



The Baobab Tree

Journal of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California, Inc.

The Militant Matron: Dr. Nettie J. Craig Asberry



By Antoinette Broussard

My great aunt, Dr. Nettie J. Craig Asberry, was the youngest sister of my maternal grandfather, Barry Benjamin Craig. As a child, I only knew her as Aunt Nettie and had only visited her a few times. I knew none of the things I later discovered about her.

When my Grandfather Barry died in Oakland, California, in 1958 at the age of ninety-four, he left manuscripts about African-American history which he'd completed in the 1930s. In 2002, forty-two years after his death, my mother, Maybelle Craig Broussard, gave me his manuscripts. I also received his personal letters and other miscellaneous papers. This was my first knowledge of his work. I had not known my grandfather as a writer or historian.

He'd built a solid income with a stellar reputation working as a porter on the private railroad cars. In 1910 he was involved in a train accident that severed his left leg below the knee, an incident that ended his train career. At fifty-six years old, Barry got a job as an elevator operator at Oakland City Hall, a job he performed for twenty more years.

Some of Barry's manuscripts appeared to be based on autobiographical facts, starting me on a quest to validate his work. I could see that some of his writing was based on factual historical incidents; perhaps some he experienced or knew about firsthand. Gradually, I researched his siblings and discovered Dr. Nettie J. Craig Asberry.

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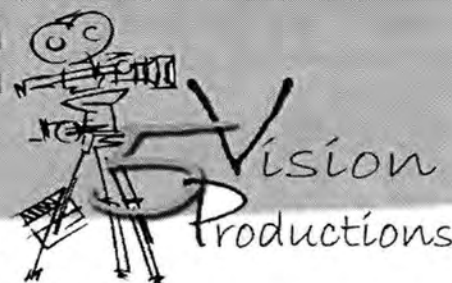
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MANY THANKS

The saying "It takes a village" is true in many circumstances, including producing the Baobab. It takes a dedicated team of volunteers to get the journal into your hands each quarter, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of them. Members of the AAGSNC journal committee help solicit articles, facilitate publishing and mailing, and lend support in many other ways. Our profound gratitude to all of them: Jackie Stewart, Vernester Sheeler, Patrice Anderson, Lois Freeman, Carol Miller, Frances Johnese, Nicka Smith, and our liaison to the Executive Committee, M. Howard Edwards. We also appreciate Dera Williams, Carole Neal, and Melynn Gillette, who edit stories for us. And special thanks to all of you, our readers, whose interest keeps the Baobab thriving.

Charlene Brown

Annette Madden

Message from the President

By M. Howard Edwards



AAGSNC Summer Hiatus

If you're a new member of the African American Genealogical Society, you might wonder why we take a summer break from meetings, since California weather certainly doesn't require being inactive for two entire months.

The answer is that so many members leave for research trips, family reunions, and home visits, that it is difficult to assemble a reliable number of members for educational meetings and to conduct the society's business. As researchers, we spend plenty of time probing the internet and each other, but we also yearn to get back home to visit our families and to fill the gaps in our family history that can be filled no other way.

We encourage all of you to take such a trip. Those old bound volumes of original records, histories, and newspapers are only available at the source—in the libraries, courthouses, and archives. Also, that old relative or neighbor you have been meaning to interview will not survive forever, and there is no better time to approach him or her than now, before it is too late. It might be necessary to book a second visit to ask the questions you forgot the last time or that have been raised by more recent research or conversations with relatives.

Go ahead, book the trip, service the car, make the reservations. Then share your

successes at our September meeting when we're back on our regular schedule. Better still, put together an article for the Baobab Tree and share your findings with everyone.

Outreach and Education

Alameda County (California) Supervisor Keith Carson recently inaugurated a program in the public schools to teach the techniques of family history research to interested students. The program is called *Who Am I? Family Journeys: Alameda County Youth Testimonials*. Carson and his staff invited the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California and the Oakland Regional Family History Center of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to join the effort. Members **Nicka Smith, Felicia Addison, and Alvis Ward** stepped forward to help. They also became the nucleus of AAGSNC's new Outreach and Education Committee, chaired by Mrs. Smith.

On June 4, the students shared their experiences tracing their family histories, and the empowerment they felt from discovering their roots. It was also enlightening for many of their parents. All society members should be proud of the contribution made by the committee and the volunteers they summoned to help. AAGSNC continues doing great things for our members and for the community.

Dr. Nettie Asberry

(Continued from page 1)

Nettie Craig was born free on 15 July 1865, in Leavenworth, Kansas, on the opposite side of the Missouri River from where she was conceived, in Weston, Platte County, Missouri. She was the daughter of William Payne Wallingford, a descendant of British immigrant farmers, and Violet, his former slave.

