



# Heritage Newsletter

*California African American Genealogical Society*

**May 2015 Volume 27 Number 5**

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**California African American Genealogical Society**

P.O. Box 8442  
Los Angeles, CA 90008-0442

**General Membership Meetings**

Third Saturday monthly at 11:45am (dark July and August)

**Mayme Clayton Library and Museum (MCLM)**

4130 Overland Ave., Culver City, CA 90230-3734  
(Old Culver City Courthouse across from VA building)

**2014 Board of Directors**

Dr. Edna Briggs – President  
Ronald Higgins – Immediate Past President  
Ron Batiste – First Vice President  
Carolyn Conway – Second Vice President /Membership  
Cartellia Bryant – Corresponding Secretary  
Open – Recording Secretary  
Christina Ashe – Treasurer  
Dr. Stanley Viltz – Parliamentarian  
Website – [www.caags.org](http://www.caags.org)

**Committee Chairs**

Open – Book Sales and Acquisitions  
Open – Public Relations/Fundraising Chairman  
LaVerne Anderson – Librarian  
Open – Historian  
Monica Maurasse – Newsletter Editor  
Open – FGS Delegate  
Open – Volunteer Chairman

**President's Message**

**By Dr. Edna Briggs**

Greetings CAAGS Members,

On the TV show, "The Late Show with David Letterman," for several years during the month of May, the host has been heard to announce that "*Mothers' Day is nothing but a major warm-up for Father's Day,*" and in response to this, my thoughts have always been that without mothers, there would be no fathers!!

As we move through the month of May, it will be important that we pause to remember our Mothers, including grands and great-grands, if you are so blessed. I recall that my Mother would always call me, and express how special the card or gift that I sent made her feel. She would always describe what her plans were for any gift that I sent.

What do you remember about celebrating your Mom's Mother's Day? Consider writing something to pass on, or to include in your life story.

This month beyond the Mother's Day holiday, and in celebration of Memorial Day, we can look forward to a presentation on The Tuskegee Airmen and African American Aviators by historian and guest speaker, Rick Moore.

Remember also, to plan to attend the Los Angeles Family History Library field trip planned for May 23, 2015, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 pm. The trip will consist of a tour of the remodeled library area and three classes:

- Getting the Most Out of Family Search
- Researching Birth, Death and Marriage Records

*Neither the newsletter editor nor CAAGS guarantees publication of any submission. Submissions for the newsletter are due by the third Saturday of each month. Please email your submissions or inquiries to [CAAGS@hotmail.com](mailto:CAAGS@hotmail.com)*

- Researching Land Records

Wishing all a safe and happy holiday during the month of May!

### 2015 Calendar of Events

#### On going

**CAAGS Writers Group**, Fourth Friday monthly 10-12  
Check our website for meeting details, [www.caags.org](http://www.caags.org)

#### May 15 – 16

9<sup>th</sup> Annual “Memorial In May” Cemetery Preservation Conference. Downstream Casino, Quapaw, OK. Contact Mary for more info, [PuertoRicanDoll@sbcglobal.net](mailto:PuertoRicanDoll@sbcglobal.net)

#### May 16

CAAGS Board meeting, 10 am - 11:30 am  
Beginner/Intermediate Classes, 11:45 am - 12:45 pm.  
Guest Speaker Rick Moore African American Aviators  
**Membership directories will be available, see Carolyn Conway, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP/Membership.**

#### June 5-7

46<sup>th</sup> Annual Southern California Genealogy Jamboree. For all the details go to [www.genealogyjamboree.com](http://www.genealogyjamboree.com)

#### June 20

CAAGS Board meeting, 10 am - 11:30 am  
Beginner/Intermediate Classes, 11:45 am - 12:45 pm  
General membership meeting/Guest Speaker, 1-3pm,  
Gerard McKay, Pension Files

#### June 30

Deposits due for Salt Lake City, UT research trip

*\* Calendar is subject to change without notice*

### Los Angeles Family History Library Upcoming Classes

A reminder of the family history classes that are being offered in the coming months. The 3-day Intensive Courses cost \$20 and you will receive a binder with the handouts from the class. To register, please call (310) 474-9990. The classes are listed as follows:

#### 3-day Intensive FH Training Courses - 8:00-5:00 p.m.

- May 12-14: Beginning
- June 9-11: Advanced
- July 14-16: Beginning
- August 11-13: Beginning

#### Introduction to Family Tree - 10 a.m.

- May 9
- June 13

#### Family Tree Sources/Memories - 10 a.m.

- May 16
- June 20

#### **CAAGS 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Quilt**

In commemoration of our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, CAAGS members Norma Bates and Tommie Mallet are creating an Underground Railroad themed quilt. Donations are being accepted to help purchase the quilting supplies. If you would like to make a donation, give at the next monthly meeting or mail us your donation. You can also contact Norma Bates, [teapotnorma@yahoo.com](mailto:teapotnorma@yahoo.com). Our goal is to raise \$300 for the quilting project.

#### **Salt Lake City Research Trip**

CAAGS invites you to celebrate Family History Month by joining us in a Family History research tour to the Salt Lake City Family History Library. Take advantage of 5 days with professional researchers who live and work in Salt Lake City. Trip dates are October 19-24<sup>th</sup> 2015, your non-refundable deposit is due by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Registration forms were included in the March newsletter. Contact Colette DeVerge at 323 933 8381.

#### **The Texas Freedom Colonies Project**

This project is part of a larger University of Texas doctoral research study, led by Andrea Roberts. The study seeks stories of how former slaves built whole communities out of absolutely nothing after Emancipation. The Texas Freedom Colonies Project, a research and social justice initiative, is dedicated to

- Recording descendants’ memories and stories of how these communities began
- Documenting ex-slaves’ contributions to history
- Learning about descendants’ present-day community development & historic preservation concerns

The Texas Freedom Colonies Project has amassed a working database of more than 500 Black settlements!

#### **What Are Texas Freedom Colonies?**

Freedom Colonies also known as Freedmen’s Towns, “my family place,” “where we go for homecoming,” Black settlements, or “the Black side of town.”

Former slaves in Texas founded these communities 1866-1890. Nearly 150 years later, most settlements have lost population, and their landowners have lost property through

auctions, partition sales, or outright theft. Few remain on maps or in current census records, but these settlements live on in memory, church anniversaries, and family reunions. Still, a small number of Freedom Colony residents have retained land and continued to live within rural AND urban settlements for generations. This Project supports their efforts!

**GET INVOLVED!** Calling all descendants of Black settlements, museums, genealogists, educators, cemetery associations, Rosenwald School alumni, community homecoming presidents, archaeologists, archives, research institutes, HBCU alumni, Historical Landmark Commissioners, writers, and anyone else who care about the future of Freedom Colonies! Share your story.

Contact: Andrea Roberts  
Phone: 832-465-6829 Email: roberta318@gmail.com

Web: [www.linkedin.com/in/andrearoberts](http://www.linkedin.com/in/andrearoberts) [The Texas Freedom Colonies Project](#) (Facebook) #TXFCProject (Twitter)

## **African American Family History Step By Step**

Few areas of American genealogy research pose as much of a challenge as the search for African American families. The vast majority of African Americans are descendants of the 400,000 black Africans brought to North America to serve as slaves in the 18th and 19th centuries. Since slaves had no legal rights, they are often not found in many of the traditional record sources available for that period.

Don't let this challenge defer you, however. Treat your search for your African-American roots just as you would any other genealogical research project - start with what you know and methodically take your research back step-by-step. Tony Burroughs, an internationally known genealogist and black history expert, has identified six steps to follow when tracing your African American roots.

### **Family Sources**

Just as with any genealogy research project, you begin with yourself. Write down everything you know about yourself and your family members. Scour your house for sources of information such as photographs, postcards, letters, diaries, school yearbooks, family papers, insurance and employment records, military records, scrapbooks, even textiles such as old clothing, quilts or samplers. Interview your family members - especially the oldest ones who may have had grandparents, or even parents who were slaves. Be sure to ask open-ended questions so that you learn more than just names and dates. Pay special attention to any family, ethnic or naming traditions which have been handed down from generation to generation.

### **Take Your Family Back to 1870**

1870 is an important date for African American research because the majority of African Americans living in the United States prior to the Civil War were slaves. The 1870 federal census is the first one to list all blacks by name. To get your African-American ancestors back to that date you should research your ancestors in the standard genealogical records - records such as cemeteries, wills, census, vital records, social security records, school records, tax records, military records, voter records, newspapers, etc. There are also a number of post-Civil War records which specifically document thousands of African Americans, including the Freedman's Bureau Records and the records of the Southern Claim Commission.

### **Identify the Last Slave Owner**

Before you assume that your ancestors were slaves prior to the U.S. Civil War, think twice. At least one out of every ten Blacks (more than 200,000 in the North and another 200,000 in the South) were free when the Civil War broke out in 1861. If you aren't sure whether your ancestors were enslaved prior to the Civil War, then you may want to start with the U.S. Free Population Schedules of the 1860 census. For those whose African American ancestors were slaves then the next step is to identify the slave owner. Some slaves took the name of their former owners when they were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation, but many did not. You will have to really dig in the records to find and prove the name of the slave owner for your ancestors before you can go any further with your research. Sources for this information include county histories, the records of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Bureau, the Freedman's Bureau, slave narratives, the Southern Claims Commission, military records including the records of the U.S. Colored Troops.

### **Research Potential Slave Owners**

Because slaves were considered to be property, your next step once you find the slave owner (or even a number of potential slave owners), is to follow the records to learn what he did with his property. Look for wills, probate records, plantation records, bills of sale, land deeds and even runaway slave advertisements in newspapers. You should also study your history - learn about the practices and laws which governed slavery and what life was like for slaves and slave owners in the antebellum South. Unlike what is common belief, the majority of slave owners were not wealthy plantation owners and most owned five slaves or less.

### **Back to Africa**

The vast majority of Americans of African ancestry in the United States are descendants of the 400,000 black slaves forcibly brought to the New World prior to 1860. Most of these slaves came from a small section (approximately 300 miles long) of the Atlantic coast between the Congo and Gambia rivers in East Africa. Much of African culture is

based on oral tradition, but records such as slave sales and slave advertisements may give a clue toward slave origins in Africa. Getting your slave ancestor back to Africa may just not be possible, but your best chances lie with scrutinizing every record you can find for clues and by being familiar with the slave trade in the area in which you are researching. Learn everything you can about how, when and why slaves were transported to the state in which you last found them with their owner. If your ancestors came into this country, then you will need to learn the history of the Underground Railroad so that you can track their movements back and forth the border.

### **From the Caribbean**

Since the end of World War II, a significant number of people of African ancestry have emigrated to the U.S. from the Caribbean, where their ancestors were also slaves (primarily at the hands of the British, Dutch, and French). Once you have determined that your ancestors came from the Caribbean, you will need to trace Caribbean records back to their source of origin and then back to Africa. You will also need to be very familiar with the history of the slave trade into the Caribbean.

The information discussed in this article is just the tip of the iceberg of the vast scope of African American genealogy research. For a much greater expansion on the six steps discussed here, you should read Tony Burroughs' wonderful book, "Black Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing the African-American Family Tree."

*Taken from aboutgenealogy.com*

### **Hillary Clinton Family Tree A Wake-Up Call for Genealogy**

When *Irish America* requested that I research and write a piece on Hillary Rodham Clinton's heritage (pages 50-52), I was concerned. Why? Because delving into the ancestral past of celebrities has become something of a sub-hobby in the world of genealogy, so I knew that countless others would have climbed the branches of her family tree. What would I possibly be able to add that wasn't already known?

Fortunately for me, but regrettably for genealogy in general, there was plenty of fresh terrain because I soon realized that everyone had a quarter of her family tree wrong. And when I say "everyone," I mean dozens of people on at least eight family history websites.

One of Rodham Clinton's grandmothers was a woman named Hannah Jones who was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania around 1882. If you've been doing genealogy for even a short time, you know to be cautious whenever you encounter a name like Jones, which happens to be the most common surname in Wales, the birth place of Hannah's parents. Names like Jones, Smith, Johnson,

Brown, Miller and Williams are a punch-line in the family history world – guaranteed to provoke a reaction from a seasoned audience – because we all know how much effort it can take to sift through the abundance of records featuring these names to find the ones we're looking for. So it's astonishing that no one had taken the time to make sure that they had identified the correct Hannah Jones. As it happens, there were two baby girls born with this name in Scranton around the same time, and the other one left a more conspicuous paper trail. It's not surprising that some researchers fell into the trap of picking the wrong one, but it's mind-blowing that *everyone* did.

The wonderful online tools that make it faster to trace our family trees also make it easier to make a mistake, and the constant merging of Internet-based trees creates an unfortunate echo effect where wrong information starts to look true simply because so many are claiming it. I've seen this lemming phenomenon many times before, but the fact that it happened to someone whose family history has been scrutinized by so many is a serious wake-up call.

If everyone got a quarter of Hillary Clinton's tree wrong, what about yours? Are the names adorning your family tree really your ancestors or just crowd-sourced fiction?

- *Taken from Honoring Our Ancestors*

### **46th Annual Southern California Genealogy Jamboree**

June 5 - 7, 2015 Friday through Sunday

[www.genealogyjamboree.com](http://www.genealogyjamboree.com)

The theme of the 2015 Jamboree is *Genealogy FANfare: working together*. We welcome attendees who are fans of genealogy, amateur or professional. Jamboree 2015 celebrates the use of friends, associates, and neighbors (FANs) of our elusive ancestors in order to aid in our research. Our heritage focus will be on African American, Jewish, Eastern European and Russian research. In addition to these, sessions on other geographic regions in the United States, United Kingdom, and Europe will be included.

*Special pricing for 2015 offers a discount to those who register for both Jamboree and Genetic Genealogy: DNA Day Plus! as well as discounts for SCGS members for each event.*

Stay updated on all the Jamboree news through the Jamboree blog. Follow @SCGSGenealogy and #scgs2015 on Twitter. