



# AAHGS *News*

The Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society, Inc.  
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## NATIONAL AAHGS RINGS IN SEASON OF NEW LEADERSHIP



President-Elect Gene Stephenson

The National Executive Board of AAHGS welcomes our new national president, Gene R. Stephenson, to guide AAHGS through to the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. "While there are still many challenges facing us as an organization," outgoing National President Sherri Camp beamed, "we are a growing organization. Every year we are adding at least 200 new members. AAHGS is set to be more broadly recognized for who and what we are — the premiere source and home for African American family historians and genealogists. We are it!"

Camp went to say, "Since officers' new terms begin January 1, 2018 we ask for your Watch Night prayers for our organization and leadership. Terms end December 31, 2019, and anyone with a vision and mind to work who meets the qualifications of office can and is encouraged to run for a leadership office."

In addition to Gene, Alison Barnes will continue for another term as corresponding secretary, and Karen Strickland remains as treasurer. For all of AAHGS, we thank and congratulate these three persons for continuing the legacy of excellence and continuity in leadership of our organization.

Gene has served AAHGS at an executive level for many years, most recently as vice-president of history, and chair of the Chapter Committee. He is also president of Metro Atlanta AAHGS and brings a wealth of leadership experience to the job as a former Pennsylvania Assistant Deputy State Treasurer, former Chair of UNCF Advisory Board of Pennsylvania, and member of the first Martin Luther King, Jr. Statewide Youth Assembly - Capital Area Chapter in Harrisburg, PA. Serious about his research of African American history, Gene published *Freedom Ways: The Black Soldier During the Civil War Era: A Historical Bibliography*, and *Dark Earth, Wind & Fire: A Selected Research Bibliography on Black Life in Virginia: 1555-1895*. He is also an ordained elder at the First African Presbyterian Church in Lithonia, GA. Gene is also the father of six children, and grandfather of 12.



AAHGS President Sherri Camp

## RESEARCH STRATEGY TO FIND ENSLAVED ANCESTORS PAYS OFF

By ROSALYN GREEN

I recently traveled to Northumberland County, Virginia with two of my cousins, Paula Glenn-Lamb and Karas Lamb, to do research on my father's family. While there, we visited the Northumberland County Historical Society (NCHS). I had emailed ahead of time to let them know what types of information I was looking for and when I was coming. They let me know that they did have some of the things I was seeking and that the person most knowledgeable about their African American research resources was usually there in the afternoons. I had

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**AFRO-AMERICAN  
HISTORICAL AND  
GENEALOGICAL  
SOCIETY, INC.  
FOUNDED 1977**

*The Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc., (AAHGS), is a non-profit membership organization committed to the preservation of the history, genealogy and culture of the African-ancestored populations of the local, national and international community.*

*AAHGS stresses the importance of our history and genealogy by encouraging active participation in recording research and personal family histories.*

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## AAHGS ANNOUNCES 2017 NATIONAL AWARD WINNER: ROBYN N. SMITH

Robyn N. Smith was presented the AAHGS 2017 Paul Edward Sluby, Sr./Jean Sampson-Scott Meritorious Achievement Award for distinguished performance and her significant contributions to African American genealogy for almost 20 years.

An engineer by day, Robyn makes good use of her research and problem solving skills in the field of genealogy. A part-time genealogy instructor and a lecturer for many years, Robyn teaches Advanced African-American Genealogy at Howard Community College in Columbia, MD.

Robyn is a prolific writer and published author. She regularly writes a genealogical blog "Reclaiming Kin: Taking Back What Was Once Lost." In her blog, she shares helpful tips and strategies for researching African-American genealogy. Several articles written by Robyn were published in periodicals, newsletters, and journals.

In April 2016, she won a second-place award for *Minty's Legacy* in the Excellence-in-Writing Competition from the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors.

In 2015, Robyn published *The Best of Reclaiming Kin...Helpful Tips on Re-searching Your Roots*. In this book, we can clearly see the three sides of Robyn—the skilled researcher, the consummate teacher, and the prolific writer. Congratulations Robyn for sharing the story of your ancestors and teaching others to do likewise!

**Editor's note:** Another article on this awards event was published earlier this year. We apologize for errors in that article. This new article corrects those errors.



*Sybil Templeman Williams, Chairperson of AAHGS National Awards Committee, presented the award to Robyn N. Smith at AAHGS Central Maryland Chapter meeting, September 9, 2017.*

## INTERNATIONAL AAHGS BOOK AWARDS

The International AAHGS Book Awards is a competitive contest established to recognize, promote and honor authors of high quality publications that accurately examine and portray African-ancestored family history and genealogy in a wide variety of genres both fiction and non-fiction, for adults and young readers.

AAHGS takes great pride in sponsoring this book Awards program as part of its mission to document and disseminate research to all sectors of the American population on the history, struggles, and contributions of African Americans from Jamestown to the present. Ric Murphy, vice-president of history, is spearheading this initiative for AAHGS. For more information and to enter your book into this top rated competition, go to AAGHS website at [www.aahgs.org](http://www.aahgs.org).

**Announcing**  
AAHGSbookawards.org





## Greetings From Your National President!

Ask Not What AAHGS Can Do for You. Ask What Can You Do For AAHGS. And Do Something!

