



# The Baobab Tree

Journal of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California, Inc • Founded 1996

Summer 2010

## Slaves in Church Records

By Bill Melson



### Bethel Baptist Church, Franklin, GA 2009

While researching my Melson ancestors from Georgia, I had read a history of the area where they were emancipated. It indicated that there was a Bethel Baptist Church whose records dating back to 1827 were saved and microfilmed.

The church is located in Franklin, Georgia, on the border between Heard and Coweta Counties. Further research on whites with the Melson surname in the county where my ancestors were emancipated included local history that mentioned a W. H. Melson as a deacon in Bethel Baptist Church.

My next family reunion was coming up in the fall of 2005 in Georgia, and it couldn't come fast enough. I wanted to include a trip to the Georgia state archives in Morrow to see if they had a copy of these films. I wanted to search them to see if I could find some clue to the ownership and the travels of my ancestors.

At the archive I searched the card catalog for Heard County and church records, and bingo! They had the minutes from Bethel Baptist Church on microfilm.

While reviewing the church minutes, I found that one of my ancestors, a man named Andrew, was baptized into the church in 1861, and that he was the servant of W. H. Melson. With this information and other data, I was able to establish W. H. Melson as the last slave owner of my ancestors. This was also my first knowledge of slaves being baptized into the church of their owner.

Other members of my family were also referenced in these minutes, with the key series occurring in 1866. On May 12, 1866 a committee was appointed to meet with the church's colored brethren to see if they wanted to break away from Bethel and form their own church.

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### Welcome New Members!

Judith Collins

William Dawkins

Georgia Martin

Michael Willis

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## EDITOR'S NOTE



The idea of keeping a diary never appealed to me until I attended a genealogy workshop a few months ago. One of the presenters said that after a years-long quest to learn about his great-grandfather, he finally found his burial site. Sadly, the marker had deteriorated and only pebbles remained. He challenged the group to do what our ancestors didn't: leave a record of our own lives for posterity. So as you search for the past, I urge you to also preserve the stories of the living. Start a journal and share your story with the children in your family.

*Vernester Sheeler*

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By M. Howard Edwards



## GET OUT OF THE HOUSE!

The internet is invaluable as a source of genealogical data, however, it cannot eliminate the ancestral home as a source of information. The mountains of information in local libraries, court houses, historical societies, and churches -- and the people who inhabit them -- will likely never be on the internet. The old friends of the family or the people who knew them are assuredly not as accessible online as they are in person.

Writing the family history in a style that is interesting to the reader requires local color not discernable through the internet. The very best way to capture this local flavor is simply to go and sample it. We need to see what the streets are made of; are there sidewalks? In what condition are the buildings? Are any old ones left? What is the weather like this time of the year? How do folks dress these days? Are they taking care of the church, the graveyard? It is tough to answer these questions on the World Wide Web.

Many of us who have gone back home have had really great experiences with the residents helping us in our research. They are happy to see us and happy to help us. As a vacation trip you can't beat it.

Of course, you need to be prepared, knowing what information is needed, and having some idea where to find it. That way you make efficient use of your time and avoid wasting the time of your hosts.

If family still lives back home, this is an opportunity to get acquainted or reacquainted.

If no family members still reside there, it is even more important to travel the roads, enter the buildings, and share the sights that enveloped your ancestors. It will help shed light on the decisions folks did or did not make, and it sure will add flavor to your writing.

## COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER

Taking a break from digging around and banging my head against the brick wall genealogy so often presents, I browsed through a book to see what success looked like. The book was *Twenty Families of Color in Massachusetts 1742-1998*, by Franklin A. Dorman, New England Historical Society, 1998. In the introduction the author wrote:

*One public misconception which needs to be corrected is that genealogy has only to do with the rich and famous. The truth is that all families over time have heroes and villains, wealthy and poor, adventurers and homebodies, well-known and unknown persons, and such diversity should be viewed as a strength, not a weakness. We all need to have a sense of belonging somewhere; the family is our first opportunity to be accepted for what we are, and in a diverse extended family we have many different examples after which to model ourselves into what we want to be. Family ties can be strengthened by a knowledge of family history; we all need to honor the oral tradition, listening in our youth to stories of the past and passing those stories on to younger generations as we become older. No one is born, lives, and dies in a vacuum; as family members, we all belong to the past and to the future, and in this sense of continuity there lies a kind of immortality.*

And with that, I went back to digging around the brick wall, looking for a passage. I couldn't have said it better myself.

