. Robert and Clarissa Madden and many of their grown children lived in the same two blocks of East Latimore Street in the Greenwood section of town. There is much about that era I would never want to revisit, but those kinds of bonds appeal to me and seem to be missing now.

I have documented a great deal of intermarriage. I am related to one cousin by marriage on three of my lines (Crout, Madden, and Pitts) through marriages that happened in Cadron. There are several examples of a set of siblings in one family marrying a set of siblings in a neighboring family. Three Madden siblings married three Pitts siblings, among them my grandparents. It seemed a pretty incestuous world, but I soon realized who else would people marry but their neighbors. This was before the day of automobiles and paved highways and people did not travel as far.

The other pattern that began to jump out at me was in naming practices. First, people would name their children after their parents and their brothers and sisters, so names passed down from generation to generation. Berry Finley has many descendants named Berry. Clarissa had a brother and a son named Morgan. The other thing is that almost everyone had a nickname and that was often the name that

general sessions but not the workshops until I sat listening to Mr. Ragsdale during the Preserving Our Culture workshop. I had to pull out that video camera and get him on tape. I think all young people should hear what he has to say because it certainly puts things in perspective. At one point he was very pointed in describing what it was like for those ancestors to travel in the hold of the slave ships, not being able to move or to attend to any personal needs, etc.

The telling your family story presenters each offered a different way to do that:

- (1) using different family trees – the presenter works at the Thurgood Marshall Center for Service and Heritage in Washington, D.C. She works with youth, many of whom are foster children or children who do not know their biological parent and, therefore, their family tree may not follow the standard. She shared a number of examples of “alternative” family trees.
- (2) writing a play – the second presenter wrote a play, based on the family’s oral history, about an ancestor who had escaped from slavery. He got young family members involved in various roles for the play, which was performed at their family reunion.
- (3) producing a family cookbook – the third presenter gave a comprehensive presentation on producing their cookbook. The thing that makes the book so special is that in addition to the recipes it includes anecdotal information and family stories that pertain to some of the recipes. The presenter shared how her mother, like so many others, cooks by feel and touch and never measures anything. But in order to include her recipes in the book, the ingredients needed to be measured. So she would ask her mother, for example, “how much flour do you need?” And her mother replied, “Oh, just enough.” What the presenter ended up doing was taking the “just enough” amount of flour and putting it into the measuring cup to determine how much it was.

The third presenter’s talk inspired me so much I have decided to work on producing a cookbook of my family’s recipes. Along with the recipes, the book also will include anecdotal information and family

stories, as this book will be as much about memories as about food. I hope it will become a treasured family heirloom to many. So I have sent the word out to cousins and other family members – both male and female as we have a host of great cooks in the family – to be prepared at our reunion in July to contribute recipes.

In the spirit of Alex Haley, remember that the family you reunion with today represents the roots of future generations. By planting the seeds now and nurturing the roots, the family tree will grow sturdy and resilient to face the world tomorrow.

Family Reunion

First, they’ll recognize the ancestors and pour libations one by one

Because, they’ll recognize the importance of their Family Reunion...

A call in the middle of the night, a wedding, a funeral, sometimes a fight

A baby born, a loan’s come due, a graduation anniversary and a card that says, “I love you”

A Sunday morning breakfast, a cookout in July, the time that Uncle

Robert tried to do the Electric Slide

The family comes from out of town to join the family here, they share some

jokes, some memories, they share some smiles and tears

Prayer and faith intermingle, with a sermon and gospel songs:

Pass Me Not Oh Gentle Savior, Precious Lord and Pressing On...

No, not everything is perfect, not everything is right, not everybody’s coming because they have been downsized...

But of all those who make it, and all of those who come, will be a part of all of those who recognize they’re one
And who recognize the importance of a Family Reunion...

Official Poem of the Family Reunion Institute, “Family Reunion” by Jo-Ann Kelly. Reprinted with the permission of the Family Reunion Institute, Dr. Ione Vargus, Chair

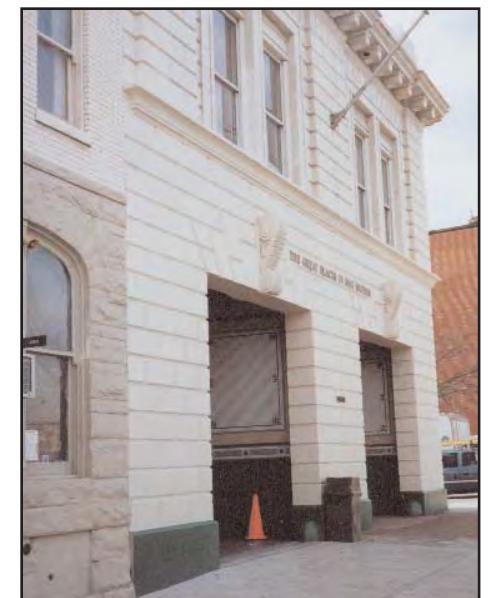
RESOURCES

Family Reunion Institute
Temple University, School of Social Administration, Ritter Hall Annex
1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 204-8623
(215) 204-8606 (Fax)
www.temple.edu/fri/familyreunion.

REUNIONS Magazine
P. O. Box 11727
Milwaukee, WI 53211-0727
www.reunionsmag.com

Pathfinders Travel Magazine
6424 N. 13th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19126
www.pathfinderstravel.com

- “For Every Season – The Complete Guide to African American Celebrations Traditional to Contemporary” by Barbara Eklof
- “The Family Reunion Sourcebook” by Edith Wagner
- “Family Reunion Planner” by Donna Beasley
- “Family Reunion Handbook - A Complete Guide to Reunion Planning” by Tom Ninkovich



Entrance to the Great Blacks in Wax Museum, Baltimore, MD.

