



From the BAOBAB TREE

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

There was one day I remember especially well. Daddy brought out something I had never seen

before. It was a picture of a lot of people standing around a tree. To my horror, on that tree hung the burned body of a man! When I gasped, Daddy hugged me and told me about it. He said that Grandpa (George O. Paris White) and his friend had been working in Tyler, Texas in the 1920s and that something happened between a black man and a white woman. The people thought that Grandpa's friend had done it so they grabbed him. Daddy said that Grandpa George barely escaped but his friend didn't. I don't know how Daddy got that picture, he never said, but even now as an adult, I can still remember looking at those smiling faces with teeth like hungry tigers. It hurt that such a picture made my Daddy cry. Mom had seen that picture before, too, I could tell. We both knew it was on the left side of the third drawer.

Excerpt from "The Third Drawer,"

First Prize winner in the AAGSNC Writing Contest.

See page 5.



Photo courtesy of www.musarium.com/withoutsanctuary, is included in the book *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, compiled by James Allen. The charred corpse of 17-year-old Jesse Washington suspended from a utility pole in Robinson, TX, shortly after he was murdered in Waco, TX, on May 8, 1916. The mentally-retarded Washington confessed to murdering a white woman for whom he worked. After a brief trial, the all white jury deliberated for four minutes before finding him guilty. Immediately after the trial, he was taken outside, castrated, covered with oil and lifted by a hoist above a fire. As the flames rose, he tried to get away by climbing the chains that held him, but members of the mob, numbering over 15,000, cut off his fingers as he attempted to climb. He was then repeatedly lowered and hoisted into the fire. His body was then dragged around the City Hall Plaza and taken seven miles out to the black neighborhood in Robinson and hung for display. His toes and ears were cut off and taken as souvenirs.

Lynchers would often parade their victims down the main streets, through black neighborhoods and in front of schools in session.

This photo, like many other photos of lynchings, was turned into a postcard, which sold for 10 cents. The inscription on the back of this card reads: "This is the Barbecue we had last night my picture is to the left with cross over it your son Joe."

Tuskegee Institute recorded nearly 5,000 lynchings of black people between 1880 and 1930 but historians suspect there were thousands more. Most lynchings happened in Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama. Thousands of these lynching postcards were widely distributed for years until they were banned from the mails in the mid 1920s by the Postmaster General. Today the remaining cards have become collectibles, selling online for as much as \$250 each.

- First Annual AAGSNC Writing Contest Winners

- Society News

- Ways to Celebrate Black History Month

- AAGSNC 2003 Annual Report

- 2003-2004 Surname Directory (supplement)



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Ms. MELVYN L. GILLETTE



December is here, and what a year this has been! In the Winter 2002 edition of *From the Baobab Tree*, new election procedures were announced, and

so in 2003, for the first time, AAGSNC has had two groups tasked with directing the Society. The By-Laws vest primary decision-making power in the Board of Directors, which this year appointed a separate officer group (with some overlap) to handle the day-to-day Society business.

Define "appoint." A verb meaning to ask, or beg, or cajole, or arm-twist, or all of the above, until someone agrees to serve.

We started the year with an all-day meeting of the Board of Directors and the Officers where we hammered out a calendar for the entire year, with discussion topics/events for each month, including our first-ever writing contest. And it got printed and distributed at the February general meeting! Of course, our Programs chair had her work cut out for her – getting presenters for the planned

discussions. But she pulled it off. In January, the officers prepared a budget, which was presented to the Board for approval. This was a new experience for the Society. If at first you don't succeed, try again. We didn't, so we did.

At our February meeting, the sale of surplus office supplies (aka throw-aways) from our Board Chair's employer added funds to our treasury and 'stuff' to our homes. Our immediate past-president was still busy showing the flag for AAGSNC (and incidentally, handing out pamphlets) at some Black History gatherings.

In May, two of our members did joint presentations at Bret Harte Middle School for two classes. In June, AAGSNC had a booth at the Port of Oakland's Portfest, where pamphlets and information were distributed. We also had genealogy books for sale. In July, we were off to the Bill Pickett Black Cowboys' Rodeo, where we again distributed information, along with having some society-produced pamphlets for sale. Both events were useful in acquainting new people with our organization. Thank you fundraising chair for putting us into new venues.

In September, AAGSNC was featured in an article in The Oakland Post and as a result, I was asked to do a presentation on

beginning genealogy for the "Black LDS" group of the Pittsburg Ward of the LDS church. In October, AAGSNC was well represented at the 3rd Annual West Coast Summit on Genealogy with 20 members attending. The Society will be featured on a radio interview in December, thanks to a contact made at the Portfest in June.

One of our members presented a beginning genealogy mini-class for the San Francisco Historical Society in early December. We now have a Publications Committee functioning and they are working on getting our first publication out, with our own Barbara Dunn as author. All in all, it's been a busy year and we are not through. On to the Writing Contest winners to be announced in this issue!

A big "Thank You" to all of the Officers, Board members, Committee Chairs and Committee members who contributed to a successful year.

On to 2004!

Melvyn L. Gillette
AAGSNC President - 2003

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AAGSNC NEWS

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

AAGSNC meetings are held at 1:30 pm on the **Third Saturday** of the month at the Dimond Branch of the Oakland Public Library. Visitors are always welcome to attend.

• January 17th

- Using Funeral and Church Records

We realize that most black churches don't keep records, but there are more records out there than you may realize. Don't overlook this potential source of information. We'll also show you why old funeral programs can be a gold mine of genealogical information.

• February 28th

** Note 4th Saturday **

Discover Your Roots. co-sponsored by the AAGSNC and the LDS (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), this all-day event will be held at the Mormon Church, 4766 Lincoln Avenue, Oakland. Individual workshops will cover such topics as Using Military Records to Find Your Ancestor, Beginning Genealogy, Using Historical Newspapers in Your Research, Writing Your Family History, and others.

The program runs from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm and lunch will be provided.

• March 20th

- Tracing Native American Ancestry

Whether or not your ancestor was a member of one of the Five Civilized Tribes, we will show you many overlooked resources for tracing your Native ancestors and how to find them.

• April 17th

- Organizing Your Records

Yeah, yeah, we know you keep *saying* you're gonna clean up that mess of papers piled all the way up to the sky, but despite all of your excuses, we're going to show you the *correct* way to get organized and *stay* that way. You'll be glad you did.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS and OFFICERS:

In recent board meetings, the AAGSNC Board of Directors (BOD) has elected several new board members and officers, to fill vacancies that resulted from resignations. New to the BOD are Barbara Shepherd Dunn and Sarah Robinson. New officers include Lenora Gobert as our Third Vice President (and fundraising chair), and Dr. Lois Freeman, our recording secretary. Their email addresses appear on the back cover of this journal.

Board meetings are held the Third Saturday of each month, immediately after the general membership meetings. Members and guests are welcome to attend the Board meetings.

MEMBERS' BIRTHDAYS:

December 2003

- 2 Jackie Stewart
- 12 Carole Neal
- 13 Melvyn Gillette
- 13 Melody McGriff
- 14 James A. Brimm
- 14 Samuel L. Golden
- 14 Julia A. Lockert-Baker
- 14 Ranie G. Smith
- 16 RoseMary Lee
- 16 Delores Williams
- 17 Cornell Celestine

January 2004

- 2 Mary V. Davis
- 9 Sharon Taylor
- 10 James W. Martinez
- 12 Juliet E. Crutchfield
- 12 Michele LeDoux
- 13 Ronald W. Higgins
- 16 Sharon Henderson-Nichols
- 25 Minnette B. Murphy
- 30 Kashan Robinson
- Geoffrey Carter
- Shirley Mann Jones

February 2004

- 2 Cynthia Grady
- 10 Havis White Blanchard
- 17 Kathryn B. Smith

- 18 Kathleen Murphy
- 21 Electra Kimble Price
- Cleveland Smith
- Annamae Louise Tolan
- Richard Wilson

NEW MEMBERS 2003:

- James A. Brimm
- Gary Brown
- Wanda Brown
- Denise F. Dantzler
- Jeannette N. Dunn
- James Elam
- Peggy A. Hadaway
- Vera Harl
- Horace House (lifetime member)
- Joyce M. Jones
- Ricardo Keppard
- Laura McDonald
- Diane Mitchell
- Claretta Morrow
- John A. Neal
- Farnsworth Curtis Reed
- Patricia Simmons
- Joyce O. Summerville McDaniel
- Paul D. Taylor
- Sharon Taylor
- Adrienne Anderson (International Black Women's Film Festival)

3rd SUMMIT a SUCCESS:

The Third Annual West Coast Summit on African American Genealogy was held in Los Angeles in October 2003, hosted by the California African American Genealogical Society (CAAGS). The Summit was attended by over 200 genealogists from all over the West and the keynote presentation by Tony Burroughs, "How to Become a Better Genealogist," was delightful and educational.

Twenty AAGSNC members made the journey South to attend the event. Our congratulations to CAAGS for a job well done. The 2004 Summit will be held in San Diego, CA October 15-16 and will be hosted by the San Diego African American Genealogy Research Group (SDAAGR).

For more information about the 2004 Summit, please contact Margaret Lewis at (619) 566-7566 or ibemarti@aol.com

1ST ANNUAL AAGSNC WRITING CONTEST WINNERS

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

When the AAGSNC Board of Directors first proposed hosting a writing contest, we had hopes that it would motivate family history researchers to finally put pen to paper and write some of the fascinating stories left behind by their ancestors. We weren't disappointed. Those members who participated in the contest allowed us to journey back in time with them, to relive the terrible and wonderful experiences of those long passed, and by doing so, gain a greater appreciation of the legacies they worked so hard to create.

Some of these stories were painful, yet all of them epitomize why we do what we do — why we are drawn to search to tell the ancestors' stories.

The hardest part of the contest was having to judge the entries. Since this was our first contest, we were fairly lenient on the requirements, not knowing what, if any, submissions we would receive. In some cases, grammar and spelling weren't great, and in other cases, there were confusing facts (one sentence referred to an ancestor as the writer's great grandfather, while another sentence referred to the same ancestor as the writer's great-great grandfather), and in yet other cases, source citations were incomplete.

We decided to overlook much of that because the stories were simply compelling and deserved to be heard. We promised to publish the stories of all three prize winners, and we intend to do just that, but due to fiscal constraints, we cannot publish them all in one edition of our Journal. We have decided to publish the First Prize winning essay in this Journal, the Second Prize winning essay in the Spring 2004 Journal, and the Third Prize winning essay in the Summer edition of our Journal.

PRIZES

First Prize - "The Third Drawer,"
by Marilyn Elaine Patrice White (\$250)

Second Prize - "Turner Family History,"
by Nancy Thompson (\$100)

Third Prize - "The Puzzle,"
by Loretta Henry (\$50)

SECOND ANNUAL WRITING CONTEST 2004

We know a good thing when we see it so we're going to offer the writing contest for a second year. The contest details:

- Open to AAGSNC members only. You may join the AAGSNC at any time, via mail or the web (www.aagsnc.org).
- Prizes: 1st \$250
2nd \$100
3rd \$ 50
- Your genealogy must cover at least three generations but not more than five. Include the progenitor and spouse as the first generation, all of their children with spouse(s) as the second generation, and all grandchildren with their spouse(s) as the third generation. It is not necessary to list the children in the fourth and fifth generations.
- Your manuscripts must be between 4,000 - 15,000 words
- The family history must include at least one person of African descent but the family does not have to have lived in the United States. The writer may be included as a member of the third generation, but not earlier.
- Your genealogy must be your own work based primarily on research you have conducted yourself. Contributions by family members are expected, but these sources must be cited.
- AAGSNC Officers and Board Members are ineligible for prizes.
- You must submit a pedigree chart that corresponds to your submission, following standard genealogical naming

and numbering conventions. Pedigree charts may be hand written or computer generated. **DO NOT INCLUDE PHOTOS IN THE PEDIGREE CHART.**

- Oral history has always been an important part of black history, since many of our ancestors could neither read nor write. But oral history is subjective and tends to shift depending on who's doing the telling. If your story depends on oral history to a large extent, we need to see the steps you took to validate this information. Tell an interesting story, placing your family in historical context of the world at that time. **The emphasis of your submission should be on the original research you did to create this history.**

We will use the following criteria to judge the entries:

- ___ Grammar and spelling
- ___ Sources cited
- ___ Consistency
- ___ Research techniques
- ___ Interesting story
- ___ Verification of oral history
- ___ How much research was done

- Submission may be done in typed or printed format, but email submissions are preferred (boy, did we learn that lesson well this year!).
- First, Second and Third place manuscripts will be published in an upcoming edition of the AAGSNC quarterly journal, *From the Baobab Tree*.
- **Deadline is November 1, 2004.** Mail printed submissions to:

AAGSNC - Writing Contest
PO Box 27485
Oakland, CA 94602-0985

or via email (**preferred**) in virtually any electronic format (Word, Word Perfect, PDF, Mac, PC, you name it, we'll take it) to: newsletter@aagsnc.org



1ST ANNUAL AAGSNC WRITING CONTEST: FIRST PRIZE

The Third Drawer by Marilyn Elaine Patrice White

I come from a long line of "savers." We save everything from string to furniture. If we think any soul can use it, we hold it for a rainy day. Daddy (Ela Nelson White) was one of those savers.

With a background like that, it was no wonder that a certain article caught my eye. While browsing through a local African American newspaper, I read about a new genealogical society being started to help blacks research their family history. The saver in me was certainly interested. The California African American Genealogical Society (CAAGS) was presenting a workshop on tracing family history on February 9, 1988. I decided to attend and was thoroughly blessed.

When I got home, I was so excited that Mom (Mary Laurenza Susan Johnson White) enthusiastically volunteered, "There's a whole dresser I haven't even touched yet." It had been eight years since Daddy had died and Mom finally seemed ready to tackle that chest of drawers. It was on that day that we were finally brave enough to begin sorting through the "dresser of treasures" I remembered as a child.

I can remember loving to watch Daddy clean out that chest of drawers. He had done it many times. Once he brought out a picture of Grandma Ella (Ella Sarah Thompson White) with her white dress and fez. He was so proud of her being the education representative for the Elks.

There was one day I remember especially well. Daddy brought out something I had never seen before. It was a picture of a lot of people standing around a tree. To my horror, on that tree hung the burned body of a man! When I gasped, Daddy hugged me and told me about it. He said that Grandpa (George O. Paris White) and his friend had been working in Tyler, Texas in the 1920s and that something happened between a black man and a white woman. The people thought that Grandpa's friend

had done it so they grabbed him. Daddy said that Grandpa George barely escaped but his friend didn't. I don't know how Daddy got that picture, he never said, but even now as an adult, I can still remember looking at those smiling faces with teeth like hungry tigers. It hurt that such a picture made my Daddy cry. Mom had seen that picture before, too, I could tell. We both knew it was on the left side of the third drawer.

Time with Daddy and that chest of drawers had been precious, but sadly, as I grew up, there seemed to have been less time with Daddy and the chest of drawers. I wish I had known then to ask more questions.

My reverie was jolted back into the present by Mom asking, "Well, where do you want to start?" I pointed to the "safe" side of the third drawer. Mom and I reverently began our remembrance service. Slowly, in silence, with hands touching, we slid open the third drawer. We took a deep breath in unison and began to touch the treasures. There were old coins, Grandma's doll that flipped from slave to mistress, a pocket watch I had seen Grandpa George wear, the tassel from Grandma Ella's fez, scrapbooks and pictures, pictures, pictures (over 200 of them). Some even had names on them! There was one picture we moved but didn't look at. We even found an accordion Kodak camera with film in it.

A bulky leather pouch, finely painted with multiple colors, caught my attention and my hands trembled in excitement as I opened it. Out fell birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, personal letters written by relatives in Phoenix, Arizona and Lawrence, Kansas, deeds,

and speeches handwritten by Grandma Ella. There too, in that drawer, under the mountain of pictures, was also the giant family Bible with a lock of my aunt Gladys White Morton's hair in it.

We'd always been told that Daddy's grandfather (Wright White) had been in the Civil War and there, in the third dresser drawer, like a lie detector going right, was a Civil War sword in a worn leather sheath, on the blade, "1860." Mom and I looked at each other and blew out a bewildered, ragged breath. "So it really was true," I said almost to myself. Mom said nothing. Even as a child I knew that drawer held the most important memories.

The third drawer experience was the beginning of a research hunger I have yet to satisfy. I joined CAAGS and began learning the fine art of researching in earnest.

I reached back into my childhood to remember the oral history so lovingly passed down by my Grandma. That precious oral history told me that my grandfather, William White, and his wife Phoebe, had been sent to Fletcher, Canada by their slave master so that William would not have to serve in the Civil War. At that time I did not even understand the significance of knowing their names.

Everyone knows that as a teenager there is no fate worse than having to travel with your parents to see relatives during the Summer, the only free time you think you will ever have. In the Summer of 1961, my parents, Ela Nelson White and Mary Laurenza Susan Johnson White, forced me to go with them to Florence, Arizona to visit my cousin Yeddo Smith Leos and her husband Lucas Leos. Not only did they make me visit but they made me write down every word Cousin Yeddo told me about our family. I couldn't believe they were being so cruel. At the time, I thought I was being punished. Florence, Arizona was a tiny, hot, cricket-filled town and to my horror, my cousin just never stopped



George O. Paris White



talking. It seemed as if she had been waiting for someone just like me to come along so that she could unload everything she had ever known, seen, or done in the years since her birth (June 23, 1888).

Yeddo's mother, Margaret White, who was born in 1865 in Canada, was the sister of my grandfather, George O. Paris White (September 21, 1874). No one seemed to know what the O. stood for or where he got Paris as a middle name. My father, Ela (pronounced "L. A.") Nelson White (May 29, 1902) was probably hearing Yeddo's lecture for the first time, too, at least by the expression on his face it seemed like it to me.

I wrote down all of the information as I had been instructed to do, but none of it went into my teenage head or heart. After five days, and pages and pages of notes, Yeddo seemed satisfied that she had told it all. When I got home, I stuffed those notes in my closet with my old textbooks, figuring that I would never need any of that "stuff" again and breathed a sigh of relief that that was finally over forever. I know you are thinking, "She sure was lucky!" Well, I must agree that I certainly was blessed. But fate has a way of punishing us when we are not wise.

Along came Alex Haley and *Roots*, and all of a sudden I wanted to know who I was, who my great-great-great-grandparents were and where were we from in Africa. How I wished I could have talked to Lucas and Yeddo again, but it was too late. They were gone. "Oh, if I could just remember what has become of those notes!" I whined to myself.

So on February 9, 1988, I attended that workshop sponsored by CAAGS at the California African American Museum. Now, I wanted to begin searching for my family history. I was astounded to see so many African Americans who knew so much about their genealogy. In fact, I met some that day who had actually found the emancipation deeds for their ancestors. I was "hooked!" I joined CAAGS that day!

Genealogists in that society helped me prepare a pedigree chart and family group sheets with the information I already had. I happily filled in that pedigree chart. I

called relatives I had not spoken to in years and promised to send them any information I found in exchange for any information they could give me right then.

The next day, armed with information from those treasured birth, marriage and death certificates, and the hint of Civil War service, I went to the Family History Library (FHL) of the Mormon Church. There, I met some more CAAGS members, and I began the search to be connected on paper, to the heart-connected people of my oral history.

My first visit to the FHL was a remarkable one. Within the first thirty minutes of census research, I had found my grandfather George O. Paris White on the 1880 census for Lawrence, Kansas, Douglas County with his parents William White and Jane (Phoebe Jane Seaton) and siblings, Salina, Gilbert, Margaret (as a fifteen year old), Elizabeth, John, George (my grandfather as a six year old), and Nora. There was also Jane's nephew James Seaton and a boarder Mary Stewart. I was so overwhelmed that all I could do was sit in front of the microfilm reader and cry. Here was proof that my ancestors were not folklore, but flesh and blood.

My hands were trembling so hard at this point that it was difficult to put the roll of 1870 microfilm on the reader. Then, out of the blue, there they were again. I found the family again! There was William B. White and Phoebe Jane Seaton White on that 1870 census in the same place in which they had lived before. Bless them, they had stayed put! They were there with their six children, Martique, Salina, Gilbert, Margaret, Elizabeth and Charles. Phoebe's nephew, James H. Seaton was still with them. A female by the name of Libbie Clark was listed with them too. Now

I was sure I was the one chosen by the Ancestors to research our family. And when I stopped to really think about it, I remembered them trying to get my

attention many times before.

Again, you are saying to yourself, "How lucky can you get?" But I would be telling a lie if I let you really believe that it remained that easy to document it all. That was just my ancestors' way of whetting my research appetite. Now I had to document their existence and interaction in their actual community.

I went back to the library the next day to look at the film for Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas. I wanted to visit the neighborhood. So, one page at a time, one line at a time, I went calling on my relatives and their friends unannounced.

I didn't find anyone else on the 1880 census I recognized but I found a Seaton family in Lecompton, Douglas County, Kansas. There was the Gilbert and Matilda Seaton my cousin Yeddo had talked about for five days! These were Phoebe Jane's parents. I knew right then that I had to find those long lost notes from the Florence, Arizona interview week, wherever they were. They held the key to my family's history.

I went home and into the garage to treasure hunt for the notes of that long ago visit to Florence, Arizona. I just had to find those papers! Then, way at the back of the garage, in the last box, tucked into a geography textbook, I finally found the notes. They were dusty and brown and it appeared that the silverfish had feasted on many of the pages. But there they were nevertheless. I screamed for joy and right there in the dusty garage, I sat down to begin reading!

I returned to the library the next day and the next day and the next day, but focus was my hardest chore. On one occasion, I went back to the 1870 census and realized the significance of what I was seeing. Instead of one family, there were two, William B. White's family, and Wright White's family. Wright and

William had been in three states together, North Carolina, Michigan, and Kansas. They were both born in North Carolina. They had named their children with the



William B. White



same first names. It was beginning to sound like the ancestors singing to me again.

Armed with this information, I sent out to find out more about William and especially Wright. That 1860 sword was foremost in my mind. Suppose one of them had served in the Civil War? I sent away for their military records from the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Six weeks later I got a thin package with about ten papers in it for William B. White. I couldn't wait to read it. Imagine my surprise when I read that William White, of the Michigan 102nd, Company B, had deserted in Detroit on January 27, 1864. That was the very year before Margaret, his daughter, was born in Canada. What a coincidence! The notes from Yeddo had said that William and Phoebe were sent to Fletcher, Canada so he could avoid serving in the Civil War. I was beginning to have more confidence in my family's oral history.

About a week later, I received a gigantic package from the National Archives with Wright White's military pension file. He served in the Michigan 102nd Company H. His file was a whopping 122 pages long! In his own words on his deposition, he named people he knew before, during and after the Civil War. I felt as though I was sitting down with him listening to him speak. What an experience! That remarkable file had a half dozen other depositions from him and from fifteen other people who knew him well. Three of the depositions were from his brothers, John White, James White and Jesse White! Wright stated that he had, "lived in Kansas since the year Grant was elected." When asked if he had been a slave, he answered, "No sir, my grandmother was a full-blooded Irish woman and a white woman's child could not be a slave."

I knew that I had to prove a relationship between William B. White and Wright White. There were just too many coincidences, they had been in three states together, both born in North Carolina, had named their children with the same first names. There had to be some connection blood or otherwise.

I decided to backtrack because I had never looked for the family beginning

with myself as I was being taught to do by CAAGS. The most recently accessible census I could use to find my father Ella Nelson White was the 1910 census. So back to the Family History Library I went. I found George P. White, Ella White, Gladyce A. White age 9, and Ela N. White age 7, in Phoenix, Maricopa County, Arizona. Yeddo Smith was living with them at 213 South Eleventh Avenue.

The 1900 census found the family in Arapahoe County, Colorado, listed as George O. P. White, Sarah E. White, and Christina age 5. At first I was confused. Who was this Sarah that George was married to? Since my grandmother's name was Ella Sarah, the Sarah E. was most probably the same person. Could that be the answer? What happened to Christina? Why wasn't she in the 1910 census? Could she have died? Was she living with another family? These and a million other questions had to be answered.

When the 1920 census was released in 1992, I was one of those just chomping at the bit to get my hands on it. I found the family again, this time in Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California. The family unit consisted of George P. White, Ella White, Gladyce A. White age 19, Nelson White age 17, and Emma Hoffman, a 28 year old boarder.

I found out that Kansas had a state census that was taken every ten years but it was always between the federal censuses. So, of course, I went hunting for the family in Lawrence, Kansas. In searching the 1905 state census of Ward 1, Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas, where Daddy was born, I found a family with Charles E. Smith age 45, Maggie Smith age 40 (yes, this was Margaret, the one born in Canada), Yeddo Smith age 16, and William B. White age 71. They were in the same neighborhood as Langston Hughes, age 4, with his grandmother Mary Hughes age 69.

The 1895 state census of Ward 1, Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas showed Ella Thompson aged 17, Sarah Thompson age 55, and Nelson Thompson age 60. Something about all of those familiar first names set up an alarm in my head. I had seen the name Thompson somewhere before. I racked my brain and remembered that it was in an autobiography in a "This is Your Life" album which had been presented to Grandma Ella by the Elks. I went back to Daddy's third drawer and there it was. Grandma had said that she was adopted by the Thompsons because her real parents, Molly Varnes and Louis Varnes, were only thirteen when she was born. Now it was beginning to make sense.

That same 1895 Lawrence, Kansas census showed Jane White age 61 living with only her two youngest children, Lizzie (Elizabeth) White age 28, and George White age 20. Where was William? There was another question to answer. He was still alive in 1905 and in Lawrence, Kansas. What was going on?

With the wonderful information on births, deaths, and marriages from the third drawer of Daddy's chest of drawers, the census records and our family's oral history, I felt comfortable with the White side of the family. Oh, I'm not saying that I was finished, I just felt that I wanted to know more now about the Seaton side.

The Seaton oral history from Yeddo was to be my focus now. If it was as accurate as the White oral history, I would be blessed again. I knew that Phoebe Jane Seaton married William B. White. Grandma Ella and Grandpa George had told me that since I was old enough to hear. There were even 2 daguerreotypes of them in Daddy's third drawer.



Ella Sarah Thompson

While I was researching the White family on the 1875 Kansas state census for North Lawrence, Douglas County, I began to also look for the Seaton line. While doing a census walk through the neighborhood I discovered Matilda Seaton age 60, J. H. Seaton age 21, W. B. White age 42,



Jane White age 40, Salina White age 14, Margaret White age 10, Elizabeth White age 8, John W. White age 3, and George White age 7 months, all in the same place.

An interesting feature of the Kansas state census is that it has a column marked, "From Where to Kansas," I was truly thrilled to find that my Whites and Seatons had all come from Michigan. Now I had another connection between the families.

About a month after my census neighborhood walk in North Lawrence, Kansas, CAAGS had a field trip to the Southern California Genealogical Society Library. Of course I went. I figured that my Midas touch would keep working, but by the time we left I had nothing but a few copies of my own and an article about the "Old Settler's Reunion" in Mecosta County, Michigan I had made for a friend when I saw a surname she was searching. I was certainly disappointed. What had happened to my "luck?" Daddy had always said, "There is no such thing as luck! There is only preparation meeting opportunity." I had never believed him until now. I had to admit that I had not prepared very well for this field trip. I should have found out what the library offered. Then I should have planned what I would look for. I thought, "Oh well, this sure is a lesson learned."

At the library I had only skimmed the article since it was in a journal which was ten years old. I was so frustrated and bored at not finding anything of value, that I hadn't expected to find anything and so I didn't. I had had enough searching for the day and couldn't wait to get home. Later, I prepared an envelope to mail the article to my friend. Just as I began to slip the article into the envelope, I noticed the name Seaton. "Where in the world had that name come from?" I said aloud. I was positive it hadn't been there before. I was sure I would have seen it. I took the article out of the envelope and read it thoroughly. It was a list of black families who had settled in Mecosta County, Michigan. More amazingly, the author was Leslie Seaton! I was astounded. Before I knew it, I had picked up the phone and had contacted Directory Assistance in Michigan. The operator said that there was no one by the name of

Leslie Seaton in Mecosta County. I was just about to hang up, when I heard the operator say, "But there is a Les Seaton in Grand Rapids. Would you like the number?" "Absolutely!" I yelled.

I immediately called the number and a kind voice answered. I told him that I was beginning to do my family history and was searching for Gilbert and Matilda Seaton. Before I could say another word, he screamed, "You're my link!!" We must have talked for three hours. Our genealogy overlapped by a generation. We were sure we were related. His grandfather, Joseph Anthony Seaton, was my great-grandmother, Phoebe Jane Seaton's brother. Gilbert and Matilda Seaton were the parents of both!

That Summer, I visited Leslie Seaton. We drove to Cass County, Michigan where the family had lived. We looked at the graves in Chain Lake Cemetery. We shared all the research we had both done. The blessing was, that we found each other and in doing so reconnected a family who had not been together since 1868. We found that we had a common oral history almost to the exact words. His oral history passed down in Michigan, mine in California.

Our common oral history was that a seventeen year old who lived on the coast of Guinea, West Africa, was supposed to be watching the village while the adults went to harvest the field. He and the children were captivated by the red flag being flown by a ship and got too close. They were captured and Captain Bernard would not let them get off the ship. Imagine, the identical oral history, including the name Captain Bernard, being passed down generation by generation on different sides of the United States for 135 years. There has to be something to this.

Again, I will say that I am blessed, blessed, blessed by the richness of my family's history and the seemingly magical way it has of making itself known to me, but I don't want to mislead you. Research takes work. As I went about trying to document everything I found, it is one thing to know or think you know, but quite another to prove it with documents other than the census. After my census research, I wanted to find the marriage records of William B. White and Phoebe Jane

Seaton but the information was stubborn in coming. I looked at index after index for them. They were nowhere to be found. Because I had found them on the 1870 census in Lawrence, Kansas, I knew that they had lived next door to Wright White and Sarah. William's sister, Sarah Ellen, was living in Wright's household as a twelve year old along with Susan, Wright, Jr., Jesse, and Joseph ranging in ages from fifteen to twenty (all except Susan were born in Indiana). I also found James H. Seaton living with William and Phoebe again. He had been established on the 1880 Douglas County, Kansas census for Grant Township as Phoebe Jane's nephew. I had never been able to find William and Phoebe on the 1860 census anywhere, therefore their marriage certificate had remained elusive. I was determined to find proof of their marriage.

According to the birthplaces of their children on the 1880 and 1870 censuses, they should have been in Michigan in 1860. Maybe tracing Wright White might help. Perhaps I would find them next door again.

I located Wright White in the 1860 Michigan census for Calvin Township in the town of Brownsville in Cass County. William and Phoebe were nowhere to be found. Instead of William and Phoebe next door, I found John White and Indiana White. John was also born in North Carolina just as were Wright and William. Their children were born in Indiana and Michigan. It is interesting to note that John and Indiana had named one of their children Phebe J. White. There was still no sign of William and Phoebe and no clues.

Having come to a dead end on William and Phoebe with no real connection to Wright White and John White other than circumstantial, I began to focus again on the Seaton line. I hoped that Phoebe would lead me to the marriage record.

I located Gilbert and Matilda on the 1870 Douglas County, Kansas census in Lecompton Twp. the city of Clinton. Phoebe was not there but that was not surprising considering the fact that Phoebe, born about 1834 could have been on her own at age 26. The Seatons were also located in the 1860 Michigan



census for Cass County, Calvin Twp. city of Brownsville. This is the very same city in which I found Wright White and John White in 1860. I continued following the Seatons using clues found in the 1870 and 1860 censuses.