**Editor's Note:** On May 22, 2010, I attended commencement exercises at California State University Sacramento and watched with pride as my brother, Tyehimba Kokayi, and his daughter, Nailah Kokayi, received their Master's Degrees. The family celebrated afterwards at the home of Nailah's maternal grandparents, Eddie and Alice Seabron. Knowing how much I value family history, Grandma Alice pulled out a book called *A Living History of South West Virginia: Hometown Memories, Coal Camps, and Castor Oil*. It contained a story titled "Bringing Grandpa Home," written by her sister, Arlene Thompson Hayes. It is reprinted here, unedited and exactly as it appeared in the book, with permission of the publisher, *Hometown Memories*. It gives a little insight into the life of the Thompson family. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did. **V. S.**

## Bringing Grandpa Home

I was born in Bluefield, West Virginia on November 4, 1934 in a two bedroom house on High Street. The oldest of ten, there was a new baby every other year. I lived with my mother's mother and her husband, which wasn't Grandma's first husband, or Mama's daddy.

Mama, Daddy, then I came along. Chamber pots were known to us as slop jars and when I got big enough, it was my job to empty it because I was the oldest.

The outhouse was down the hill from the house and Mama always got dressed to go, lipstick, powder, and all in case someone saw her on the way.

As the kids came, we had to line up once a week for a tablespoon of castor oil. I was first, so I started throwing up before they even got to me.

Water was heated on a coal stove on Saturday nights and everyone took a bath in the same water. When the brothers got a little older they told the girls snakes were in the outhouse so we would be scared to go.

During the war, there was a siren that went off at night and someone would knock on the door to make sure all the lights were off. Then after a while another siren to let us know it was over. I guess so the planes wouldn't know where to drop the bombs. It was really scary.

Mama used to sing on the big old radio Grandma had in the living room and whenever the program came on she would put me in her lap



**Mama Albertha Thompson**  
Born February 19, 1912

in the rocking chair to listen to the radio. "Look Down That Lonesome Road" was the theme song. All of the kids inherited Mama's voice and me so church was a must. And we were into singing in the choir, singing in school, operettas, etc.

There was no TV at that time so we had wiener roasts, socials, different other things to do.

The phone was a wonderful way for grownups to hear other people's business. So they never hung up if they tried to make a call and heard someone's voice.

**By Arlene Hayes of Bluefield, WV**

A weekly paper called the "Shadow" was another way to find out gossip.

Spankings at school were in the hand with a ruler or a switch from a tree.

We had a washer wringer in the kitchen, summertime it was on the back porch. I tried to help once and my arm went all the way through the wringer. I was so skinny it didn't even hurt.

Saturday movies were ten cents for kids and 25 cents if you were over 12. We could stay all day. Popcorn and candy bars were five cents and Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, etc. was usually playing.

Daddy, Harold Thompson, told us he used to walk backwards into the movie so they would think he was coming out and wouldn't have to pay.

Mama's and Grandma's cooking was great except on the coal stove it took all day, and they only used plain salt and pepper.

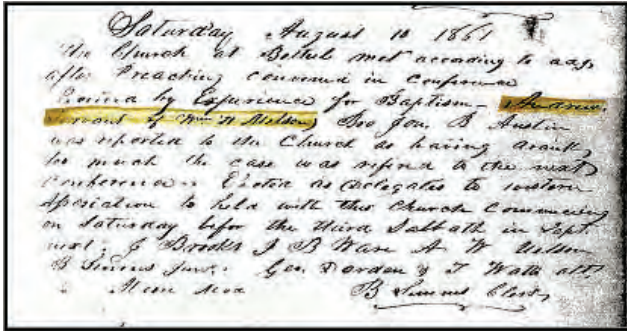
Grandma, Artolin Griffin, had a sewing machine; you had to work your foot back and forth, and made clothes for us.

Playing hooky from school wasn't done too often, but once when I did I had on a shiny chartreuse jacket, and the teacher told me the next day she watched me all the way home.