One of the great joys of this adventure has been connecting with living relatives I never knew I had. I often commented that I could stumble over my relatives on the street and never know who they were. This actually happened to me ... I had a couple of dates with a cousin – a distant cousin – before we realized the family connection. This is a warning: KNOW YOUR FAMILY!

spelled Kraut. I have since learned many lessons about spelling in the census. Using the Soundex, I found a Julian (later to be corrected to Julianne) Crout living in Laurens in 1870 with a daughter named Clarissa. Could this be my Classy? Eventually, I proved that it was. I have since learned that South Carolina is the only state where Crout is spelled with a C instead of a K.

So at the end of this searching, over the course of a year and a half, I knew that all of my ancestors on my Dad’s side had come from Laurens County, South Carolina. Most of them had moved to Cadron Township, Faulkner County, Arkansas in the 1880s, although the Pittses had not come until around 1915. As my research continued and the list of family surnames broadened, I found many more people connected to me who had followed this same migration route from Laurens, South Carolina to Cadron Township, Arkansas.

As a young black girl, I wondered how our family had come to have so many Irish names: Madden, Pitts, Finley. After I began doing research on the family, I began to do some research on the Laurens area and found that it had been settled by Scotch-Irish people who had traveled into the South from the Northeastern states, adopting the slaveholding habits of the area. Thus the origin of those names.

One of the facts that I began to notice was that while my Madden relatives were classified racially as black on every census, my Pitts, Crout and Finley relatives were designated mulatto when that designation was still in use. This may mean that somewhere in the past is a

acres from Hampton when he died. One of my projects is to find the documentation to support this story. The story continues that after Berry died, the land was divided up among his children and brother. Berry’s son, John and his family, and J.D. and Dolly and their family lived in the house until about 1915, when white people ran them out and burned down the house. The story doesn’t supply the reason. I have no documentation on this yet, but it would explain why J.D. and Dolly came to Arkansas at that time.

As I continued my research, I began to see several patterns. First of all, people in that era did not travel alone. As I put it, they traveled in clumps. People moved to a new place with their family and their neighbors. There was a big exodus in the 1880s. What was going on? I began to study the historical background my family had been living in so I could begin to understand what motivated them to move. By the early 1880s, the brief period of reconstruction was over, the Southern governments were instituting the infamous Jim Crow laws. The lives of black people were becoming severely restricted again. In the meanwhile, lands in the West were opening up. Labor was needed, labor agents roamed the South, enticing people to move to the West, to Kansas or Oklahoma or Arkansas, promising a life of ease and plenty. Some went so far as to describe a land of tropical sun and pineapple, a glorious sunny Eden. They would give whole families one-way train tickets. Or people would band together in wagon trains and head West. One cousin says he was told of relatives coming to Cadron on the train. Another says that her grandfather and his family traveled by

Family Reunions: Reconnecting and Celebrating Your Roots



Carole Neal is a past officer and past Membership Chair of AAGSNC. She is Family Historian for both sides of her family and has been seriously researching her family's roots since 1996. She has coordinated family reunions for both paternal and maternal gatherings. In addition to AAGSNC, she is a member of the Ark-La-Tex Genealogical Association, the Louisiana Genealogical and Historical Society, the National Genealogical Society, the California Genealogical Society, and is in the process of establishing a part-time consultancy as Advisor, Genealogy and Reunion Planning.

Ms. Neal may be reached at cen@worldnet.att.net.

As summer approaches, many families are preparing to gather in celebration – to reconnect and recommit to strengthening their family. Family reunions provide food for the soul and allow for a “coming together” to honor the elders, to remember those who have passed on, and to celebrate the living. These gatherings also provide an opportunity to share the family history.

There are different approaches to organizing or planning a family reunion and an abundance of resource information is available for those who take on this activity. Through this article I'll share information about one of those resources: The Family Reunion Institute of Temple University.

In partnership with Pathfinders Travel Magazine, the Institute presented the **12th Annual Family Reunion Conference March 8-10, 2002, in Baltimore, MD.** This annual event provides a wonderful opportunity for reunion planners and others to meet, network, and exchange information and ideas. The conference was great!! The Maryland Division of Tourism, the George Department of Industry, Trade & Tourism, and the Baltimore Convention and Visitors Association sponsored the conference.

For anyone involved in family reunion planning, I encourage attendance at this conference. You will come away re-energized and with information that can help to make your next reunion more memorable. The keynote speakers were poet Sonia Sanchez at the Friday afternoon opening session and Chris Haley, Alex Haley's nephew, at the Saturday morning general session. There were exhibitors present, including several other CVBs (convention and visitors bureaus). The DeKalb (Georgia) CVB representative regularly holds reunion workshops for interested persons. She mentioned they

had 400 reunions last year in her area.

The Saturday morning speak out was facilitated by Edith Wagner, editor of Reunions Magazine who, by the way, encourages people to submit articles about their reunions to the magazine. At the speak out, attendees heard suggestions for dealing with specific challenges they face regarding their reunions and, again, many ideas and solutions to problems were shared.

This was my third time attending the conference. I attended in 1998 and in 1999. Each time I come away with new information. And it is always helpful to get a refresher. Being around others who share my passion for genealogy and family reunions serves to re-energize me.

There were several things that left a marked impression on me: two came during our Friday morning bus tour of Baltimore. Conference attendees toured African American historical sites in Baltimore including the Fells Point area where Frederick Douglass, disguised as a sailor, escaped from slavery. We stopped and got off the bus to see the Frederick Douglass house and to hear more from the tour guide about Douglass' time in Baltimore. The other stop was at The Great Blacks in Wax Museum – a must see when visiting Baltimore.