Our mission is to preserve African-ancestored family history, genealogy, and cultural diversity by teaching research techniques and disseminating information throughout the community. Our primary goals are to promote scholarly research, provide resources for historical and genealogical studies, create a network of persons with similar interests, and assist members in documenting their histories.

Our founders set a great example of leadership for us by establishing our mission. Our founders never knew how AAHGS would grow or what would it would become, but they had a vision. Likewise, we can only envision what this organization will be in the future. We can dream of a chapter in every state. We can dream of AAHGS being known by African American researchers everywhere. We can dream of our youth having a burning desire to know their ancestors and being guided by their ever presence in spirit.

For such dreams to be realized, we need dedicated leaders and members who are determined, mission focused, with the knowledge, skills and abilities to move AAHGS forward. We have been blessed by founders and leaders over the past 40 years who have had these qualities; and we must continue in the pattern set by them to become stronger leaders in African American genealogy and our local history. It's time for each one of us to step up, throw our hat into the ring, give of ourselves and ask ourselves, "What can I do for AAHGS!"

There is so much to be done. And as we have learned, *many hands make light work*. Each member of AAHGS can work on the chapter level and help with programming to teach in his or her community. Each member has a story to tell and, therefore, something to share in our Newsletters and Journals. Each member can identify those he or she knows for leadership, both locally and nationally, including yourself. Yes! You! We all have something to offer AAHGS because we have a heart for the work. You know how important our work is to your life. Many of you are already doing a lot in your communities, but the rest of us don't know because you haven't told us. You can bless the lives of those around you with your knowledge and leadership in AAHGS. Send us your stories of leadership and learning. Join a committee; help to start a new chapter; find out how your contributions can make a difference in the initiatives we have planned for the next three years!

This is my final "In Spirit" Column as president of AAHGS. I step back as president for new leadership to bring forth new visions for AAHGS. As *Immediate Past President*, I will continue to help to lead AAHGS. My vision for bringing AAHGS into the 21st Century by building our infrastructure and programming is taking shape. Our presence in the nation and abroad is increasing. Our membership has steadily increased; and we look forward to even greater increases in the future as we tell our stories and as each one of us steps up to *Do Something for our Beloved AAHGS*.

Let AAHGS know you care! Join a committee today! To find out how, update your profile on our website at [www.aahgs.org](http://www.aahgs.org). Login and select the committees you want to serve on under the Manage Your Profile link. The Board will review requests again by the end of the year. All requests will be added to the AAHGS Volunteers List. There's something for everyone to do at AAHGS. Be a volunteer. Today!

In Spirit,  
*Sherri Camp*

**In Spirit**



# GEORGIA RED CLAY

AAHGS 2017 National Conference was my first ever ocean cruise. I thoroughly enjoyed myself but came away not really sold on cruises (don't like the confinement), but the stellar array of conference presenters and speakers inspired, informed, excited, and reaffirmed how important is this work that we do.

Reminds me of the African American spiritual "Chi'ren, don't you get weary, there's a great campground meeting on the other side." Despite brick walls, burnt courthouses, slavery's iron curtain, lost memories, never recorded relationships, and kinfolk who seem not to care about family history, please don't quit. Speaker after speaker at AAHGS 2017 made clear that our work as family historians is important and essential.

We poured libations and offered up prayers to thank God for the ancestors, especially those who somehow survived, ironically by the grace of God, the treacherous middle passage. Meanwhile, over 200 of their descendants cruised in high style over that same ocean telling their stories, honoring their sacrifice. The contrast was beyond amazing but it was clear we had the love and approval of our forebears — we enjoyed great weather with no concern for a hurricane rising up off the coast of West Africa!

Upcoming issues of AAHGS News will highlight the conference cruise. We urge all members to get ready for AAHGS 2018 to be held in Philadelphia. Send in your proposals to present your research. My only frustration with AAHGS 2017 was that I couldn't attend each and every session.

This is our last issue for 2017. This edition contains important announcements about AAHGS initiatives — International Book Awards competition, AAHGS 2018; don't forget to renew your AAHGS membership. Be sure to read about Robin Smith, our AAHGS 2017 Paul Edward Sluby, Sr./Jean Sampson-Scott Meritorious Achievement Award. I am duly impressed with her long list of notable achievements in genealogy that explains why she won the award. Also, our contributing columnists Char Bah and Doris Posey are back with great advice for all family historians. Don't be shy — send them your questions! Then retired Emory University professor, Denise Raynor, wrote a timely opinion on using "slave" or "enslaved." We'd love to hear your opinions on this matter.

Guy Weston shared a small bit of his years of research of a free African American community in New Jersey. While slavery was the main social status for the vast majority of our 19<sup>th</sup> century ancestors, it is so important to document their successes in establishing their own spaces of liberty. At the same time, Rosalyn Greene's painstaking research allowed her to take a sledgehammer to the 1870 brick wall. She left the Internet and travelled to the original scene of the crime (of slavery) and found her ancestors! Read how she did it. Nathania Miles connected the past with the present in her piece on efforts to revive the first black-owned airfield. And do you think a 1921 governor's proclamation on "Negroes" can be relevant to a national debate today? Read us and send us your feedback, please.