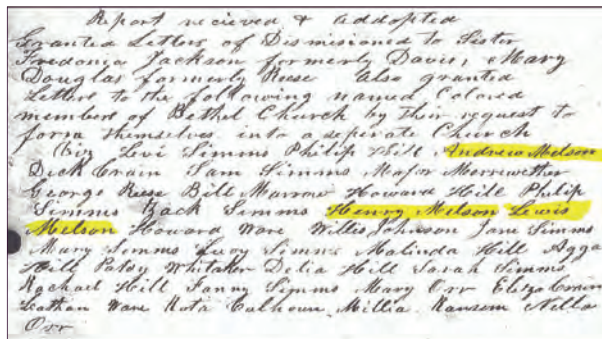
*(Continued on page 7)*

## Slaves in Church

(Continued from page 1)

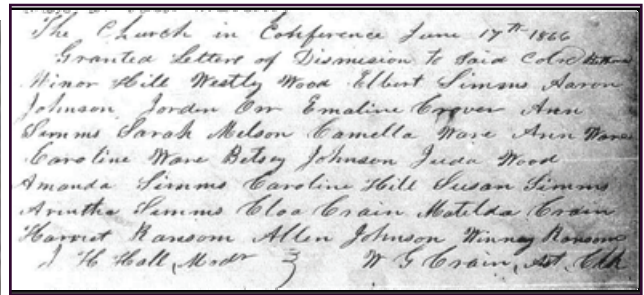


Church minutes show Andrew, a Melson ancestor, was baptized in 1861.



Bethel Baptist Church minutes, June 09, 1866, giving Blacks permission to form their own church.

In June of 1866, the colored members were given letters of dismission to form a separate church, the men on June 9<sup>th</sup> and the women on June 17<sup>th</sup> [see list below].



Bethel Baptist Church minutes, June 17, 1866.

This find enabled me to tie together my great-great-grandfather's family, and to extend my family tree on the Melson side to 1830. I documented this family history in a video which I produced in 2007, and shared with family members during the 2008 Melson family reunion in Newnan, Georgia. Even those who live in the area were not aware of Bethel Baptist Church and the role it plays in their history.

On Sunday afternoon we attended a family service at Bethel Heard Baptist Church, whose congregation is entirely African-American, and whose pastor is a family member. Before our service ended, I offered to escort members to visit Bethel Baptist Church.

Although the two churches are less than 300 feet apart, they are separated by the street, a small cemetery and woods that conceal Bethel Baptist. Given their proximity and the similar names, Bethel Heard may well

(Continued on page 5)

### The 53 Who Left Bethel

These are the names, extracted from the 1866 minutes of Bethel Baptist Church, of the 53 Black men and women given permission to form their own church after Emancipation. Some spellings may be inaccurate because the microfilmed image was not always legible.

- |                |                   |                |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Rata Calhoun   | Andrew Melson     | Jane Simms     |
| Cloa Crain     | Henry Melson      | Levi Simms     |
| Dick Crain     | Lewis Melson      | Lucy Simms     |
| Eliza Crain    | Sarah Melson      | Mary Simms     |
| Matelda Crain  | Major Merrewether | Philip Simms   |
| Emaline Groves | Bill Morrow       | Sam Simms      |
| Agga Hill      | Jorden Orr        | Sarah Simms    |
| Caroline Hill  | Mary Orr          | Susan Simms    |
| Delia Hill     | Nella Orr         | Zack Simms     |
| Howard Hill    | Harriet Ransom    | Ann Ware       |
| Malinda Hill   | Millie Ransom     | Camella Ware   |
| Neindor Hill   | Winney Ransom     | Caroline Ware  |
| Philip Hill    | George Reese      | Howard Ware    |
| Rachael Hill   | Amanda Simms      | Leathan Ware   |
| Aaron Johnson  | Ann Simms         | Patsy Whitaker |
| Allen Johnson  | Arentha Simms     | Juda Wood      |
| Betsy Johnson  | Elbert Simms      | Westly Wood    |
| Willis Johnson | Fanny Simms       |                |

## Slaves in Church

(Continued from page 4)



**Bethel Baptist Church was rebuilt after a fire, but the pews are original.**



**The lectern is another of the original furnishings.**



**Bethel Baptist Church Cemetery, which may be mixed-race.**



**Trees separate this African-American cemetery from the Bethel Baptist Church cemetery.**

be the church started by my ancestors who left Bethel Baptist Church, but I don't yet know Bethel Heard's history.

After our family service, about 10 of us climbed into cars and took the short drive to Bethel and were surprised to find a car parked outside and the church door open. I had visited the church and cemetery on at least two occasions, but never encountered anyone. This time, two people were there, the director of Bethel Baptist Church and another member. They welcomed us in, and invited us to stay for service, which we learned is held at 1:00 p.m. on the third Sunday each month—just often enough to keep the church's legacy alive, since its

membership has dwindled to less than 50 from a high of 350.

We asked to look around and were given an open invitation to explore the church and grounds. We started our tour inside. The lectern and pews are original. We were told that the original church caught fire and burned to the ground, but they were able to save the furniture. They then built the current church, which is a replica of the original.

Next to Bethel Church is a cemetery, which may contain the remains of Blacks as well as whites. Separated from it

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## Slaves in Church

(Continued from page 5)



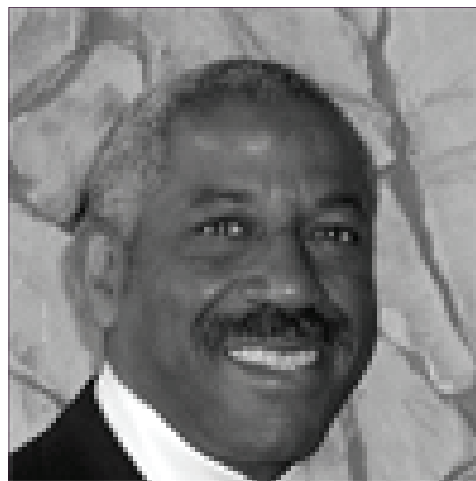
**Bethel Heard Baptist, the African-American church, is less than 300 feet from Bethel Baptist.**

by a stand of trees is an African-American cemetery.

On my way back from exploring the cemetery, Bethel's director met me in the parking lot and said someone that I might want to talk to was attending the service that day, and perhaps I might want to stay. I said no, but told her I would return at the end of service, and left to do more exploring in the area.

I returned to the church around 2:55 p.m., and was shocked to meet a man that I had been trying to locate for four years. He was the great-grandson of my ancestor's last slave holder. His name was Holland Ware, and he had moved to a nearby state, but still had interests in Georgia. We talked, but I was disappointed that he could not, or would not, share any information about my Black ancestors. I spent most of our time together telling him about my ancestors in the church and what I knew about his family. We parted, saying that we would contact each other if we made any discoveries.

Although that one encounter didn't turn out exactly the way I wanted, it did not diminish the deep satisfaction of visiting a place that played such an important role in my family history, and sharing that experience with other family members.



*W. E. "Bill" Melson was born in Old Hickory, TN, attended public schools in Davidson County, and graduated from Haynes High School in Nashville in 1958. He then moved to California, where he earned an Associate's Degree in drafting from Modesto Junior College, followed by a B.S. in Engineering from California Polytechnic University.*

*After graduation, Bill went to work for IBM, serving in various staff and management positions that took him to San Jose, CA; Harrison, NY; and Boulder, CO. He retired from IBM in 2002. He has served on numerous non-profit boards in New York and California, and is currently Board Chair of AAGSNC.*

*This former high school and college athlete is now an avid boater, and founder of the Ebony Boat Club of California. Since he started doing genealogy in 2000, Bill has traced several of his ancestral lines to their last slave owners. He can be contacted at [BillMelson@aol.com](mailto:BillMelson@aol.com).*

### Queries

*AAGSNC members and non-members may submit one family query for each issue of The Baobab Tree. There is no limit to the number of words, however, the journal committee reserves the right to edit all queries. Queries are free to all AAGSNC members, and cost \$5.00 for non-members. All queries must be printed or typewritten. Begin the query with all surnames capitalized and listed alphabetically. Non-members must submit via mail with payment to: AAGSNC, P.O. Box 27485, Oakland, CA 94603-0985. AAGSNC members may submit queries via email to [journal@aagsnc.org](mailto:journal@aagsnc.org) or by mail.*

## Grandpa

*(Continued from page 3)*

It used to snow so bad we couldn't get out the doors. I believed in Santa Claus until I was 15 years old and cried all day because I only got a sweater and candy and nuts. Mama said we used to throw the toys away and play with the boxes.