Some of the exhibits may be hard to stomach, for example, the Lynching Exhibit and the Middle Passage site. When I first ventured down into the replica of the slave ship, there was no one else there. I had to come back up, though. I kept thinking of the Sankofa movie and how the main character was transported back in time to slavery. When some others went down, I went back again but it was a quick walk through for me. The tour

guide, Louis Fields of Baltimore Black Heritage Tours, Inc. and also the Executive Director of the Baltimore African American Tourism Council, Inc., is a fountain of information regarding the history of African Americans in Baltimore. The Council is working to get the various historical sites we saw on the tour officially identified as such. Some of the sites were stops on the Underground Railroad.

The closing session on Sunday morning was uplifting and made the point that, as most family reunions include a Sunday worship service, they should be inclusive. There can be different faiths represented in a family, as well as different denominations within one faith. That morning, faiths represented included Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Baha'i. During the program, attendees joined in reciting the Family Reunion Pledge by Maya Angelou, and in singing “Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing.” We also honored our ancestors with the pouring of libations and calling out of their names. At the conclusion of the service, everyone recited the Reunion Farewell Statement.

The three workshops I attended dealt with preserving our culture, telling your family story, and scrap booking (as a means of maintaining family photos and other pieces of information). I was reminded of the importance of removing photos from those magnetic sheet photo albums and storing the photos using archival albums, instead. One of the Preserving Our Culture workshop presenters stated ‘family reunions should be meaningful – not just a time to party.’ She and her husband travel with their Lest We Forget exhibit which includes some slave artifacts and they speak to young people to help them learn and appreciate the past so that they can have a better future. I videotaped the

was shown on official documents and in the census. It has taken me a year to figure out that the Shug Crout I have found in the census and on deeds and as surety on marriage certificates is actually Morgan Crout, Clarissa's brother.

I also soon learned that spelling was a creative art in the census. I've seen Madden and Maden, Finley and Finly, Clary and Classy. Sorting out someone's age before the era of birth certificates is also an interesting endeavor. My grandmother Lula was six years younger than her sister Lena until the 1920 census, when Lena became younger by two years. This may have been creative license on Lena's part so she would be younger than her husband! The other factor is that people often did not know exactly when they had been born, so they took their best guess, which could change over time.

As with most of us, long buried secrets and misinformation were revealed. My mother had long said that there was Choctaw in the family. I wasn't sure how to do research on Native American ancestry. The first official United States census in Oklahoma was 1910. Fortunately, the African American Genealogical Society, which I had joined shortly after beginning my search, had an Oklahoma study group. I knew that my mother's grandfather was named John Perry and that he had two brothers. I mentioned the possible Choctaw connection at a study group meeting and it turned out that one of the members had with him a CD with all of the Choctaw freedmen names. He immediately pulled up a list with all of the Perrys. As soon as I got home I started comparing it to the names I had gotten from my mother. There was John and his brothers, James and Lester. Lester and John were the same age. Maybe they were twins?

My next step was to go to the National Archives to try to find the Dawes Rolls records. I am fortunate in that I live within half an hour of the National Archives in our area, and only about ten minutes from the Family History Center. It didn't take much searching to find the necessary records. In them I found the name of my first maternal great great grandparent, Austin Perry. And some other information, which then necessitated a call to my mother. First, I told her that I could not

find a blood tie to the Choctaw, only one of ownership. She had had no idea that our ancestors had been enslaved by the Choctaw. A blood tie may exist, but I haven't been able to find it yet. The next thing was that I had to tell her that her grandfather, John Perry, was an “outside child” of Austin Perry. Lester and James were by his wife, Patsy, in Atoka County. John had been born at approximately the same time as Lester, by Sallie Johnson in Kiamichi County. I wasn't sure what her reaction would be, but she just laughed and said there was a lot of that going on back then.

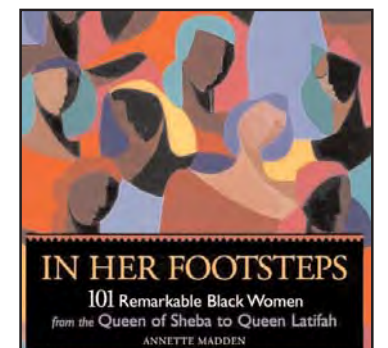
My mother had always spoken very fondly of her paternal grandmother, Etta, who had raised her for a couple of years when she was about ten. Her Dawes Roll record revealed a very interesting woman... a “pistol” as some would call her... who had been married five times by the time she was thirty-five. The family story is that Etta's mother, Levissey Beams, was a slave in Texas, having been sold there by a previous Choctaw owner. When she was to be sold again, the slavemaster's son, named Joe Harper or Hopper, had run off with her to Oklahoma, where Etta was born. My mother's cousin tells the story that Etta's mother died when she was twelve or thirteen and that Etta then fell in with a band of outlaws. The truth of these stories may never be known, but it is for certain that she eventually ended up in Atoka County and married John Perry. When he died, she married Charles Johnson, her fifth and last husband.

One of the great joys of this adventure has been connecting with living relatives I never knew I had. I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and only visited Oklahoma twice in my life, once when I was three and once when I was nine. I often commented that I could stumble over my relatives on the street and never know who they were. This actually has happened to me. I had a couple of dates with a cousin – a distant cousin – before we realized the family connection. This is a warning : Know your family!