In 1837, Wallingford moved from Kentucky, where both he and Violet were born, and settled on the Platte Purchase in Platte County, Missouri. He may have brought Violet with him from Kentucky. Wallingford was married three times and fathered eighteen children, including nine with Violet. Nettie was the youngest of Violet and Wallingford's children and the only one born free.

Wallingford kept Violet and their children on one of his farms. Over a period of time he amassed a lot of farms and property in Platte and surrounding counties. The 1860 Slave Schedule documented Violet, a black female, and four mulatto children as Wallingford's slaves.

When Violet was emancipated in late 1864 or early 1865, she was about 35 years old. She left Wallingford's farm with five of her children, aged one to 14 years old, and pregnant with her ninth child, Nettie. One child, George, was lost (probably sold), and two other children were deceased.

Violet considered Wallingford's name to be her slave name, so when freed, she took the surname Craig, which she considered to be her maiden name. This name possibly came from a Craig farm or plantation in Kentucky that may have owned some of her other family members. After emancipation, many Craig family members connected with each other and lived in Leavenworth, Kansas. I found this information through census records, address directories, and cemetery records. Though Nettie knew her father's identity, she probably never met Wallingford, who became a wealthy



Violet Craig, mother of Dr. Nettie J. Craig Asberry

landowner. The older Craig/Wallingford children returned to ask their father for financial assistance. He said, "How do you know I am your father?" They said, "We know; mother told us." He never acknowledged or helped them. Wallingford died in 1875 at 55 years old. His assets were divided among his white family.

Nettie's siblings saw her as intelligent and musically gifted, so they pooled their resources to assist with her education. She began studying the piano at eight years of age. Her love of classical music helped her to master the piano. Later, she composed her own music.

Few women of any race were attending college when Nettie attended the University of Kansas. According to a 1977 article in *The Tacoma News Tribune*, "It was virtually unheard of for a black girl to do so in the Reconstruction era following the Civil War."

On June 12, 1883, Nettie was granted a "Teacher of Music" degree from the Kansas Conservatory of Music and Elocution in Leavenworth, Kansas. She is also believed to be one of the first Black women to receive her Ph.D.

In the 1880s, Nettie and her family were among the early settlers of the all Black town of Nicodemus, Kansas, which was established in 1877. Nettie was a music instructor and later a schoolteacher there. She began collecting material about the town from the time she arrived, and eventually wrote about Nicodemus history. In July 1950, a student presented a thesis to the graduate faculty at Fort Hays (Kansas) State College citing Nettie's unpublished manuscript (now lost) in its bibliography.

Nicodemus is now the only town west of the Mississippi established by African-Americans during the Reconstruction Era that still survives today.

Several of Nettie's siblings, her mother, Violet, and her stepfather, Taylor Turner, began settling in Denver, Colorado, in the late 1880s. Violet and Taylor had one child together, named Frank Turner. Among my grandfather's papers were old letters from Frank.

Spiritually astute and devoted to her church community, Nettie taught music in Kansas City and Denver, and spent a lot of time playing for churches and directing choirs. She married Albert Jones in Kansas in 1890, and they traveled by train to Seattle, Washington, where she was the first organist and musical director for the First AME Church.

At ninety-six, Nettie recalled of their arrival in Seattle that, "News of the great Seattle fire in 1889 aroused a lot of interest in the Midwest. Many disposed of their belongings and moved to Seattle. We arrived amid much excitement. It was a good time of friendship and good neighborliness."

After Albert's tragic death in 1893, Nettie returned to Leavenworth, Kansas. Eventually she went back to the Pacific Northwest and settled in Tacoma,

(Continued on page 5)

Dr. Nettie Asberry

(Continued from page 4)

Washington, where she continued her activities as organist and musical director for Tacoma's First AME Church.

On February 23, 1895, Nettie married Henry J. Asberry, a well-known businessman. Referred to as the "barber de luxe," Henry was the owner of the Tacoma Hotel Barbershop. He had many dignitaries among his patrons, including Mark Twain, Vice-President Calvin Coolidge, superior court judges and visiting presidents of the United States.

It was the custom for regular patrons to keep handsome decorated shaving mugs bearing their names on the barber's shelves. After Henry Asberry died, July 26, 1939, Nettie presented the collection to the Washington State Historical Museum. At the time of his death Henry had accumulated a considerable amount of property which Nettie inherited.

In 1908, Dr. Asberry was among the Tacoma area Black women who founded The Clover Leaf Art Club, an organization formed to exhibit their needlecraft and artwork. In 1909, these club members were determined to participate in the Washington women's exhibit at the Seattle World's Fair. They paid for their exhibit space by selling "colored dolls." At the fair, they earned a gold medal for their entire exhibit; a bronze medal for a handmade Battenburg lace opera coat made for the exhibit by Dr. Asberry's sister, Martha Craig Townsend; and a bronze medal for ceramics and paintings by another club member, Mrs. Hiram Moore-Baker. The opera coat is preserved in the Nettie J. Asberry Collection at the Washington State Historical Museum in Tacoma.