Trolley cars used to be in downtown Bluefield, just like in San Francisco. A band from New Orleans came every year named "Silas Green from New Orleans," complete with a circus. They performed out near City Park.

Everything was opened downtown, Kresges, Woolworths, Cox's, and many more and the town was so lively. Us kids didn't even know we were poor.

My first job was at the West Virginia Hotel downtown running the elevator, making \$16.00 every other week.

When someone died, their body was dressed and placed in the living room of the home, and left to be viewed by friends and family.

Grandma and Grandpa had hogs,

chickens, rabbits, all in the backyard, so did all the neighbors. We had chicken just about every Sunday. I couldn't eat the rabbit after I saw how they killed them. Hit them in the back of the head. I can't eat rabbit today.

My sister and I used to eat the little white balls in the yard until we got caught and found out it was rabbit poop. We picked apples, peaches, pears, and cherries every summer so they could can them on the back porch. Home brew was made also, and stored under the house.

Before my job, the way we made our movie money, someone would tell us Grandpa, Frank Griffin, was somewhere drunk, we would gather up everyone, all the kids, go get him and bring him home and he would give us a quarter or sometimes 50 cents.

When I got my first kiss I thought I was pregnant, and was scared to tell Mama. They never told us anything; anyway, maybe finding out the hard way was a good lesson.

I went to New York in 1954 after getting married at 19. I got



Left to right back row Arlene, Albertha holding Thelma, John Jr., Mary Katherine, Alice, John Sr. and Charles Thompson

pregnant ten times, like Mama. I have seven living, my husband, Samuel Hayes, died in 1983. I came back to Bluefield in 1986. Everything was changed. Stores closed up, etc. It's been a crazy ride.

*This article is reprinted courtesy of Hometown Memories LLC, 3551 Savannah Lane, Claremont, NC 28610, 1-877-491-8802. It originally appeared in the 2009 book Coal Camps and Castor Oil. The book is still available for purchase from Hometown Memories.*

## AAGSNC TOTES FOR SALE

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- White with dark blue trim, baobab tree photo

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## A Home For Your Treasure Trove

What happens to all the physical documents you accumulate in researching your family tree? Computer software can help us keep track of thousands of records about our families without taking up an inch of physical space, and there are plenty of programs to choose from.



But even at the start of your search there are notes, letters, certificates, maybe maps or deeds, and treasured keepsakes that all have to be stored somewhere. Where do you keep yours—in a dusty box under the bed or a pile of papers stuffed into a drawer?

Over the two years or so since I started doing genealogy, I've accumulated several legal pads full of notes, a few special documents, and pages of information gathered from the internet and other sources. So far, my stash is so small that all of it fits neatly into an old, seldom-used brown tote bag, with room left over for my book club reading lists.

Part of me has always known this

filing system couldn't last, but I wasn't sure how to organize this type of material. So I consulted a group of veteran genealogists who are my friends, my family, and now my personal panel of experts. They generously shared the different ways they have stored all the material produced by their years of detective work.

My friend Madelaine Gentry has a large extended family, and has amassed a collection of family history worthy of the Smithsonian, but it didn't start out that way. Like many of us, she started with a single folder.

Her relentless search quickly overflowed into many more folders. "I created files with headings, using plain manila folders to catalog my documentation," she says. Her headings included family surnames, family groups, events, pictures, and notes, with additional categories for records such as birth, death and marriage certificates. She also kept files for letters of inquiry and response letters.

Madelaine's cousin, Deniece "Niece" Gentry, is also a longtime genealogist. Her record-keeping began as notes on loose-leaf paper. As she came across genealogy articles and artifacts, she kept them along with her notes in a paper folder. She learned the hard way about the need to get organized and

carefully file all relevant material.

"The mistakes I made when first starting off weren't many, but they were important," she says. "I threw away a note that had an important date on it," (her paternal grandparents' wedding date). Lack of a filing system also cost her some other important notes about her family.

"Though I had written down the information years ago, I still needed them as family artifacts. They were in my mother's possession and she eventually developed Alzheimer's and, I guess, threw them away."



Niece says she also missed an opportunity by not asking her aunt to will the family Bible to her. That Bible is now missing, and the family believes it may have been thrown away after her aunt's death.

My cousin, Paul Boykin, got organized from the beginning.

*(Continued on page 9)*



## Treasure Trove

(Continued from page 8)



“When I started, the first thing I did was buy a software program called Family Tree Maker that came with a user’s manual. I kept notes on research tables, correspondence tables and scrap paper. The program kept everything organized and stored in my computer.”

He keeps notes and correspondence he’s currently working with, as well as blank forms, in his desk drawer for quick access. The rest are stored in a file cabinet.

At last count, Madelaine had accumulated seven binders, each with a capacity of up to 800 pages. Four of them are now full, preserving census information, historical background, inquiries she’s sent out, and responses received.

“I still do keep several manila folders that are labeled ‘Current Research’ or ‘Follow-up Research’

which I use when I go to the library” to keep from lugging around those heavy binders. She says the mainstay of her tracking system is that she keeps each individual piece of information in the appropriate, carefully labeled file.

Niecie now keeps her notes in binders as well. Notes that are on loose-leaf paper are kept in a binder with a note on the outside telling future family researchers never to throw them away. She also uses an expandable file to hold manila folders that are each labeled according to what’s in them.

She keeps written artifacts in special acid-free plastic covers, and stores everything, including her electronic disks, in a box. She plans to purchase a file cabinet to house her collection.

Each of my experts also offered some wise advice for other genealogists. Niecie says, “Never throw anything away, and only give people copies, never your originals.” She and Madelaine both strongly recommend carrying a notepad with you at all times, just in case you run into some unexpected information.

Paul recommends keeping hard copies of items that are stored on the computer. He also sent tips from the pros. They recommend

that you create some sort of filing system right from the start, organizing files by surname, for example, with a folder or section for each individual. And make sure your binders or filing cabinets are easy to get to, orderly, and safe from damage.

Finally, Madelaine says, “Have the patience of Job. Have the love of family. Have the passion for investigating and researching. As long as the genealogical thirst remains that the answer is out there somewhere, keep digging, keep investigating, keep the flame burning.”

As for me, I’ve already started a new, organized filing system.



*Charlene Brown is a journalist who is originally from Oakland, CA. She now lives in Columbus, OH, and is Layout Editor of The Baobab Tree.*

## Other Parts of the Federal Census

By Melvyn Gillette

In your quest to fill out your family tree, you've probably mined the U.S. Census for names, ages, dates of birth, approximate dates of marriage, marital status, occupation, etc. You likely found this information on what are called "population schedules." But a mother lode of information awaits in federal census "nonpopulation" schedules. Mortality Schedules, Agricultural Schedules and Slave Schedules can be a gold mine for genealogists.

### Mortality Schedules 1850-1900

Mortality schedules record deaths in the 12 months preceding the taking of the census, and may help you locate an ancestor who seems to have vanished into thin air. Mortality schedules in the 1850 and 1860 censuses include the names of deceased slaves as well, the only time in the census where slaves are named (with the exception of slaves over the age of 100, which I'll discuss shortly).

Among the many important pieces of genealogy information these mortality schedules contain are name, age, sex, color, marital status if married or widowed, occupation, birthplace, month of death, cause of death, number of days ill, the attending physician and other details. In 1870, a question regarding the birthplaces of parents was added to the list. In 1880 questions were added regarding length of residency, and the place where the disease was contracted. Determining the place and date of death through a mortality schedule can lead you to other records in that same locality.

Mortality schedules may be the only record of death for some people. Many states did not require the recording of deaths until much later, some as late as the early 1900s, and

for some individuals there may not be any gravestone or cemetery records. The mortality schedule entry may also be the only record of existence for children who have no gravestones. In addition, the cause of death shown in mortality schedules may be important for your genetic genealogy.

Here is a link to a transcription of an 1850 Mortality Schedule online that will give you an idea of the information that may be available: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~takelley/c1850ml.htm>.