Postings on the internet surname lists have been very helpful to me. I have connected with five cousins in various lines who have contributed greatly to my research through the internet. One cousin from Grand Rapids, MI told me about another

cousin in Los Angeles. I have now traveled to meet with her twice and she has supplied me with the only picture I have of my father's family. It was taken in 1925 and my sister and I suspect that my dad is the lap baby in the photo. Up until that photo, I had never seen my father's people, except for my grandmother who died in 1954. It is the only photo I have of my grandfather, who I never met. The family resemblance is uncanny. I handed the photo to my son and asked him if he could pick out his great grandfather. Took him about two seconds to spot the resemblance to his own face staring back at him from the page.

My current project is to find as many deeds as possible and plot out my ancestor's land ownership in both Arkansas and South Carolina. I am also concentrating this year on my mother's family. My dad's family has been relatively easy to trace so I have focused there, that being the path of least resistance, but now I am ready to track down those elusive Danielses, Latsons, and Perrys. As for my original goal of finding all of my great great grandparents, I have found documentation on all but two of them. Along the way, I have met some wonderful people in my genealogical society who are as obsessed as I am (my husband's nickname for me is the “Dead Detective”), connected with long lost relatives all over the county, and developed a passion that will be with me the rest of my life.



You may purchase *In Her Footsteps* from the AAGSNC online store at: www.aagsnc.org/store.htm

The 2nd Annual West Coast Summit on African American Genealogy

In lieu of our normally scheduled membership meeting in June, we will attend the West Coast Summit on African American Genealogy, held in Sacramento on June 15. We urge all AAGSNC members and guests to join us for this historic event.

Last year marked the first time that all of the major black genealogy groups in the West came together for a joint meeting. That tradition continues as the 2nd Annual West Coast Summit on African American Genealogy will be hosted by the AAGSSC (African American Genealogy Society of Sacramento, CA) at the Sacramento Convention Center.

Speakers from the five major black genealogy groups in the West will present a variety of topics. The keynote luncheon will highlight the considerable talent and experience of **Reginald Washington**, the African American Genealogy Subject Area Specialist from the NARA in Washington, D.C. Mr. Washington will speak on *The Southern Claims Commission*, which includes information about those who filed claims with the federal government as a result of goods that were furnished or seized by the U.S. Army during the Civil War. Anyone doing slave research in the American South will benefit from his presentation.

The other workshops are as follows:

- **People of Color in the Bible**, presented by AAGSSC President Denise Griggs

- **Using Color Clues in African American Genealogy Research**, presented by AAGSNC President Dr. Juliet Culliver Crutchfield

- **Lost in Louisiana**, presented by CAAGS member Charlotte Bocage

- **Louisiana Conveyance Records**, presented by SDAAGR member Sharon Gillins

- **Creating a Family History Website**, presented by BGRG member Sandra Hilton

- **Beginning Genealogy**, also presented by CAAGS member Charlotte Bocage

- **Freedmen Enrollment in the Five Civilized Tribes**, presented by AAGSNC member Terry Ligon

- **Native American Research Techniques**, presented by AAGSSC guest Taffy Gould Coutts

- **Black Genealogy in Ontario, Canada**, presented by AAGSNC, CAAGS, and AAGSSC member Lisa B. Lee

- **Constructing a Family History Book**, presented by AAGSSC co-founder Jimmy L. Sumlin

- **Career Goal Setting**, presented by AAGSSC member Delores Griggs

In addition to the workshops and breakout sessions, members are encouraged to bring along their research for an open forum "Show & Tell." A variety of local vendors will be selling their wares, there will be registration gifts for all who attend, and a few lucky attendees will win some exciting door prizes.

The Summit was started by the AAGSNC in Oakland last year, and featured as the keynote speaker, noted genealogist and author, Dr. Dee Parmer-Woodtor, author of "Finding A Place Called Home: a guide to African-American genealogy and historical identity.

Each of the groups participating in the Summit is independently organized and operated. This yearly event gives us the opportunity to meet others who not only share our passion of genealogy, but also the chance to meet others who are researching the same family lines.

Each group has the opportunity to host the Summit each year, choose the topic, location, speakers, etc. The Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (AAHGS), a national black genealogical organization located in Washington, D.C. hosts a yearly conference, but that's over 2,000 miles away and it's difficult for most of us to make that trek to attend the national event. Thus the Summit was born. It behooves us all to support events sponsored by our local genealogy societies as well as our sister-organizations.

For more information about this year's Summit, call Denise Griggs at (916) 383-3031, or see their website www.aagssc.org

CAN WE LEARN ANYTHING BY JOINING NON-BLACK GENEALOGY SOCIETIES?

Black folks think that if it isn't labeled "black," they don't want to have anything to do with it. I have learned so much by attending functions/seminars given by white folks where I was the only black in the audience. I've learned new and interesting sources and methodologies. We really need to expand our focus. We had a member in our group who is Japanese-American. He joined our society because he felt slave genealogy is the closest thing he found to Japanese genealogy. In Japan, if you were poor, your family's identity was tied to the land owner, so you had to research the owner, much like African Americans have to research the slave owner's genealogy. I had no idea of this similarity. We can learn so much more, and share so much more, by realizing our common areas of interest. More importantly, when you identify the name of the slave owner, by definition, you're doing white genealogy. How are you going to research their genealogy unless you know about their methods and sources?

WHAT'S NEXT FOR TONY BURROUGHS?

- 1) Apply for some lineage societies, something I recommend that people do. They can help you prove your research is correct.
- 2) There are several other books I want to write, and I intend to reduce the number of lectures I'm doing in order to write more.
- 3) I have a project I've been working on comparing surnames of former slaves versus the last slave owner's name database, I want to finish and publish.
- 4) I'd like to see how far I can go with my Pennsylvania research. I've been able to get back to my 7th generation ancestor who was born in 1781, and I've traced the slave owner back to England.

WHAT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT GENETIC GENEALOGY?

I'm a little apprehensive about it and at this point I've decided not to participate. Interestingly, in October, I'm going to spend a few days in Bar Harbor, Maine

with Tom Roderick, a geneticist. I'm on the Board of Trustees of the New England Historic Genealogical Society and we brought Tom in as a DNA consultant. I've attended some lectures and private sessions on genetic genealogy and I still have mixed feelings about it. One big problem is that they haven't shown how they can secure DNA data away from people who may want to use it for devious means. Secondly, I haven't seen how it's going to help people doing practical genealogy. One of the problems with genetic genealogy is that it's not being fueled by genealogists – it's being fueled by biologists and money. They're charging \$200 per person to take a DNA sample, which isn't cheap, so I'm a bit skeptical. I don't think we know enough about the science of genetics and the science of genetics with genealogy. Right now, with DNA, you can only trace the female mitochondrial line and the male Y-chromosome line. Where I've had my most success is on neither of those lines, so it won't do me much good.

TELL US ABOUT WRITING "BLACK ROOTS"

I had no idea it would take me ten years to write my book. When I first started it was fifty pages long. It was going to be like the Boy Scout genealogy book. After I wrote it, I passed it out to members of our genealogy society and asked them to critique it. And then I passed it out to people who were not genealogists and asked them the same thing, because I wanted to see if they understood the concepts of genealogy. Speaking is one thing, but writing is totally different. I got a lot of good feedback and I transformed that fifty page book and it started growing. As I started teaching my course, I thought, "this needs to be in the book," and as I started doing lectures, I'd think, "this also needs to be in the book."

When I submitted the proposal for the book, I decided consciously to limit the scope of it. This is not a comprehensive guide on doing black genealogy. I don't talk about doing Reconstruction research, military research, slave research – there's a lot about genealogy that I know about that's not included, because I wanted a beginning guide. I wanted to stop with census records, specifically the 1920 census records. So I figured that if I went into depth and detail up to that point, that

would be good for my readers because I not only wanted to give them the beginning fundamentals from a black perspective, I wanted to go into depth and detail about those things that everyone else was just glossing over.

My contract was for 280 pages, and the book turned out to be 461 pages, while my manuscript was over 700 pages. When my editor received my manuscript she was shocked with what I put together. They had to totally redesign the book. Also, when the deadline came, I was nowhere near finished, so I had no idea that this whole process would take ten years. I was doing consulting, I was lecturing, serving on boards, writing articles, playing tennis tournaments, doing photography ... I was doing a million things all while I was working on this book. Finally, I got to a point where I realized I wasn't getting any younger, and I had to sit down and make a decision, "what is the most important thing you want to do?" because you can die tomorrow. It wasn't an easy decision – I looked at all the projects I had been working on, and decided this book was the most important thing I wanted to do. I took all of my other projects and put them on the back burner in order for me to get it done.

HOW DO YOU GET YOUR LEADS?

I don't really hear the ancestors talk to me, but after you research your ancestors long enough, you feel like you know them and you can kind of put yourself in their shoes and figure out what they were doing and where they were going. You can know about a ton of records but that doesn't mean you can solve your genealogy problems. A lot of it has to deal with analysis, placing yourself in this historical context, and just trying to brainstorm solutions, and then follow those hunches to see which ones pan out.

I'm a list maniac, and once lists are on the computer, it's easier to reorganize them by cutting, pasting and sorting. I'm always putting together lists and when they're completed, I cut & paste completed items into my "done" list, so they don't clutter what I still have to do. That helps me to stay focused.

I've traced so many different lines and

... continued on page 14



Oakland
AAGSNC



Seattle
BGRG



Los Angeles
CAAGS



San Diego
SDAAGR



Sacramento
AAGSSC

With regard to the fact that the AAGSNC needs to find a new webmaster, in Chicago there's an organization of black computer people, Black Data Processing Association BDPA, which has chapters in other cities. The San Francisco Bay Area's chapter is the BDPA Silicon Valley Chapter in Sunnyvale. I suggest you go to them and make a presentation to find someone to maintain your current website.

HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO START DOING GENEALOGY FULL-TIME?

Well, quite honestly, I thought I could do a better job talking about black genealogy than any of the white genealogists who were out there. I'd already lectured once or twice to AAHGS in D.C., and having lectured in Chicago before, my lectures were well received. While I was on the Board of the Federation (of Genealogical Societies), I met Richard Able who was in charge of the History and Genealogy section of the Cincinnati Public Library. Richard invited me to speak at the Ohio Genealogy Society's Annual State Conference, and he didn't want me to speak on black genealogy. That was a real tribute because I wasn't being pigeon-holed as an expert on only black genealogy. Richard, was a great genealogist, and had a lot of foresight.

Once I gave that first national lecture, the following year I was accepted to speak at one conference but rejected from another. Then FGS decided to do a lecture dedicated to James Dent Walker. When Jimmy died in 1992, they decided to do this lecture in '93. Since the lecture was devoted to Jimmy FGS preferred it be on military records, National Archives records, or black records, since those were his areas of expertise. They invited me to give the first lecture, so I did it on Buffalo Soldiers because he'd helped me research my Buffalo Soldier ancestor. I was very honored to be the first and since then, the FGS does a James Dent Walker Lecture every year.