In the spirit of the season, we give you many gifts in our last issue for 2017. We invite you to share your stories, research, photos, and opinions for publication in these pages. We are you, and there is no AAHGS News without YOU!

Peace

*Paula Whatley Matabane*

Atlanta, GA

publications@aahgs.org



## TIMBUCTOO — A FREE BLACK COMMUNITY IN NEW JERSEY

BY GUY-ORIEDO WESTON

When Timbuctoo was being settled in the 1820s, southern New Jersey already had a bustling population of free Black people. Certainly, many of them had escaped bondage in the South, but they were preceded by an earlier and significant number of free Black residents. Fully two-thirds of southern New Jersey Blacks were classified as free in the 1790 U.S. Federal census. By 1820, that number had reached 96 percent<sup>1</sup>. This substantial community of Black people could form institutions to meet their spiritual needs and provide their own spaces from which to fight for equality, improve their quality of life, and protect their community from Southern bounty hunters seeking to raid places like Timbuctoo in search of formerly enslaved persons.

The number of Black churches in northern communities is a strong indicator of the growth of the free, Black population. Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church was founded in Philadelphia in 1794.

Abyssinian Baptist Church was founded in New York City in 1808. Jacobs Chapel A.M.E. Church in what is now Mt. Laurel, NJ was founded in 1821, and Mount Moriah A.M.E. Church was founded in what is now Hainesport, NJ in 1826. Many Timbuctoo residents worshiped at Mount Moriah, and were buried in their cemetery. At least two of the six trustees listed on a Mount Moriah incorporation document filed with the Burlington County Clerk's office in 1840 were residents of Timbuctoo.

Within Timbuctoo, there were at least two churches: a "Place of Divine Worship," located closer to Rancocas Rd, established circa 1841, and the Zion Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal African Church, which had its rustic sanctuary on the front portion of that lot, established in 1854. The cemetery was in the Church's "back yard".

The A.M.E. Zion Church grew out of the John Street Methodist Church in New York City in 1821. Blacks were supposedly "fortunate" to be able to worship in integrated spaces in New

their own denominations. Once independent of the mainstream Methodist denomination, the A.M.E. Zion church was quick to join the Abolitionist Movement and became known as the Freedom Church.

Zion Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal African Church was formed under this umbrella. The Church's affiliation with Zion is codified in the 1854 deed recording their purchase of this property. It says that one "Peter V. Coppuck, and Eleanor his wife" sold the premises to "David Parker, Noble

L Johns, Adam Gibson, Jacob Colewell, James Pinion, Richard Christy and William Chase, Trustees of the Zion Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal African Church of Timbuctoo in the Township of Westampton," and that premises were "granted and released to be used as a place of religious worship according to the form of government and discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in America, and as a place for the burial of the dead of such are in connection with said

search or the descendants thereof, (and such others as the majority of the Trustees for the time being may permit) forever". This was 1854, nine years before the end of the Civil War.

There are approximately 79 graves in the cemetery, according to a geophysical survey conducted in 2009. Thirteen of them have stones of which only three are not Civil War veterans. They are members of the Parker family including Eliza Parker (d. circa 1847), Trustee David



*Celebrating a free people. Photo courtesy of Guy Weston.*

York, where slavery had been abolished by gradual manumission in 1799. However, Black Christians frequently confronted demeaning treatment by white Christians in church. Forced to sit in the balcony, Blacks were the last to be served communion, and could be baptized only after all whites had been baptized. The notion of the ordination of Black men into ministry was fully resisted so that even all-Black congregations associated with white churches could only have white ministers. These and other factors caused Blacks to separate and form

**continued on next page**

**TIMBUCTOO**, continued from page 5

Parker's first wife; their son Frisby Parker; and David's second wife, Matilda.

Veterans were given stone grave markers as a death benefit for military service. Wooden grave markers were commonplace except for people of financial means. Since wooden markers do not survive time, this particular cemetery has 66 unmarked graves. We can only wonder about the identity and lives of those whose grave markers did not survive over the years.



*Timbuctoo, NJ African American cemetery. Photo courtesy of Guy Weston.*

The Parkers were unusual as African Americans given their ability to afford stone grave markers. According to his 1876 obituary in the *New Jersey Mirror*, David Parker “occupied a prominent position with his race in this vicinity, commanded the respect and esteem of a large number of white friends, and possessed more than ordinary intelligence and a determined will, which made him a natural leader among his people so long as his physical strength lasted, and he was generally at the head of any movement among them.”

Parker's life offers insight into the fascinating history of the free community of Timbuctoo. He was one of the first of Timbuctoo settlers to purchase parcels there in September 1826 — more than 190 years ago. Parker outlived all of his fellow settlers by nearly two decades and outlived two wives. In 1871, when he would have been in his late 60s, Parker married 30-year-old Clarissa Cole of Philadelphia, according to the *New Jersey Mirror*. Their son Charles was born in 1872. Charles also had a son named Charles born in 1920. One of the latter Charles' children, Bart Parker, is still alive in 2017!