### Agricultural Schedules 1840-1910

Your ancestor was a farmer? Agricultural schedules were taken from the 1840 through 1910 censuses and provide the following information for each farm: name of owner or manager, number of improved and unimproved acres, cash value of the farm, farming machinery, livestock, animals slaughtered during the past year, and "homemade manufactures." It also includes expenses to operate the farm, the type and value of the farm's produce, and the quantity of each type of livestock. By 1880, the number of poultry, and the number of eggs produced was included.

Not every farm was included in these schedules, however. In 1850, farms producing less than \$100 were not included. By 1870, farms of less than three acres, or which produced less than \$500 worth of products, were not included.

Non-resident farm operators are enumerated where the farm is located, which may not be where they lived. So they might appear in one place on the population schedule and in another place on the agricultural schedule. This may bring

to light previously unknown connections between two different locales within a family unit. I wondered, for example, how my grandmother in Chicot County, Arkansas, met and married her first husband, who was from some distance away in Clark County, during a time when travel was limited. The agricultural schedule may not answer that question for me, but it might be the key for you if you face a similar brick wall.

While the agricultural schedules do not contain basic genealogical information, you can use the information contained in them to put flesh on the bones of your ancestors through the history you find there. Occasionally, you may find a full name in the agricultural schedule, while the population schedule used only initials for the same individual. Some enumerators took a shortcut and most of their entries appear as P. Jones, etc.

### Slave Schedules

Before 1850, only free "heads of household" were listed by name, with others in the household--slave and free--grouped by age and sex. Starting with the 1850 census all free individuals in a household were listed by name, and in the 1850 and 1860 censuses, free African-Americans were enumerated by name along with other free persons. However, most African-Americans were still enslaved and were enumerated separately on Slave Schedules. It is important to note that slaves are not listed by name on these schedules, but under their owner's name. Generally, the only information included for each slave in these separate schedules is age, gender, and a racial designation as either black or mulatto. There are a few

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## Federal Census

(Continued from page 10)

exceptions, such as slaves over the age of 100, who are listed by name. Some details of their origin and lives may be included as well. Otherwise, the inclusion of names is very limited.

### Where to Find Supplemental Schedules

They are available through several different sources. Subscribers to Ancestry.com will find them easily online. They are also available through the Mormon Church's LDS Family History Library. Also check for this data at <http://www.familysearch.org> where no subscription is required.



Melvyn Gillette is a native of Gum Springs, a small rural community in Clark County, Arkansas. Her path to Grandma's house led across the local cemetery. Constant exposure to names on the tombstones fostered an interest in the community's history. She began to write down her family's history in 1969 and began serious family research in the early 1990s. Her family tree has grown into a "community tree," and includes all of the Black families of Gum Springs as well as their connected families in nearby communities. All four of Melvyn's grandparents were born in Arkansas, three within the same county as she was.

## Check Out Our New Website!

The AAGSNC web site has a colorful new look and some helpful new features to make it much more user-friendly. Highlights include a bright new color scheme, and new navigational tabs and drop-down menus.

The AAGSNC web site committee revised the site and engaged member and web designer Jim Neal to turn their ideas into reality. We hope you'll spend some time at [www.aagsnc.org](http://www.aagsnc.org) and let us know how you like the changes.

### Unique Features

The re-engineered web site now lets you register online for special events. There's also a Calendar section that accepts member input under the headings Today, Family Reunions, Genealogy Events, Historical Events, Monthly Meetings, Research Support, Study



Group Meetings, and User Group Meetings.

You can now share your pedigree charts online, and there's a Surname Forum for sharing surname research with other users.

### Three New Sections

A **Members Only** section includes an archive of articles from past issues of *The Baobab Tree*, and a category that contains AAGSNC highlights by year. It also allows

AAGSNC members to download forms, share compiled databases, and view or download past issues of *The Baobab Tree*.

In addition, Members Only will let you submit and review program presentations, and conduct study group forums online.

We now also have a **Blog** that allows frequent posts about newly discovered resources and events in the genealogical world.

And finally, the **AAGSNC Store** combines Amazon Store, a place where nonmembers can purchase *The Baobab Tree*, and a new category under construction called AAGSNC Stuff where AAGSNC will be able to sell items to the public for fundraising purposes.