After that, I was invited to give more national lectures, serve on more Boards, and one thing led to another. Then I got to a point where I was doing more genealogy research, lecturing, and serving on Boards. Genealogy was conflicting with my work as a computer consultant. Computers, as you know, were changing every year, and networks, which had been

the norm for large corporations for many years, were becoming the norm for small businesses. My computer clients were not-for-profits and small businesses. Once they started getting into networks, because they had multiple computers, I had a decision to make – did I want to get into computers full-time, or cut it loose and get into genealogy full-time? With computers, I'd have to make a tremendous investment in hardware, software, and training, which I'd already be doing, but I'd have to continue to update and upgrade – it never ends. So around 1992, I sat down and decided to go into genealogy full-time and cut loose my computer consulting.

WAS IT SCARY?

No – it's still scary! You can make good money in computers, but it's not where my passion was.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE THINKING OF LETTING GO OF THEIR DAY JOB AND PURSUE GENEALOGY FULL-TIME?

Don't let go of their day job, unless they have some really good skills. With genealogy, you really have to be creative. There's only a few ways to make money in genealogy – you can publish, but if you're selling just to the genealogy community you're not going to make a lot of money because the book-buying genealogy community is very small. My book wasn't published to the genealogy community, it was published by Simon and Schuster, because I wasn't looking to sell to genealogists. I was looking to sell to non-genealogists who wanted to become genealogists – that's a much larger audience.

You can do genealogy for clients, but most genealogists I know don't have the right type of clients to make it profitable. It's only profitable if you do genealogy for people who can afford it – people who are not genealogists.

The other way to make money is by doing lectures, but you have to have enough experience where your lecture fees escalate to the point where it's worth your while and then again, you realize that the people who can really afford you are not genealogists. I tell most folks, "Stay with your day job," then if you get to a point

where you can make a living doing genealogy full-time, go for it – but it's not easy. But I don't regret it at all, not at all. I enjoy what I do, I love what I do, and I cannot imagine doing anything else. I really feel I'm fortunate in that I've found my life's work and I love what I do. I know that there are so few people who ever get to this point.

WHAT COULD/SHOULD BLACK GENEALOGY SOCIETIES DO BETTER?

- 1) I would go outside my group to get needed skills;
- 2) I would concentrate on marketing and promotion. A lot of people want to get into societies but they have no idea a society even exists. In Chicago, our society is over fifteen years old and though we have about 250 members, we could easily double or triple that number;
- 3) I would concentrate on finances. Most societies don't have fund-raisers, have no clue to financing, don't think of endowments, nor provide for members to contribute money to their society when they die.
- 4) They could do a lot more projects. There are tons of indexing projects that need to be done that will help other genealogists down the road.
- 5) They don't encourage their members to publish their genealogies, and I mean verbally, in writing, and by supplying support to help publish their research. We need to get to the point where we start publishing our research. Since most black people have never written anything before, they're very apprehensive about their writing skills, let alone publishing skills. Here again, we can go outside our society to get help with writing and publishing.

ANY SUGGESTIONS ON GRANT WRITING?

That's an excellent idea, however the caveat I have with that is that I'd advise the society to have a project first before they go out to seek a grant. One of the most dangerous things is to give someone some money with nothing to do. Put together a project then seek funding for your project. There's money out there, you just need to have a worthwhile project in order to get the money.

Marriages of People of Color De Witt County TX • 1847-1883

This is the fourth installment of **Barbara Shepherd Dunn's** transcription of the De Witt County, TX marriages of people of color. This installment lists all the colored brides and grooms with surname beginning with the letter "D." These marriages were transcribed from the De Witt County, TX Marriage License General Index, Books C and D, FHL film 1012058.

GROOM	License	Page	BRIDE	Comments
Davidson, Frank	538	150	Famor Buchanan	
Douglas, Nicholas	553	157	Marinda Carroll	
Daniel, Lewis	567	164	Maria Lynch	
Drake, James	724	243	Clara North	
Drake, Dock	729	245	Filia Thomas	D, Pct 2, pg 35, HH246
Drake, Nick	735	248	Easter Peebles	D, Pct w, pg 22, HH149
Dowdle, Lewis	748	255	Mary William	
Davis, Beverly	823	292	Mary Adits	D, Pct 2, Pg 22, HH155
Dally, Benj	842	301	Mary Thomas	
Dally, Berry	1442	147	Mary Jane Campbell	D, Pct 3, Pg 19, HH137
Duglas, Stanford	1475	158	Ada Tippin	
Doak, Levi	1955	313	Hannahs Taylor	D, Pct 5, Pg 24, HH172
David, William	1966	317	Senalle Taylor	

BRIDE	GROOM
Dandridge, Susan	James Norwood
Duran, Liney	Andrew Lear
Dunham, Mary	Spencer Johnson
Douglass, Mary	Willis White
Darden, Isy	John Brown
Darby, Jennie	Joseph Pasant
Davis, Mary	Simp Washington
Dolly, Mary	John Allen