Dr. Asberry was one of the northwest founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), helping establish branches in Tacoma, Seattle and Spokane, Washington; Portland, Oregon; and cities in Alaska and Canada. With Tacoma

setting the pace, Dr. Asberry submitted the Tacoma charter application to the New York office. In 1913 Tacoma became the first NAACP branch chartered west of the Rocky Mountains. Subsequently, she served as regional field secretary and later as local branch secretary.

When the film "Birth of a Nation" debuted in 1916, it provoked Dr. Asberry's strong-willed, militant side. This film was propaganda for the Klu Klux Klan, portraying freed slaves trying to rape white girls and attack whites, and portraying the Klan as their heroic rescuers. It also showed the KKK lynching of a Black person. Klan membership rose dramatically after its release.

Dr. Asberry was elected secretary of a mass meeting of concerned people at the AME church. It became her duty to draft a letter to the press protesting the release of the movie and its racist depiction of Black people. She stated, "The rape scene, the intermarriage affair, the demoralized Negro soldiers – the insolence of the freemen – all pave the way for the advent of the notorious clansmen, who now come galloping over the screen by the hundreds...like a clap of thunder the applause breaks upon my ear. My blood was at the white heat point... I was in a fighting mood...No one can witness the production of this movie and be the same as before he saw it. No city can afford to have the equilibrium of its people disturbed." (*The Tacoma Ledger*, 1916.)



Dr. Asberry models the handmade lace opera coat that won a prize at the 1909 Seattle World's Fair. Photo Courtesy University of Washington Special Collections.

The Gillettes from Alabama to Arkansas

By Melvyn Gillette



The author's grandfather, Daniel Clayborn "Bud" Gillette, and family

I grew up hearing that my great-grandfather "was a Presiding Elder in the Methodist Church" who "homesteaded our land," and that my grandfather "was raised by his Aunt Margaret." I also knew that my grandfather died when I was six. These few pieces of oral history were all that I knew about their ancestry when I began researching.

Great-Grandpa was Daniel Clayborn "DC" Gillette. From the 1870 census, I learned that he was born in Alabama, about 1842. I later found an article in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church newspaper, *The Christian Recorder*, in which he states, "I was born in Talladega County, Alabama, raised in Arkansas." His sister, Margaret Spence, was born about 1841, also in Alabama. They were both married in Clark County, Arkansas in 1866.

By the time of the 1870 census, DC and his wife, Amanda, had two daughters, Emma, born in 1867, and Winney, born in 1869. By 1872, DC was established as a farmer. My grandfather, Daniel Clayborn

"Bud" Gillette, was born March 18, 1872. DC was ordained as an AME deacon in 1875, initially serving at a mission in Arkadelphia, Clark County, Arkansas. On December 13, 1875, he filed a Homestead application on eighty acres of land in Clark County, located about five miles south of Arkadelphia. In the application he stated that he had settled on the land in January 1873. The community that grew up in that area came to be known as Gum Springs. In 1876, the year after his homestead application, DC and Amanda's second son, Richard Augustus, was born.

At some point, DC was posted to a church in Camden, Ouachita County, Arkansas. He was serving there by May 1878 when he filed a report to *The Christian Recorder* from Camden. Amanda had apparently died some time before 1879 because on February 20, 1879, DC married Maggie Sinquefield, daughter of Rev. Richard Sinquefield, a Presiding Elder in the AME church. Rev. Sinquefield had transferred from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to the AME Church at its first Arkansas Annual Conference in 1868.

In the 1880 census, DC and Maggie were living in Camden and his occupation was

"Minister of the Gospel." His younger daughter, Winney, is missing from this census, presumably having died. DC's other three children were in Clark County with their Aunt Margaret and her husband, Henry Turner. By December of 1880, DC was ready to file the final proof (a document proving a legal claim) on his homestead. The proof was filed on January 31, 1881. One of his witnesses was his brother-in-law, Henry Turner, who stated that he had known DC for 26 years. A Patent Deed was granted by the U.S. government on June 30, 1882.

The January 1, 1885 issue of *Christian Recorder* found DC in the AME Church's North Mississippi conference, serving at Oliver's Chapel in the Hernando District in DeSoto County. It was a small church with 75 to 100 members, his last church posting for which I have found a record. In 1885, while in DeSoto County, DC married his third wife, Louisa White. In 1886, DC and Louisa gave two acres of land from the Arkansas homestead to the AME Church. This land was donated for the Gum Springs Cemetery, which is still in use today. DC died in July 1905, Louisa

(Continued on page 7)

The Gillettes



**Siblings Lena and Clayborn
Gillette**

(Continued from page 6)

about 1917. They are buried somewhere in that cemetery, but neither has a tombstone to mark their final resting places. Louisa's sister, Lizzie White, apparently followed her to Arkansas. In 1889, Lizzie married another Gum Springs resident and Alabama native, Samuel Hale.