## MYSTERY PHOTO

*Do you need help identifying persons in old pictures? Do you think they are persons from this area? If so, we would be happy to include them in future issues to see if anyone can help you. We would need a small black and white copy of the picture, one that you do not need returned, and any information about it that you think would be of help. Submit photos to:*

AAGSNC  
P.O. Box 27485  
Oakland, CA 94603-0985

*AAGSNC members may submit photos via email to [journal@aagsnc.org](mailto:journal@aagsnc.org) or by mail.*

Harvey James Brewster found this photo in the home of his mother, Gladys Utsey Brewster, after she died. Unfortunately, there is no identifying information on the photo and we are unable to remove it from the frame.

Gladys' younger brother, Archie Utsey of Denver, shared the photo with me. He believes the women are Utsey relatives, possibly descendants of Cincinnati Utsey of Boone Township in Union County, Arkansas.

If you recognize either of these ladies, please contact Vernester Sheeler at [vernestersheeler@sbcglobal.net](mailto:vernestersheeler@sbcglobal.net)



## Rosenwald Schools Initiative



**Postcard ca. 1935 of Dunbar High School in Little Rock, AR, built by the Rosenwald Schools Program.**

Did you know the National Trust for Historic Preservation is rescuing a major segment of African-American educational history? Through its Rosenwald Schools Initiative, the National Trust is trying to save what remains of historic school buildings constructed by and for African-Americans through the Rosenwald School Building Program. The program built rural public schools for Black children in the South, who were often relegated to schooling in churches, lodge halls, or dilapidated and poorly equipped buildings.

It began in 1912 as a partnership between Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute, and Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company and a member of Tuskegee Institute's Board of Trustees. In 1917, Rosenwald established his own foundation and eventually constructed more than 5,300 buildings in 15 states. You can read more at <http://www.preservationnation.org/travel-and-sites/sites/southern-region/rosenwald-schools/>.

## CALENDAR

AAGSNC meets every third Saturday of the month from 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Oakland Public Library, Dimond Branch, 3565 Fruitvale Avenue Oakland, California. No meeting in July and August. Upcoming topics:

September 18—Braggin' and Lyin'  
 October 16—Slave Research  
 November 20—Using DNA in Research  
 December 18—Christmas Party and Black Elephant Sale

October 8-9 California Family History Expo, Alameda County Fairgrounds, 4501 Pleasanton Ave., Pleasanton, CA, 94566, 801-829-3295, [www.familyhistoryexpos.com](http://www.familyhistoryexpos.com).

California Genealogical Society and Library offers Genealogy for Beginners, first Saturday of every month FREE at 2201 Broadway, Suite LI2, Oakland, California 94612 [www.calgensoc.org](http://www.calgensoc.org).

The Baobab Tree is published four times a year and is provided free to all members. Additional copies and past issues may be purchased for \$10.00 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: February 27 for the Spring issue, May 30 for the Summer issue, July 31 for the Fall issue, and October 30 for the Winter issue. Correspondence on editorial matters, story submissions and requests for permission to reprint articles may be sent to [journal@aagsnc.org](mailto:journal@aagsnc.org).

### Articles and manuscripts acceptable for publication include:

#### Manuscripts/Articles:

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

#### Abstracts:

- Census transcriptions (federal, state, county & city)
- Church records (baptisms, burials, marriages, etc.)
- Court records
- Manumission and freedom certificates
- Missionary and benevolent society records
- Military and pension records
- Newspaper transcriptions
- Plantation family papers relating to slaves
- Tax lists naming free blacks or slaves
- Voter registration lists

### Your Ad Could Be Here In Our Next Issue

Unbound inserts up to 8 1/2" x 11"	\$100.00
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All ads must be typeset, camera-ready or, preferably, a computer file.



#### For more information contact:

AAGSNC  
 P.O. Box 27485  
 Oakland, CA 94603-0985  
 Email: [journal@aagsnc.org](mailto:journal@aagsnc.org)



## AAGSNC FOUNDING MEMBERS:

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Electra Kimble Price

## OBJECTIVES

- To promote interest in genealogy, biography and related history in African ancestry research
- To supplement and enrich the education of African-Americans through the collection, preservation and maintenance of African-American genealogical materials
- To promote the accumulation and preservation of African -American genealogical and related historical materials and make such materials available to all
- To promote and maintain ethical standards in genealogical research and publications

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

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