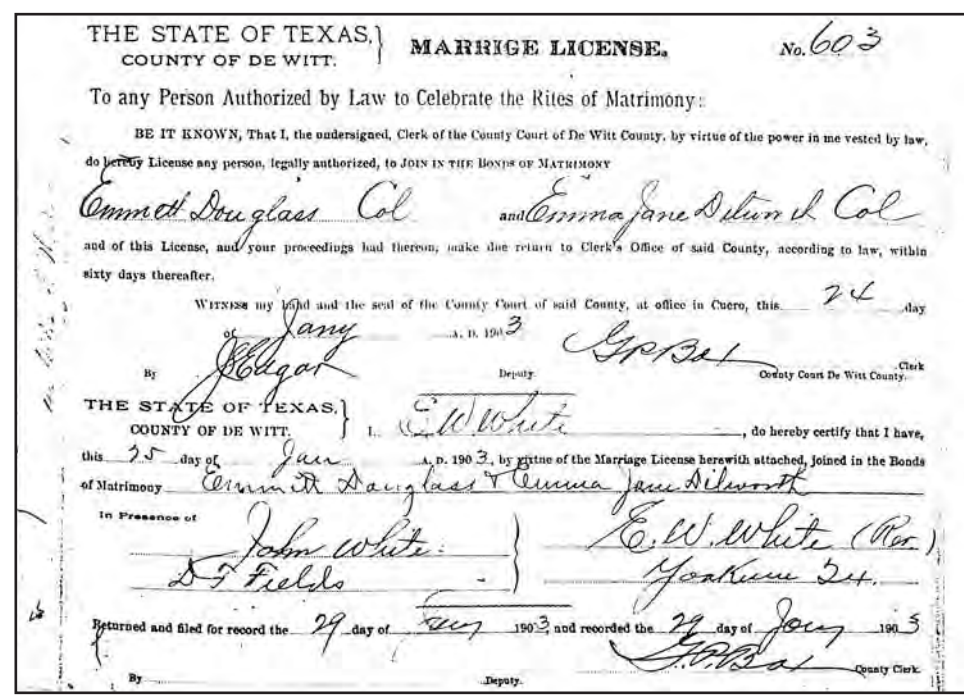


Barbara Shepherd Dunn is the First Vice President and Fundraising Chair of the AAGSNC. While researching her own family's history last year,

she decided to extract all of the marriages of free people of color from the counties of De Witt, Gonzales, and Lavaca, TX. Barbara realized that the names of the witnesses were as important as the names of the brides and grooms and rather than going back over the microfilm again and again, it made more sense for her to extract ALL of the information for the licenses of black folks and keep them for future reference. She has extracted over 1,000 records and is considering writing the local history of the area, in concert with a local Texas historian.

Her family comes from TX, GA, and LA, and she has been researching her genealogy for over thirty years.

Ms. Dunn can be reached at fundraising@aagsnc.org



You can see the notation "Col" after the names of the bride and groom. Additional information found on the actual license: names of minister, witnesses, and the date the license was filed.

An Interview With Tony Burroughs

by Lisa B. Lee



Professional genealogist Tony Burroughs, FUGA is an internationally known genealogist and author, who teaches genealogy at Chicago State University. He lectures throughout the United States and Canada on all aspects of genealogy. Author of "Black Roots: A Beginners Guide to Tracing the African American Family Tree," Mr. Burroughs serves on the Board of Trustees for the Association of Professional Genealogists, the New England Historic Genealogical Society, and the Friends of Genealogy at Newberry Library. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the National Genealogical Society, and the title of Fellow of the Utah Genealogical Association (FUGA).

Mr. Burroughs has appeared as a guest expert in the PBS series Ancestors, CBS Sunday Morning, and ABC World News Tonight; quoted in Time Magazine, the New York Times, People, Jet, and other leading publications. For more information about him, see his website, www.tonyburroughs.com

Mr. Burroughs may be reached at T-Burroughs@csu.edu

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Recently, I had the delightful pleasure of spending a few hours interviewing Tony Burroughs in Salt Lake City. Following is a transcript of our conversation and I hope you find this to be as interesting as did I. - Ed.

WHEN/WHERE WERE YOU BORN? Born in Chicago, IL in 1948

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED? WHEN WERE YOU BITTEN BY THE GENEALOGY BUG?

I was a student at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, IL, working with the Black Student Union in '68-'69. We petitioned the school to get an African American studies program, which was successful. We had no Black History Month in those days – it was Negro History Week. We had five days to have programs and our keynote speaker on Friday was Alex Haley, but it had nothing to do with Roots. Alex Haley was known for being the best selling author of The Autobiography of Malcolm X, so we were anticipating hearing about Malcolm. But we didn't hear anything about Malcolm – instead, he told us his whole story about Kunta Kinte and Chicken George – it was a fascinating story.

Let me ask you a trivia question: What was the original title of Roots? Alex Haley had originally titled his story, Before This Anger. Someone told me about that and as I was researching through his papers, I saw it mentioned there as well. I've only run into one other person who knew that.

None of us had ever heard anything about genealogy, blacks or whites. At that time

the only people doing genealogy in the '60's were people trying to get into the D.A.R. (Daughters of the American Revolution) – the masses were totally unaware of genealogy. So I decided that one day before I die, I'd like to research my family tree, but at the time, I was just trying to get out of school. I was majoring in Physical Education, but I changed my major to African American History after we got a program. Six years later, in 1975, I was at my mom's house for Thanksgiving dinner. While waiting for the relatives to arrive, I was reading the paper and saw an article about paying thanks to your ancestors on Thanksgiving and tracing your family tree. The article, which was written by a member of the Chicago Genealogical Society and published in the Chicago Sun Times, talked about a book by the Boy Scouts. Since I was a Boy Scout when I was young I knew where the Boy Scouts store was located. I went downtown and bought the book. The Boy Scouts didn't have a genealogy badge when I was a kid, but they did have one at the time the article was published (1975). The book talked about interviewing your mom, your dad, and your grandparents, and that's how I started. I got hooked from day one. I loved talking to the older people and listening to the stories. I ended up from that first day, hooked on genealogy.

By that time, I was teaching physical education and coaching track and basketball. I'd do research on weekends, after school, and during the summers. I did research for about two or three years – and this was before personal computers were invented. The latest census that was available for research at that time was the 1900 census. In fact, the National

Archives, which now has 13 branches, had a branch in Chicago, but they didn't have all of the census records. So I had to go to a place called The Center for Researching Libraries (CRL), which was a consortium of libraries, I think just in the Midwest. Individual libraries extend their budgets by contributing to the Center for Researching Libraries. So when the University of Illinois, University of Chicago, University of Michigan, and other institutions, contribute money into a common pool, the pool buys resources that institutions cannot buy individually. The Center for Researching Libraries was setup for these institutions to borrow library materials. Since I live in Chicago, and they're based in Chicago, I could just drive down and use their resources.

The Newberry Library was open at that time, so I also did a lot of research there, as well as the CRL, the NARA, the Chicago Public Library to a certain extent, and a little bit at the Chicago Historical Society. I'm a third-generation Chicagoan. My paternal ancestors came to Chicago from South Carolina in 1887, so there was a lot of research I needed to do in Chicago. My Mom was the first one in her family to come to Chicago – migrating here in the 1940's, from Pittsburgh.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO REALIZE THAT GENEALOGY WAS WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE?

Well, what happened was after I was involved in it for a while, I wanted to start a black genealogy library, but I couldn't figure out how to raise the money. I taught school nine months of the year, but was paid on the twelve month plan – so I

was able to spend the Summers doing genealogy – I really wanted to do this stuff full time. One Summer I was going to Europe. I had the trip paid for, but I cancelled and spent the whole Summer doing genealogy. Still trying to figure out how to finance the library, I started a genealogical society, the African American Institute of Ancestry (no longer in existence). We had about ten members and we met on a monthly basis. However, it wasn't setup to be like a society as they exist now – it was really setup to start a library. The AAIA existed for a few years, around 1976 – 1977, but disbanded because I couldn't figure out how to finance the library. As you know, if you volunteer for a society, it's a lot of work.

Personal computers didn't exist and I had so much information – I was swimming in paper. I had a hard time just processing it all. One of the things I plan to do is scan

Most genealogical societies across the United States are run by retirees, senior citizens, and women, most of whom traditionally lack business experience or strong organizational experience to run a not-for-profit society, so they don't have the strong management skills that are needed. If the needed skills are not within, the society needs to go outside the society to get them and have those people take out a membership. But most societies don't understand the concept of going outside and bringing in someone who has the skills they need to get the job done. Societies can really expand their circle by bringing in people from outside the organization

in those early notes I took years ago. I may have them microfilmed, but right now, it's easier to scan them in to protect them for future generations. I'd spent two or three years researching, and I had a real information overload. I kind of got burned out on genealogy, and stopped researching for quite a while.

Another black genealogy society sprung up in Chicago (the African American Genealogical and Historical Society of Chicago – AAGHSC) and they had asked me to join – of which I eventually became President. However, I didn't join initially, and about the same time, Jimmy Walker's society had started in D.C. (the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society) and I had an opportunity to become a charter member of that society in 1977. That's about the time that I started to get burned out. I didn't join either society, but when I would go to art fairs, I would often see the AAGHSC had a booth. I'd see friends of mine and they would often ask me to join. The main reason why I didn't join their group was

because they had their meetings on Sunday afternoons. On Sundays, I either went sailing, or I played tennis. For a long time, I just couldn't go to the meetings, but for some reason, genealogy just kept eating at me, and eating at me – the ancestors were calling me – so I thought that if I joined the society it would gradually get me back into genealogy. Once I joined, I would go to a meeting every now and then, because my Sunday afternoons were still pretty full. This must have been sometime in the mid '80's, maybe around '85 or '86. They didn't have tennis tournaments every Sunday, and for some reason I stopped sailing. So I started going to the society meetings on a more regular basis, the 2nd Sunday of the month. People saw I had a lot of experience, so they started asking me to give lectures. I'd given some lectures back in the '70's. I remember one lecture I gave on Evidence – analyzing

evidence, primary evidence, secondary evidence, how to weigh evidence, etc. I decided to devote a substantial portion of my book (*Black Roots*) to evidence. It's not covered in any other African American guide, and in other beginning books, they either don't cover it, or they just brush over it. Many people think it's a more advanced topic, but researchers really need to know about evidence from jump street.

After the society asked me to give lectures, they asked me to serve on their Board of Directors. They actually asked me to be Vice-President before I was even just a Board Member. This was in 1988 or '89, so I served as Vice-President for two years. The main responsibility of the Vice-President was to be Chairman of the conference. The Chicago group was not related to the AAHGS in Washington, D.C. – the Chicago group was totally independent. The problem was that instead of having one conference per year, we had two – a Spring conference and a Fall conference. In two years, I did four

conferences – I was about to burn out again. It was an interesting experience and I learned a lot. I learned a lot of the deficiencies of the society. Professionally, I had left teaching and became a computer consultant, and in my work with business, I saw that the genealogy world was really lacking in technology. I was able to transfer some of my technology skills into the society. I also saw they were really lacking in organizational skills and management skills, both of which I was also able to bring to the society.

When I first became Vice-President, we had 65 members. I served as Vice-President for two years then as President for two years, and by the end of my Presidency, we had over 200 paid members. During that same period, our treasury increased from about \$1300 to over \$10,000. It was strictly by implementing certain management

programs, fund-raising, publicity, and other things that any organization should do.

Most genealogical societies across the United States are run by retirees, senior citizens, and women, most of whom traditionally lack business experience or strong organizational experience to run a not-for-profit society. They don't have the strong management skills that are needed. In order for our organization to be run properly, I had to find people with skills. If the skills were not within the society, I had to go outside the society to get them, and have them take out a membership. I would say "You got the skills, buy a membership – \$15." The people were interested in the cause, they had the skills and the desire, so we brought them on board. But most societies think they have to do everything from within, and they don't understand the concept of going outside and bringing in someone who has the skills they need to get the job done. Societies can really expand their circle by bringing in people from outside the organization.