DC's daughter, Emma, married Robert Pratt in 1894, in Miller County, Arkansas, but had no children. His son, Richard, appears never to have married. He was a barber in Malvern, Hot Spring County, Arkansas, and died about 1940.

Grandpa was a farmer as his father had been. In 1895, he married Savada Anderson. Their son, James Napoleon, was born in 1896. Savada died in 1899. In 1901, Grandpa married again, to Tennie Wheeler. They had two children. Richard Henry was born in 1903 and Sedonia in 1905. Tennie died three weeks after Sedonia's birth, leaving Grandpa with two young sons and a three-week-old baby. Tennie's brother, James Wheeler, and his wife, Laura, had no children, so they took in Sedonia, legally adopting her when she was eight years old.

In 1907, Grandpa married my grandma, Hannah Jones. It was the third marriage for each of them and each brought children to the marriage. They had four more children together: Stephen, born in 1907 in Chicot County, Arkansas; Cleveland, born in 1910; Lena in 1911; and Clayborn in 1913, all in Clark County, Arkansas. Hannah died in October 1914, leaving Grandpa with their four children ranging in age from one to seven, his two sons, James and Richard, plus four stepdaughters: Callie, Lula Mae and Algerina Stoutenberg, and Susie Stroope. In September of 1915, Grandpa married Hannah Griffith Browning, who raised my father, Clayborn, and his Gillette siblings. His mother's other children went to live with relatives.

In 1917, Grandpa purchased 40 acres of bottom land about a mile away from the home place. He built a new house near the northern border of the homestead, abandoning the old home place, which many years later became home to my family. By the mid-1930s, nearly half of the 80-acre homestead had been sold. He continued to farm on the remainder of the homestead as well as the 40-acres of bottom land. My father, Clayborn, farmed along with Grandpa. Daddy served in the Navy during WWII and resumed farming after the war.

Grandpa's oldest son, James, moved to Little Rock and then to Chicago, and died there in 1959. Richard moved to northern California during WWII, and died there in 1992. Richard's sister, Sedonia, moved to Tucson, Arizona, where she died in 1990. Stephen died in 1927 in Arkansas, he and his mother both having died of "consumption." Cleveland moved to Houston, Texas, and died there in 1966. By the late 1940s, only the two youngest children, Lena and Clayborn, remained in Arkansas. Grandpa died on June 11, 1947.

After Grandpa's death, my father continued to live on and farm the land, later taking a non-farm job. During his

Navy service, a new house had been built for my family at the old home place near the cemetery. We lived there until 1952, when our African-American community was picked up and moved to the newly created community of West Gum Springs about two miles away, displaced by a new aluminum reduction plant. But we kept our land. My father died in 1994 and Aunt Lena in 2000, the last of DC's grandchildren. The family sold the last two pieces of land in July 2008.



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, with various migrations to the state from Alabama, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.



The Cameroon Connection

By Nicka Smith

From December 26, 2010 to January 6, 2011, 50 Americans participated in the first ever Ancestry Reconnection Program (ARP) which was created by ARK Jammers, Inc., a non-profit collective of artists who promote random acts of kindness. This program seeks to reconnect members of the African Diaspora to their African countries of origin.

The first country to participate in the program was the West African nation of Cameroon. Thirty of the participants on the trip had Cameroonian DNA, which was proven through DNA tests taken with African Ancestry.com. African Ancestry has the largest database of African DNA samples in the world. This was the first time that a group of Diasporans were invited back to their African homeland based solely upon their DNA. The trip was largely funded by the Cameroonian government and supported by African Ancestry.com, which initially contacted potential attendees based upon their test results.

Over the course of ten days, participants traveled more than 750 miles, visited four provinces and the following fons (chiefs) and chiefdoms: Bamoun, Bamileke (Bandjoun and Baleng) and Tikar. They were also able to meet fons from the Hausa and Masa. Additionally, participants met the Prime Minister of Cameroon, Hon. Philemon Yang; the U.S. ambassador to Cameroon, Robert Jackson; the Cameroonian ambassador to the U.S., Hon. Joseph Charles Bienvenu Foe-Atangana; and a host of musical artists, celebrities, and luminaries from the country.