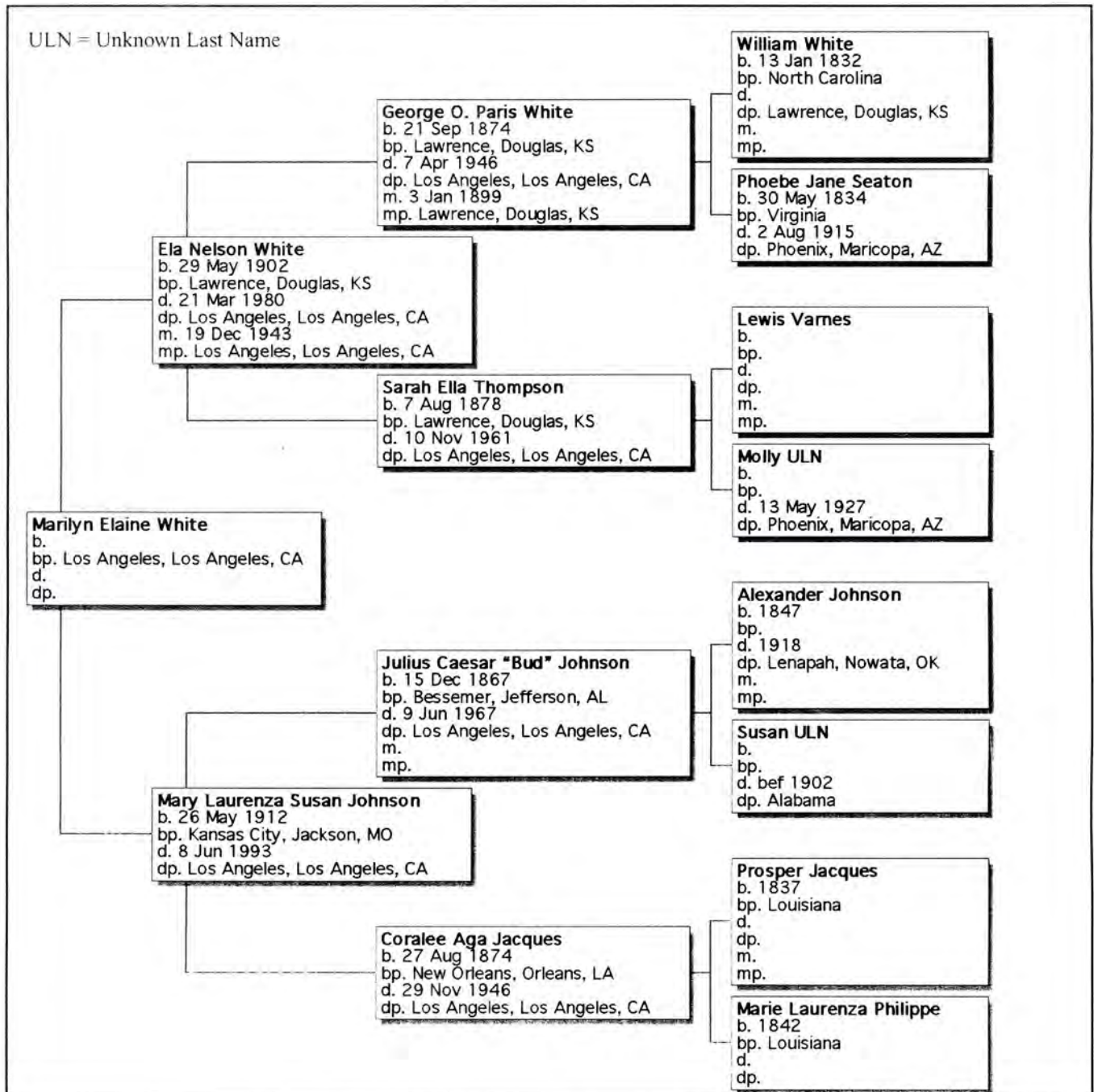
Because there were Seaton births in Ohio as indicated in the censuses, I decided to look for books which might help. I remembered Leslie Seaton saying that many of the Seatons were born and lived in Montgomery County, Virginia. One

book, *Entitled! Free Papers in Appalachia Concerning Antebellum Freeborn Negroes and Emancipated Blacks of Montgomery County, Virginia* captured my attention. In it I found an interesting Will. Charles and Polly Taylor had, by Will, freed Phebe, Taney, Solomon, Gabriel, Frank, Jim, Sarah, Becky, Jane, Gilbert, Margaret, Adeline and Mary, children of Phoebe, Sam, John, Charles, Juliet and Stewart, the children of Philis. The Will gave them land in "a free state," provisions and transportation (pages 64 and 65).

I couldn't say for sure that this is my family of Seatons but I decided to check the land records in Ohio since so many of the Seaton children were born there. I found Gilbert Seaton selling land in Gallia County, Ohio in 1847.

I found the Seatons in the 1850 census for Gallia County, Greenfield Twp. 'Lo and behold, there was Pheobe as a seventeen year old in Gilbert Seaton and Matilda Seaton's family. Understand that nothing I had found to this point had helped me

Marilyn White's Pedigree Chart





WAYS TO CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Black History Month is celebrated in February in the United States and in October in England. We encourage you to take this time to create celebrate the legacy of your own family by taking part in one of these activities.

1. CREATE A FAMILY COOKBOOK

It's just a crying shame that all the culinary talent in my family has been totally wasted on me. My daughter will attest to the fact that I can't even boil water, but thank goodness, the "cooking gene" seems to have skipped a generation or two and Dawn is quite a good cook. Over the years, I've written down some of my aunt's most popular recipes (sweet potato pie, Auntie's Killer brownies, lemon chess pie) and plan to include them in the family history I'm writing about that side of the family.

2. UNCOVER YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH HISTORY

Medical genealogy can actually be fun and potentially a life-saving project. Medical experts project that between 5,000 - 10,000 known diseases are genetically linked. Conditions such as high blood pressure, sickle cell anemia, colon cancer, heart disease and even alcoholism have been shown to "run in families." Creating a family health history can be useful to discover health patterns and genetic traits for you and your descendants.

Compiling a family health history isn't very different from the regular family history you're already compiling and you may have many of the documents needed to get started:

1. Interview your parents, siblings, aunts and uncles. Of course, some people may not want to share personal medical information, so you'll have to be diplomatic. It might help if you start with a list of medical conditions that they can identify with a simply yes or no. Be sure to make note of the person's age when the illness was diagnosed.

2. Death Certificates. Medical conditions are often noted on death certificates as well as when the deceased first got sick,

how long the illness lasted, secondary contributing factors, and length of hospital stay.