#### Endnote

<sup>1</sup> *US Census Bureau US Census of Population and Housing..* [https://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/overview/](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/overview/). Accessed on May 20, 2015

## **ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE: WE WERE ENSLAVED**

BY DENISE RAYNOR

*To Enslave: to make (someone) a slave. Slave: a person who is the legal property of another and is forced to obey them.*

The recounting of American history, when it has included slavery at all, has called the Africans kidnapped and brought to this country slaves. When we now discuss the history of people of African descent in the US, we commonly refer to them as former slaves. Some have suggested that the term “slave” should be replaced by “the enslaved”.

Just to be clear, according to the 1860 US census, there were 3,950,528 slaves and 476,748 free persons of color. Although the word slave feels more solitary, it is not; no individual chooses to surrender his freedom without force from a subjugator. Still, slave has become so much a part of normal speech that it engenders thoughts of victims without thoughts about how that status came to be.

On the other hand, the word enslaved automatically involves two parties, the victimized man or woman and the better armed owner.

Similarly, a change from the term slaveholders to enslavers evokes a sense of active ongoing participation of slave owners, not one of neutral observation. At any time, an enslaver had the option to disengage from the system and so made the conscious choice to continue to brutalize men and women daily. That choice was for more than just profit; it was to maintain the very basis of their society and more broadly, civilization as they envisioned it. This was no subconscious acquiescence to socialization but a continuous propaganda battle at all levels of society and government. That propaganda filters through today as General Kelly, presidential chief of staff, recently demonstrated. Kelly staunchly rewrote history by claiming that the Civil War happened because no compromise could be reached, omitting slavery as the clearly stated reason for secession of the Southern States. The timing of secession was a response to the belief that Lincoln, newly elected president, would abolish slavery.



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## ARCHIVING CHURCH RECORDS

The Archives and History Auxiliary of Providence Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta, GA sponsored its fourth annual workshop designed to train local church archivists and historians in techniques and best practices for organizing, maintaining, and digitizing church records. Entitled “Precious Memories, Sacred Moment II,” the October 7<sup>th</sup> event was well attended by 20 persons anxious to improve or begin creating their church’s archives. By holding these workshops Providence MBC is leading in the effort to overcome problems from the past when black church records were often either not maintained at all, were perhaps kept at the home of the person maintaining them and not passed on before that person died or otherwise left the church, or were burned or otherwise destroyed. Church records are an essential part of the broader history of a community. They provide genealogical data and mark the sacred moments in the lives of individuals and families.



*Providence MBC church archives workshop speakers and committee members*

Speakers for the day included Angelique M. Richardson, Director of Archives and Records for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta; Cassandra Little, Archivist for Mt. Zion Second Baptist Church of Atlanta; Laura Michelle Woods, Archivist for Antioch Baptist Church North of Atlanta; and Meredith Evans, Ph.D., Director of the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum in Atlanta.

Each speaker gave highly valuable points to consider when creating and maintaining a church archive whether it is large or small. Some of these are listed below.

- 1) Decide what to toss and what to keep. You can’t keep everything nor is everything worth keeping. Have a policy for deciding what is important.
- 2) Don’t keep multiple copies of the same document.
- 3) Don’t hole punch and put archival records in binders. Use paper folders.
- 4) Avoid using Post-it notes, staples, metal paper clips, tape of any kind, rubber bands, plastic sleeves or folders, and ballpoint pens on archival records.
- 5) Keep records that tell the story of your church. These may include organizational records, unique executive correspondence, financial and legal records, annual reports, personnel records, property and construction records, communications and printed materials, photographs and other formats (audio, film and videos, paintings, etc.)
- 6) Assess what you have, then ask members to share what they have to help fill in the gaps.

Church archivists must become savvy with scanning, Excel software, and finding ways to keep persons, especially youth, interested in church history by using print and digital bulletin boards.

Providence MBC wholly sponsors these workshops as a service to the broader church community. Rev. Damon P. Williams, Ph.D. is the pastor. Leonard Brown is chair of the Archives and History Auxiliary. Monica Hackney, vice-president of Metro Atlanta AAHGS, is an active member of the archives auxiliary.

*“Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet unborn may praise the Lord.” (Psalm 102:18)*



## ENSLAVED, continued from page 6

As an aside, it is important to recall the 476,748 free persons of color. They composed 12 percent of African Americans in 1860, much more than most people imagine. Because the narrative of slavery is far more complicated than we have been taught or want to believe, there are individual stories in the group of free Blacks that defy the common narrative. Some of those “colored” free were descended from men who arrived on the continent free men or indentured servants who fulfilled their contracts. Some of them were descended from or were themselves enslaved men and women who escaped or bought their freedom with their paid labor or were granted their freedom through wills, or declarations. For many, their status as freedmen was often questioned and with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, they were subject to kidnap and enslavement. The enslaved were very valuable assets and a lucrative catch for often poor white hunters.

It may be that a shift from the word slave to more frequent substitution of the word enslaved would inject some fresh associations into an old narrative. It stands to reason if we speak of African Americans as the enslaved rather than slaves, Ben Carson, HUD Secretary, would not mistake the history of his ancestors for that of immigrants or confuse their unpaid forced labor with that of wage earning immigrants. In the end, all four million Black residents in the United States at the close of the Civil War were freed by the passage of the 13th Amendment and yet, we continue to fight for the full measure of those freedoms today, 150 years later in 2017. Now, it seems that the arc is bending away from social justice once again.

## OBSCURE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

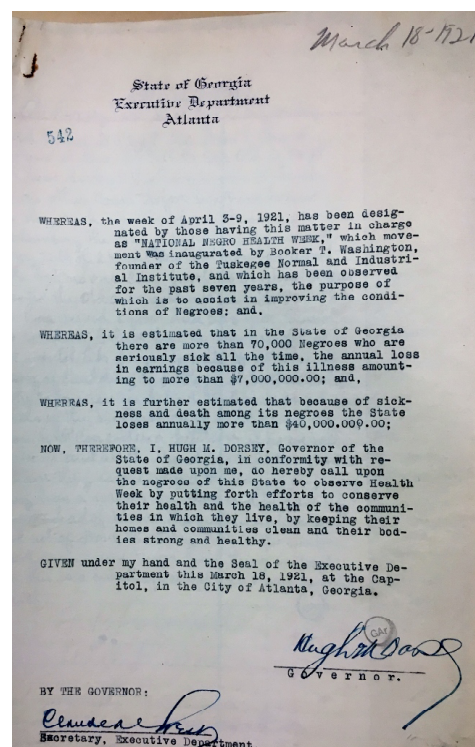
One of the joys of researching African American history is coming across long forgotten efforts by previous generations to promote the well-being of a newly freed people. While searching the correspondence of Georgia Governor Hugh Dorsey (1917 - 1921), a liberal who not only condemned lynching but took some action to curtail it (he was the trial attorney for Leo Frank, a Jew who was lynched in Atlanta in 1913), I came across a 1921 proclamation from the Governor's Office heralding “National Negro Health Week.” Notably, this observation preceded “Negro History Week.”

From the Executive Office of the State of Georgia, the proclamation begins:

*Whereas, the week of April 3-9, 1921, has been designated by those having this matter in charge as “NATIONAL NEGRO HEALTH WEEK,” which movement was inaugurated by Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, and which has been observed for the past seven years the purpose of which is to assist in improving the conditions of Negroes; ...*

The proclamation goes on to note that more than 70,000 African Americans in Georgia were seriously sick “all the time” with an annual loss in earnings of more than \$7 million. The health crisis among African Americans cost the state of Georgia more than \$40 million a year. Quite importantly, this proclamation reveals that our current national debate over health insurance is not about a new crisis, but an old one that has long had large negative repercussions for sick individuals and their families, as well as for our national and state economies.

I found the “National Negro Health Week” proclamation as well as two pamphlets written and issued by Dorsey condemning lynching in the Georgia State Archives in Morrow, Georgia. These documents might be obscure today but are still very relevant.



## HISTORIC BLACK AIRFIELD IN REVIVAL

BY NATHANIA BRANCH MILES, MEMBER PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD AAHGS

The Columbia Air Center in Croom, Prince George's County, MD opened as a training ground for the famed Tuskegee Airmen and as the first Black owned and operated licensed airport in the United States of America. It was operational from 1941 to 1958 but now sits dormant with just a plaque designating it as a historical site operated by Prince George's County Parks and Planning Commission. The airport may have continued to flourish if the heirs of the land had not refused to renew the lease after the original owner died.

But it won't remain dormant much longer if Attorney Wayne Tonkins of Washington, DC can implement his plans to turn the historic site into an active local airstrip for commercial aviation and delivery of freight materials, as well as aviation training for mechanics and pilots.

Tonkins has his own aviation experience as Attorney Advisor to the Office of the Federal Aviation Administration Office of the Chief Counsel, Airports and Environmental Law Division, and their Personnel and Labor Law Staff. He also served as legal advisor for their Aircraft Certification Branch. Tonkin's knowledge of aviation is not all legal - he's also a member of the FAA Flying Club with Ground School Certification as a private airplane pilot.

Tonkins' experiences as a Vietnam War veteran segued into his love for aviation that easily tied into his commitment to preserving and re-enacting African American history as a Buffalo Soldier. A graduate of the Howard University School of Law, Tonkins wants to preserve some of the accomplishments and history of the Columbia Air Center with an on-site museum run by The Society for the Historic Preservation of the Columbia Air Center, Inc. of which Tonkins is president. Of course the history of the air center and African Americans in aviation is so extensive it cannot be preserved in just one location.



*Pioneer aviator John Greene and his crew at Columbia Airfield. Photo courtesy of College Park Aviation Museum.*



*Pioneer aviator John Greene. Photo courtesy of College Park Aviation Museum*

During World War II, the Defense Department initiated the "Civilian Pilot Training Program" (CPT) to meet the military's need for pilots. Three Black universities became involved — Howard University, Hampton Institute (Hampton University), and West Virginia State. Howard University students did their flight training at the Columbia Air Center.

The Columbia Air Center was constructed on a 450-acre potato field leased from Rebecca Fisher for \$50 a month. The first flight took place February 22, 1941. Mr. John W. Greene, Jr. managed the facility and received pilot certificate number 10658, September 15, 1939, at Boston, MA. At that time, Greene was the only African-American to hold both a pilot license and an aircraft mechanic license. He was the first African-American awarded the "Transport Pilot" rating that today is called an "Airline Transport Pilot License" and is required for pilots flying commercial airlines.

To turn his plan of revival of an historic African American airfield into a living reality, Tonkins hopes to bring new economic development and opportunities to various underserved communities in the Washington Metropolitan area.

Regarding the many challenges and barriers to overcome, Tonkins spoke confidently, "I think that the climate is right for the Columbia Air Field to move forward with this plan. This is especially so since there is so much interest in reducing the noise level from National Airport in Northern Virginia. This site is outside the Washington restricted airspace."



## CHAR'S CORNER #41

### *DO NOT OVERLOOK USING THE NEWSPAPER FOR YOUR RESEARCH*

Over the years, I have heard from many of my students and clients that they have no one in their family who knows about their family history. Many of those people think that they are unable to research their families because no one is left to share the family history. Well, let me tell you about the newspapers. If you know where your family comes from as well as the given name and surname of your parents, you can use the local newspaper to expand your research.

Let us take Halifax, Virginia for example, located in the south central part of Virginia near the North Carolina border. Supposed your mother's maiden name was Lipford and all of her siblings, aunts, and uncles are deceased. You have no one in the family left to tell you about the Lipford family. You did not know any of your mother's cousins but you do know that your mother is from Halifax, Virginia. The first thing you want to do is get a subscription to any Halifax, VA newspaper because local newspapers publish articles on their local people, churches, obituaries, social events, sports, businesses, crimes, etc.

Let's say one day you are reading the Halifax newspaper and see an obituary for Louella 'Ted' Lipford Dunaway Bates. The information in her obituary may be very valuable to you as she may be a possible relative of your mother.

Let's examine her obit as you will find that it is full of information that can be researched. Louella died in a nursing home at the age of 94. You learn that she was born in Mecklenburg, North Carolina. Now you remember your mother visiting relatives in North Carolina and you know which county because of Louella's obit. Louella's parent's names are revealed, even her mother's maiden name. You also see a given name pattern of Louella's children with your mother's three siblings. The obit reveals that Louella was married twice and has a number of relatives that survived her. Also Louella and some of her children and siblings do not share the same surnames, giving clues to other families that might be related to this family. Lastly, the name of Louella's church, burial site, her services, funeral home, and address of one of the relatives are revealed in this obit. It's time for you to get dressed and go to Louella's church!

If this is your family, you just have been given a big gift. You went from not knowing any living relatives to having a lot of relatives to interview. Do not overlook your state and county newspapers. They can also give you a lot of family history.

Char McCargo Bah is the CEO/Owner of FindingThingsforU, LLC. She has been a genealogist since 1981; she is the co-author of "African Americans of Alexandria, VA: Beacons of Light in the Twentieth Century." Char is the "2014 Living Legend of Alexandria, VA." She is currently working on her second book tentative titled "The Contrabands and Freedmen's Cemetery in Alexandria, VA." You can contacted Char at [findingthingsforu@gmail.com](mailto:findingthingsforu@gmail.com).



**RESEARCHING THE ENSLAVED**, *continued from page 1*

planned to spend the first two days of a three-day research trip at the county government offices and the last day at NCHS. After getting their response, I changed my plans to spend two afternoons at NCHS. When I arrived, I discovered that the resources I was interested in had already been pulled and were sitting out for me to look at.

One of my goals was to break through the 1870 brick wall and find my ancestors as enslaved persons. Thanks to one resource at NCHS, I achieved that goal for several branches of my paternal family and am happily following up on more leads. The resource that was most helpful is *Northumberland County, Virginia Records of Slaves Volume II 1795-1865*, compiled by Margaret L. Forrester. It contains abstracts of almost 2000 records found in County Record, Will, Estate, Minute, and Order Books with references to enslaved persons during the title period. In addition, there are a few birth records and about 120 death records for enslaved persons from the mid-1850s to the early 1860s. Each abstract is numbered and identifies the book and page number where the full record can be found. Enslaved persons were seldom listed by name in census records, but the types of records abstracted in this book typically included their first names.

The death of a slave owner typically triggered a series of records that could continue for many years after his or her demise. If the deceased had a will, it was filed first. Next, someone had to qualify in court as administrator of the person's estate. The estate was then inventoried by listing and assigning dollar amounts to everything of value, including all enslaved persons by name and description (man, woman, boy, girl, old, lame, etc.). If there was no will, heirs had to be identified and verified by the court,

especially if there was a dispute. If the administrator determined that there was not enough cash in the estate to pay the deceased person's debts or that the estate could not be equitably divided among the heirs without selling assets, he needed the court's permission to sell assets and distribute the proceeds to the heirs and creditors. Any enslaved person who was sold was typically identified by name along with the name of the new owner. The widow's dower of the enslaved was taken first. When enslaved persons were divided among the heirs, the names of those heirs and the first name of the enslaved given to them was recorded. My observation is that

may also appear there, especially if they were sold or hired out for work, or if someone had to be paid to take care of them.

What makes this book most useful is the index. There are separate sections of the index for slave owners, free Blacks, and enslaved persons with surnames, along with enslaved persons without surnames. As you can imagine, the same first name can refer to many different individuals so the identification of family groups or the use of additional documentation is necessary to determine which record is for your ancestor. Some records appear to list the woman followed by

her children, but I have yet to find one that groups the father with the mother and children, even if he is one of the enslaved. By systematically searching the index for first names of my enslaved ancestors and their immediate family members, as determined by census, marriage, and death records after the Civil War and looking for them in family groups, I have been able to locate some of my ancestors in these



*Rosalyn Green researching her ancestors at Northumberland County Land Records Office. Photo courtesy of Karas Lamb.*

heirs who were minors or still living at home held their enslaved possessions in common until one or more of them left home or got married. At that point, specific enslaved persons had to be identified for them. This also occurred when an heir who was still living at home died and some of the other original heirs had left home. Each time such an event occurred, a new inventory of the enslaved owned in common was made along with a division to the one(s) who had left. The administrator of the estate had to file a final accounting of his handling of the estate, so names of the enslaved

abstracts. I followed one line through several changes of ownership and made connections to family oral history.

An interesting historical picture appears toward the end of the book. In 1863 and 1864, there were more than 40 instances of owners petitioning the Northumberland County Court to be exonerated from having to pay taxes on enslaved persons no longer in their possession. Many enslaved persons began freeing themselves by running

**continued on page 16**

I have been researching our family for over 15 years, but my family members don't seem to care about the research I have shared with them. What can I do now?

### RESPONSE...

Continue your family research but also enlarge your territory. Maybe your family, by your current definition, is too small. There is a larger family that is your community, your state, your race and culture. Peter Block, in his book *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest*, talks about having an even greater purpose than our own. Your purpose in genealogy may be in your community- not just your family. A service to your community is also a service to your family. Of all the materials in the libraries, there still is not enough about our own communities. Is there a story waiting to be told that you can tell?

## JUST ASK...HOSTED BY DORIS POSEY

Some examples of an enlarged territory in genealogy is research about the schools and teachers, the family church or the many denominations in your community, successful business owners and other African-American professionals. A good example of this is in the publication, *South of Main* by Beatrice Hill and Brenda Lee, published in 2005.

This book has beautiful old photographs of the families recorded in the book. There are stories about people, schools, churches and businesses located south of Main Street in Spartanburg, SC. It is a book about people from many walks of life- all living in one area of town. The book has won an Independent Publisher Award in 2006.

Make your family's history more interesting by telling a larger or an expanded version of the family's history. In African American research, we don't find much about our schools, our churches, our teachers or our recreational outlets. There is a lot more work to be done. We have acquired the tools, the methods and the passion to tell our stories.

If none of these things are of interest, then consider adding illustrations to your family history. Your illustrations can include places your family shopped and worshipped. The illustrations can be photos, sketches or your own drawings. You can also include some of the people who are not in your family, but may have contributed to your family's story in some way.

### TRUE STORY...

A Georgia AAHGS member expanded her territory by documenting family members who have received a college degree since the early 1900s. Her enthusiasm for genealogy started with names of her ancestors from the era of slavery to present times. Her research was further expanded by photos of each of them.

She has documented decades and generations of persons in her family who have acquired a Bachelor, Masters or Doctorate degrees - all descendants of one man who was once enslaved. She expanded her territory by documenting a family tradition in education.

A popular advertisement asks the question: "What's in your wallet?" As a researcher, ask yourself, "What's in my history?" Then tell the story in your own words.

**"...Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch."** Luke 5:4



*Alumna attending graduation ceremony of Interdenominational Theology Center, Morehouse College Campus, Atlanta GA*



## COMING SOON!!

2017 AAHGS Journal —  
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Don't miss exciting new research in our upcoming history if you love reading stories about our dynamic African American history and culture that is not found in textbooks. Have you ever wondered on the irony and oxymoron of former masters of US Colored Troops? How about lessons from a freedman who left an outstanding family legacy that continues into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and from an African son of the American Revolution told by a direct descendant? You might enjoy reading the intriguing and hilariously humorous story of how a free African American community beat the pants off a slave catching posse, and appreciate learning more techniques for researching African Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If so, don't miss AAHGS Journal 2017.

Let AAHGS Journal be the Statue of Liberty of your family stories. Send us your "tired and weary" — those exciting, revealing life stories and genealogies that chronicle your ancestors' life stories, losses, triumphs, and joys, but are bottled up in a box or old computer file. You keep promising to get them out, well, NOW is the time to share those stories, enumerations, and genealogies. Older and new generations are awaiting. AAHGS Journal is the Ellis Island of African American family history and genealogy. Let us help you set your stories free!

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Saturday, February 3, 2018 8:30 AM- 5:00 PM  
Family History Center, Laurel, Maryland

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*Additional details will be provided soon.*

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Evelyn I. Tenpenny, President  
PO Box 4294  
Little Rock, AR 72212  
aahgs.arkansas@yahoo.com

### California

#### **Central California**

Denise Lancaster-Young, President  
P.O. Box 9161  
Fresno CA 93790  
aahgsec@gmail.com

### Delaware

#### **Delaware**

Mari Carpenter, President  
PO Box 7205  
Wilmington, DE 19803  
[deaahgs@hotmail.com](mailto:deaahgs@hotmail.com)

### District of Columbia

#### **James Dent Walker**

Sybil Templeman Williams, President  
P.O. Box 2019  
Washington, DC 20013  
aahgsdc@yahoo.com  
<http://www.aahgsdc.com>

### Florida

#### **Central Florida**

Kenneth O. Mitchell, President  
P.O. Box 1347  
Orlando FL 32802-1347  
[www.rootsweb.com/~flcfaahgs](http://www.rootsweb.com/~flcfaahgs)

#### **East Central Florida**

Ann Harrell  
P.O. Box 11652  
Daytona Beach, FL 32114  
aahgseastcentralflorida@gmail.com

#### **Tampa, Florida**

Andria Wimberly, President  
Aahgsstampa.homestead.com  
[www.facebook.com/aahgs.tampa](http://www.facebook.com/aahgs.tampa)

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Gene R. Stephenson III, President  
PO Box 54131  
Atlanta, GA 30308-9998  
[www.aahgsatlanta.org](http://www.aahgsatlanta.org)  
aahgsatlanta@gmail.com

### Illinois

#### **Little Egypt**

Sandra McKinley, President  
PO Box 974  
Carbondale, IL 62903-0974

#### **Northern Illinois/Southern Wisconsin (NISW)**

Carla Robinson, President  
P O Box 1732  
Rockford, IL 61110  
[info@aaahgsnisw.org](mailto:info@aaahgsnisw.org)  
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2601 SW Westport Drive  
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### Maryland

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PO Box 9366  
Baltimore MD 21228  
baahgs@typepad.com

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<http://cmgen.wordpress.com>

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PO Box 10063  
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P.O. Box 44252  
Ft. Washington, MD 20744-4252  
aahgspgcm@yahoo.com  
[www.Pgcm.aahgs.org](http://www.Pgcm.aahgs.org)

### Massachusetts

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[www.aahgs-ne.org](http://www.aahgs-ne.org)  
president@aahgs-ne.org

### Minnesota

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PO Box 6289  
Minneapolis, MN 55406

### New Jersey

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Eugene Armstead, President  
P. O. Box 5343  
Somerset, NJ 08875  
[genearmstead@yahoo.com](mailto:genearmstead@yahoo.com)  
afroamnjc@aol.com

### New York

#### **Jean Sampson Scott Greater New York**

Sharon Wilkins, President  
P.O. Box 1050  
New York, NY 10116-1050  
General\_Inquiry@aahgs-newyork.org  
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#### **Philadelphia Family Quest Society**

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PO Box 34620  
Philadelphia, PA 19101  
aahgsfamilyquest@yahoo.com

#### **Pittsburg**

Marlene Garrett Bransom, President  
PO Box 99893  
Pittsburgh, PA 15233-4893  
[www.aahgspgh.org](http://www.aahgspgh.org)  
[info@aahgspbh.org](mailto:info@aahgspbh.org)

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Alison Barnes, President  
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Memphis, TN 38177  
[info@aahgsmemphis.org](mailto:info@aahgsmemphis.org)  
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Jesse Williams, President  
[htown@aahgs.org](mailto:htown@aahgs.org)  
<http://htown.aahgs.org>

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Charlotte Starks, President  
PO Box 17914  
Salt Lake City, UT 84117-7914  
[info@aahgsutah.org](mailto:info@aahgsutah.org)  
<http://aahgsutah.org>

### Virginia

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Caruso Brown, President  
P.O. Box 7492  
Charlottesville, VA 22906-7492  
[aagg@avenue.org](mailto:aagg@avenue.org)  
[bbsvachapter@gmail.com](mailto:bbsvachapter@gmail.com)

#### **Central Virginia**

Shelley Murphy, President  
265 Turkeysag Trail  
Ste. 102, #140  
Palmyra, VA 22963  
[aahgsspc@gmail.com](mailto:aahgsspc@gmail.com)  
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#### **Greater Richmond**

Marilyn Campbell, President  
PO Box 27833  
Richmond, VA 23261  
[aahgsrichmond@gmail.com](mailto:aahgsrichmond@gmail.com)  
<http://www.aahgsrichmondva.com>

#### **Hampton Roads**

Selma Stewart, President  
PO Box 2448  
Newport News, VA 23609-2448  
[aahgsshr@gmail.com](mailto:aahgsshr@gmail.com)  
<http://aahgsshr.blogspot.com>

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**RESEARCHING THE ENSLAVED,**  
*continued from page 11*

away to safety in territory controlled by the Union after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Unfortunately, most of these records did not name the freedom runners. They gave the number of enslaved persons lost by the petitioning owner and their total value.

Records prior to 1795 are abstracted in *Northumberland County, Virginia Records of Slaves Volume I 1650-1795*. It was researched by W. Preston Haynie and compiled by Margaret L. Forrester and is also available for sale at NCHS.

## AAHGS 2018

Get ready for AAHGS 2018 Annual Conference and Exposition in Philadelphia. Every AAHGS national conference is a great place to learn, connect with fellow family historians, network, explore African American history, and just have a good time. Information on AAHGS 2018 is coming soon. Keep your eyes on [www.aahgs.org](http://www.aahgs.org)!