My cousin, Jean Denton Thompson, and I took part in the trip. Our DNA was traced back to Cameroon based upon testing a direct male descendant of my third (Jean's second) great-grandfather, King Atlas, Sr. The result came back as a 100 percent match with the Bamileke in the Southwest Province. We both noticed a striking resemblance between several family members and the two Bamileke fons that we met, Chief Djomo Kanga of the Bandjoun, and Baleng Chief Nembot Thomas.



Cameroon is a triangle-shaped country on the central West African coast, bordered on the west by Nigeria. The Bamileke are its largest ethnic group.

Above: Author Nicka Smith with one of the Bamileke queens in Cameroon's capital city, Yaounde.

Left: Chief Nembot Thomas (far left), fon of the Baleng (Bamileke) and a piece of art he gave the group.

Photos courtesy of Nicka Smith.

Cameroon



Left: Cameroon's Prime Minister, Hon. Philemon Yang. Right: Chief Djomo Kanga, fon of the Bandjoun (Bamileke).



From the moment the visitors stepped off the plane, the news media followed their every move.



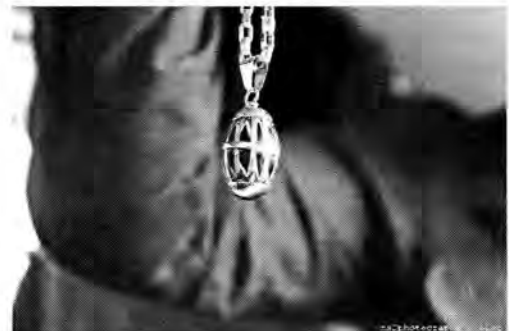
Children at the Cite de L'Enfance in Kribi, a school funded entirely by donations. They learn both English and French.



A heart-wrenching slave re-enactment at Bimbia, a former slave port. This was the first time the site had ever been photographed. Afterward, one of the fons apologized for the atrocities done to American ancestors.



Women who live in Mefou National Park, a wild-life preserve and safe haven for once-captive chimps and gorillas.



Necklace made with Bamileke style pattern.

SALT LAKE CITY SEARCH

FOUR AAGSNC MEMBERS REPORT ON THEIR TRIP TO THE MECCA OF GENEALOGY RESEARCH



Dr. Carol Miller



Nicka Smith



Vernester Sheeler



Judith Collins

Carol Miller: Three Days in Salt Lake

The quest for ancestors began on Thursday, April 14, 2011, at Oakland International Airport, on Southwest Airlines bound for Salt Lake City, Utah. We had heeded the call of research expert Electra Price, who had sent out the word, "I'm on my way to SLC Family History Library. Those interested are welcome to join me." Members of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California responded enthusiastically. Who could pass up a chance to spend four days in the Mormon Church's world-renowned Family History Library under the tutelage of AAGSNC gurus Electra Price and Judith Collins?

When we arrived, our hotel shuttle driver pointed out a few of the sights, then quickly added, "Don't know why I'm wasting my breath. You all are going to spend all of your time in the library, no matter what I say." We all chuckled in agreement and hit the library within 30 minutes of checking into the hotel.

It had been years since I had visited the Family History Library and I remembered my first trip as being full of discoveries. I had high hopes for this trip and was not disappointed. First of all, traveling with a group of friends with the same interest in

genealogy was wonderful. The added value of their encouragement and experience cannot be calculated. There was always someone around with whom to share treasures from the stacks, and soon we were all researching for each other, which was great fun.

My goal was to learn how to access wills and probate records, skills I wanted to use during this summer's research trip, and I'm happy to report success. One such discovery was a packet from the slave owner on my paternal side, Abraham Geren of Carroll County, MS. Last year, fellow researcher Barbara Tyson discovered that her Mississippi Tysons and my Mississippi Gerens had intermarried!

The library is very user friendly and accessible, with lots of open workspace, up-to-date technology, long hours of operation, and plenty of staff available and willing to help. You can hook up your computer and get online for free, use your USB thumb drives to download documents for free, and make copies quite cheaply. Having access to a large variety of original documents, including a huge repository of microfilms, maps, textbooks, gazetteers, newsletters, and geographical and sociological histories, was amazing.

At one point I got distracted while thumbing through a series of old newspapers from Atkins, Arkansas (Pope County), the home of my mother and her parents and grandparents. I was struck by a series of articles paying tribute to the locals who died in the 1918 influenza pandemic. Every week there was a listing, giving a short bio of each deceased person, including the "Negroes and Coloreds." I had never fully appreciated the devastation of this major worldwide epidemic, sometimes called the Spanish flu, until I read the personal stories of these average people from my small rural ancestral town.

Each week 15 to 20 people of all ages died just from this one illness. Some were from my family, whose surnames included Embry, Parker, Surratt, Little, Taylor, Quinn, and Crockett. The moment called to mind a saying from Judith Collins, "Our ancestors will not be forgotten."