3. Obituaries. Even if the cause of death isn't specifically mentioned, pay attention to where donations can be sent because it may list a medical foundation. Always double check with a surviving family member to confirm your suspicions.

4. Cemetery and funeral records. If your ancestor was buried in a perpetual-care cemetery, you may be able to find cemetery records that state the cause of death.

5. Mortality Schedules. As mentioned in the Fall edition of *From the Baobab Tree*, these "other" federal census schedules are available for the years 1849, 1859, 1869, 1879, and 1884 and are organized by state. Not all deaths are recorded but you might get lucky and find your ancestor's cause of death if he/she died in one of those years.

6. Military and pension records. These records often list the cause of death as well as any illnesses that may have existed while the ancestor was still alive.

7. Hospital records. In some states, medical records requests are accessible by the family of deceased persons.

3. RECORD YOUR STORIES

Whether you write them down on paper or record them on audio or video tape, start keeping these stories TODAY!! You know the old saying, "Tomorrow is promised to no one," so there's no better time to start collecting these stories than the present.

4. CREATE A HERITAGE BOOK

Formerly known as "scrapbooks," heritage books are a wonderful way to showcase your family's history as well as your hard work as researcher. You may want to start by creating a heritage book of your child's artwork (what a great idea!), and from there, start working on one branch of your family at a time. Keep the heritage books manageable (not too big) so they're easier to share with others.

TAKING SPECIAL CARE WITH PHOTOS:

- Always, always, always use acid-free paper. Most photo albums on the market today are NOT safe. The acid will degrade the photos over time rendering them useless.

- Whatever you do, do NOT write on original photos. We recommend you have your valuable old photos scanned and color copies printed. You can then crop, cut, write on, fold, spindle, or mutilate your copies to your heart's content.

- Do NOT use sticky albums. There's acid in the adhesive, in the cardboard back, and in the plastic sheet covering the photo. If you already have some precious old photos on one of those sticky albums, the best way to remove them is to use dental floss and carefully work it back and forth as you apply pressure to free the photo.

- Once you have converted your old photos to a digital format (scanned or taken digital copies of them), you can archive them onto a CD for more permanent storage.

- Never laminate photos. Though you may think you're protecting them, the chemicals in the laminating plastic may cause long term damage.

- Never use tape to repair old photos. Instead, buy some inexpensive archival plastic sleeves to store them. These plastic sleeves are available at most office supply stores and are specially marked "archival."

5. CREATE A YEAR CALENDAR WITH FAMILY PHOTOS

You can find blank calendars all over the internet for the year. You can easily add scanned or digital photographs to personalize them and share with your family. Or for a more low-tech approach, wait until January when calendars are reduced for sale at 50% off their regular price, buy a bunch of plain ones and glue-stick copies of your favorite photos throughout and send them to your family. Say they're late because they got lost in the mail.



For a more high-tech approach, you can purchase a program such as Calendar Creator (for PC) or Print Explosion Deluxe (for Mac) and create your own customized family calendars. These programs will easily allow you to import family photos, put customized text (birthdays, anniversaries, deaths, etc.).

6. LISTEN TO AN OLDER PERSON'S STORIES

Elder stories provide an excellent way to connect, to heal, and to provide information. When we listen to the stories of older people, it helps us better appreciate all that they went through to get where they are today. In some cases, the experiences may be very painful or poignant, yet the power their words represent can change the way we think about aging and provide a lasting legacy that we can then pass down to our own descendants.

For most of us, oral history has been a very important part of our family's history, yet with all the technology we have today, when's the last time we stopped to simply listen?

When you begin your listening project, keep in mind a short list of topics to cover. Sometimes if you ask a direct question, the elder may have trouble remembering the specific details. You can, instead, ask a question such as, "Who was the best cook in your family?" or "Do you remember your third grade teacher?" Questions like these will often cause the elder to reminisce and travel back to the "good ol' days," and pleasant memories, causing the memories to flow. Sometimes you can't shut them up once they start, but it's better to have more stories than fewer stories.

It's best to audio tape these stories which will allow you to take notes on information you need to clarify. With the tape recorder running silently on a side table, it's quickly forgotten and the elder will relax and open up to you.

Dementia — even if the elder being interviewed is suffering from a form of dementia, and you suspect most of the stories are his or her imagination, there's no harm in recording them anyway. Some medical experts feel that storytelling can help stroke patients heal faster

During the holidays, setup an informal "Storytelling Circle" in your living room where each person has five minutes to tell a story. Choose a theme, if you like, and include elders as well as children. Make this an annual holiday tradition.

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OBJECTIVES of the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California:

- 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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MEETINGS

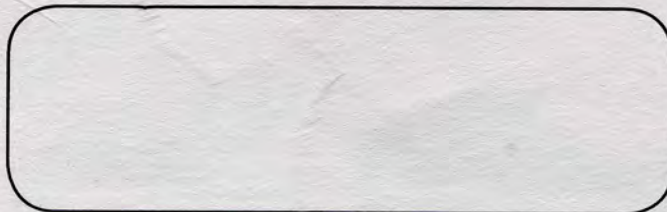
Meetings are held the third Saturday of every month, at 1:30 pm, at the Oakland Public Library, Dimond branch, located at 3565 Fruitvale Ave, Oakland, CA. There are no meetings during the Summer hiatus (July and August). Guests and visitors are always welcome to attend these open meetings. The AAGSNC Board of Directors meets immediately following the regular membership meetings (from 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm) and members are welcome to attend.

JOURNAL

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IT'S YOUR HISTORY ... ISN'T IT TIME YOU TOLD YOUR STORY?