Nicka Smith: Be Prepared

This was the first time I had been to Salt Lake City and to the Family History Library. I had been told of the many things that people have discovered during their visits, so I, too, expected to find a lot. I had spent a number of weeks preparing

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Salt Lake City

(Continued from page 10)

for the trip so that I could be sure that I would hit the ground running as soon as I walked through the doors, but because I had already made many visits to county courthouses, I wasn't able to unearth any new information. On the other hand, I was able to get digital copies of many documents that I had transcribed but had not been able to copy at the courthouse level. In addition, having documents from many states available in one place allowed me to "visit" those courthouses without spending the money or resources to go there.

I can't say enough about the value of being prepared. Just looking at rows and rows of cabinets filled with microfilm would overwhelm anyone who didn't come prepared. Search the library's catalog online so you know what's available there, whether in book form or on microfilm. Create goals for yourself and organize your days so you stay on track. It's extremely easy to get distracted. Lastly, enjoy your time while you are there and take care of yourself. You can't research well unless you are well rested and you eat regularly.

Vernester Sheeler: Breakthrough

My family research had hit a brick wall. I had not been able to find any information related to my Utsey family of Union County, Arkansas, before the 1870 census, or to identify the last slave holder. So when the Salt Lake City trip came up, I thought, what better way to try and solve this mystery.

I spent the first evening reacquainting myself with the available resources. One of the tools added since my last visit is the new African-American Wiki, which outlines some of the specific strategies and records that are helpful for tracing African-Americans prior to 1870. Additionally, there are research tips and suggestions for identifying the slave owners if the records search is unsuccessful. I shared my research plan with Nicka, who

suggested I locate my family on the 1870 census and research the white people living in the same community. I had tried this before without success. I had focused too narrowly on identifying Caucasian families with the last name Utsey in Union County in 1860 or 1870, and it appeared there weren't any. I checked the U.S. Slave Narratives, but the only name familiar to me was Katie Arberry, who shared memories of growing up on a place owned by a man named Paul McCall in Union County, Arkansas. I have several Arberrys in my family tree, but I don't know if Katie is related.

Then Nicka grabbed her computer, pulled up the census, and pointed out a couple of things that helped me think outside the box and restructure my search. She noticed that the 1870 census of Union County, Arkansas lists my second great-grandparents, Cincinnati and Nancy Brown (Utesy) Utsey, living in the household of Sarah McCall. Sarah is listed as 30 years old, born in Alabama, with three children. Furthermore, the record documents William Utsey, born about 1825 in Alabama, and his wife, Pateme Utsey, also born in Alabama about 1832, living near a Susan McCall. Susan is listed as black, 45 years old, and born in Alabama.

That raised several questions in my mind. Is there a family connection between William and Cincinnati Utsey? It seems reasonable to assume so, given the unusual name and close proximity of their homes. Also, what is the relationship or connection between Susan and Sarah McCall? What is their relationship to Paul McCall? Is there a relationship between the McCall and Utsey families?

I spent the next few days looking for clues to answer these questions. Interestingly, I found several deeds for land transactions between Paul McCall and Jacob Utsey of Alabama and his wife, Mary McCall Utsey. In early May, I was able to connect with Lynda McCall, wife of one of Paul McCall's descendants, who currently lives in Union

County, Arkansas. Lynda and I are working together to learn more about the Utsey-McCall connection. This trip has truly re-energized my search.

Judith Collins: Global Resources

I was absolutely thrilled and excited taking my very first research trip to the world famous Family History Library in Salt Lake City! The trip was well planned, but most importantly, I was traveling with a group of wonderful and talented African-American genealogists.

What I found most useful was *direct access* to books, periodicals, genealogical/historical societies, newsletters, microfilm and varied genealogical databases on a global basis. Having such an assortment of free resources at my fingertips allowed me to fill in many blanks, and solve some of the mysteries I've encountered in researching my family and their slaveholders.

My research concentrated on Tallahatchie and Yalobusha Counties in Mississippi, focusing on my Collins-White ancestors and the Leigh and Wynn families who were slaveholders in these two counties. Family maps indexed in the U.S. Bureau of Land Management database were extremely helpful in determining the physical proximity of the "circle of slaveholders" (including the eleventh U.S. president, James K. Polk) who benefited from the labors of my family members and so many other African-American slaves.

Visiting the Family History Library in Salt Lake City is a must for every genealogist. My strongest recommendation for a successful trip is organization. Have a plan of action and identify your research goals before you arrive. Stay focused and give priority to resources you can't easily find at your local library, archives, etc. Most of all, enjoy the work (who said this was work?), surround yourself with positive people, and remain grateful to those who came before us. Who's ready to go again?!

Family Search Indexing

By Robert L. Harris



The most important genealogical project going on today is the worldwide indexing and digitizing of records, and making them freely available for everyone on the Internet. FamilySearch Indexing is a volunteer effort by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (The Mormons) that solicits everyone with a computer and Internet connectivity to participate. This is a review of my experience with the project.

I found that volunteers did not need to be affiliated with the Mormons and I found no propaganda associated with my participation in the indexing. Registration was simple and easy. The online entry to the effort was www.familysearch.org, which included a hyperlink on that page labeled "Indexing." A computer-click opened up the site's Worldwide Indexing page that explained the project. No special skills were required and volunteering was done on my own time whenever I wanted.

When I started, more than 500 million records had been indexed—more than 40

million during 2011 alone—and over 67,000 volunteers like myself were involved worldwide. The FamilySearch website contained a complete list of indexing projects around the world that covered more than four pages of printout on my computer. Among the countries involved were: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Germany, El Salvador, Spain, France, Guatemala, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, England, United States, and Venezuela. I was awed by the geography and the many languages the projects spanned. My focus as a beginning indexer was the United States.

Indexing involved matching names of individuals with records, a critical key to genealogical searching. The table below shows some of the U.S. records being indexed when I started.

A project comes with an exhaustive array of self-guiding tutorials, including online "You Tube" videos, FamilySearch forums, discussion groups, blogs, and support

sites. "Frequently Asked Questions" provided questions with answers that served as guidance as I learned the system. A Google search of "FamilySearch Indexing" produced over 103,000 hits.

The steps were very intuitive: I installed their free software on my computer and downloaded record images from their site. Then I transcribed data from the images into their software, and finally submitted the batch back to the site for evaluation and processing. Each record type came with specific instructions for indexing, and blow-by-blow directions. A sample online "test drive" allowed me to practice transcribing information from a document to a computer form and provided further practice for what was to come.

I finally registered on the site by setting up a User Name and Password, then downloaded indexing software onto my computer. Three levels of indexers were indicated: 1) beginner, 2) intermediate, and 3) advanced. I logged in as a "beginner" and chose the 1930 Federal Census for Huron County, Ohio.

A "batch" was downloaded (a page from the census record) and I was guided in transcribing each line of the form into the previously loaded software. The records to be indexed consisted of line number, family number, names (including heads-of-household, spouses, and household members), ages, marital status, race,

U.S. Record	Record Type	Period
War of 1812	Pension Application Files	1812-1905
Naval Enlistments	Registers	1855-1891
Alabama	County Marriages	1809-1950 [Pt. A]
Arkansas	WWII Draft Registrations	1942

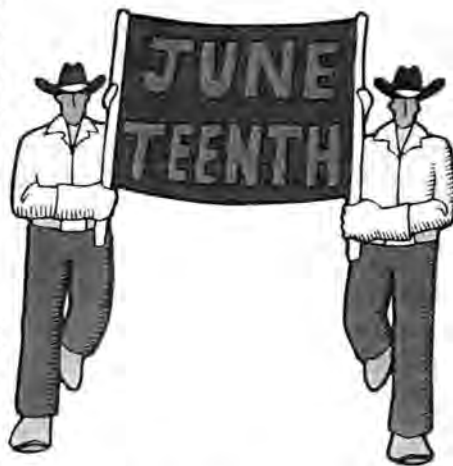
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A Brief History of Juneteenth

By Annette Madden

On June 19th African-Americans from coast to coast held parades, concerts, picnics and festivals honoring "Juneteenth," an annual tradition in many places. But how many of us know the history of this uniquely African-American celebration?

The Civil War ended with the surrender of General Robert E. Lee to Lt. General Ulysses S. Grant in the village of Appomattox Court House, Virginia. The date was April 9, 1865, but word did not reach Texas until June. On June 19, 1865 union soldiers under the command of Major General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston, Texas, to bring the news and to enforce the emancipation of all slaves. One of his first orders of business was to read General Order Number 3, announcing the end of the war and the end of slavery—two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863.



The order said in part:

"The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer."

Black folk in Texas began celebrating Juneteenth as a Black Independence Day in 1866. It soon spread to other states. The custom waned after the turn of the century, but rebounded during and after the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s, and is now at an all-time high. Juneteenth became an official state holiday in Texas on January 1, 1980. Texas state legislator Al Edwards, who fathered the Texas bill, has continued working to make it a national holiday.

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birthplace, birthplace of parents, and dates of immigration for anyone newly arrived in the U.S.

Each entry had "Help Aid" windows that further explained the item. For example, "Project Information" indicated that FamilySearch was working with Ancestry.com to enhance the 1930 census indexes.

Each entry corresponded to a column number on the census form, and as I made entries, a "Percent Completion" bar informed me of my progress with the batch. A convenient ruler was provided that allowed me to keep track of each record's line number. Handwriting help was also available on a chart that showed samples of all letters of the alphabet written in various script styles. Indexing allowed only full years to be recorded for ages, thus a child who was stillborn or less than one-year-old was recorded as zero!

Each record is indexed by an A Indexer and a B Indexer. When both the A and B have been completed and submitted, the system compares the two versions. If there are any differences, the batch is sent to arbitration. A project is not complete until all batches with discrepancies have been reviewed by an arbitrator. An arbitrator compares the differences with the document image and either selects the most correct version or types in a new value that more accurately reflects what is on the image.

If you would like to participate, go to www.familysearch.org and click "Indexing" at the upper right side of the page. Take the "Test Drive." Tabs on that page will give you the latest news, the on-going projects being indexed, and an indexing resource. I found indexing to be easy, enjoyable and educational. It's a "give-back" to our genealogy and everyone should try it.



Robert L. Harris is a founder and current Secretary of The African American Genealogy Group of the Miami Valley (AAGGMV) in southwest Ohio. He is currently researching family histories for the Harris, Davis, Boyd and Pelham families (1800-1900s) of Brunswick County and Mecklenburg County, VA. AAGGMV was formed in 1999 following the model of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California (of which he's a member) and its founders Electra Price and Ranie Smith.

Dr. Nettie Asberry

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Dr. Asberry was also known for her ambitious participation in statewide women's clubs. The mission of these self-help, charitable clubs was to uplift their race. In 1917, she started numerous charitable women's clubs, all of which became charter members of the Washington State Federation of Colored Women's Organizations of Washington and Jurisdiction, where she served as president.

She was also a member of the Progressive Mothers' Club of Tacoma and the Tacoma Inter-Racial Council. The Nettie J. Asberry Papers, found in Special Collections at the University of Washington Libraries in Seattle, document the agendas and progress of these organizations. Deeply devoted to her beloved Tacoma, Dr. Asberry served in 1918 as auxiliary chairman of the Allen A.M.E. Red Cross.

In 1943, an issue of *The Crisis*, the official magazine of the NAACP, published the record of Dr. Asberry's achievements and listed her as one of the "First Ladies" of colored America. During her lifetime, Dr. Asberry was instrumental in bringing influential African-Americans to the Northwest, including hair and beauty entrepreneur Madame C. J. Walker, civil rights activist W.E.B. DuBois, composer

and violinist Clarence C. White, concert tenor Roland Hayes, poet James Weldon Johnson, NAACP leader William Pickens, and clubwoman and civil rights activist Mary B. Talbert.

On her 96th birthday, Dr. Asberry said, "Courage is the saving grace in this tense world racial situation. Courage of the white people who dare to show their fairness by helping us achieve positions of human dignity; and courage of those of other races who risk insults by quietly asserting their rights as human beings" (*The Tacoma News Tribune*, 1961).

Dr. Nettie Asberry died on November 17, 1968 at 103 years old. She was a crusader for human rights whose voice was vividly heard, and a classical musician whose talent uplifted lives. In 1969, Tacoma Mayor A. L. Rasmussen proclaimed May 11 Dr. Nettie J. Asberry Day.

Two new plaques have recently been unveiled to celebrate Dr. Asberry's life. They are located in Tacoma at the corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Way and South 5th Street.

Family photos courtesy Maybelle Craig Broussard photo collection. All material copyright 2011. Reprinted by permission.



Antoinette Broussard, whose family has roots in Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, and Missouri, is the second generation of her family born and raised in Oakland, California. She is a graduate of San Francisco State University, San Francisco Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, and the Protocol School of Washington, D.C. She is the author of African American Celebrations and Holiday Traditions and is a contributor to The African American National Biography, Columbia Magazine of the Washington State Historical Society, Harlem of the West, and Black Past.org. She can be contacted at BroussardA@aol.com or www.antoINETTEbroussard.com.

Need Help? Send Us Your Queries

Readers may submit one family research query per 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, cost is \$5.00 for non-members. All queries must be typed or neatly printed. 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 or by mail.

CALENDAR

AAGSNC

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 meetings in July and August. Upcoming topics:

- September 17 - Braggin' and Lyin' (What I Did This Summer)
- October 15 - Beyond the Census: Other State and Federal Resources, Newspapers
- November 19 - Slave Research
- December 17 - Christmas Party and Black Elephant Sale

Other Events

September 10 - Seminar: Making the Most of An Archive, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., LDS Meetinghouse, 875 Quince Ave., Santa Clara, CA, 650-969-6567 featuring Rob Richards, Director of Archival Operations, National Archives in Atlanta

California Genealogical Society and Library offers Genealogy for Beginners, first Saturday of every month FREE at 2201 Broadway, Suite L12, Oakland, California 94612 www.calgensoc.org.

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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
- Stories & 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

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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?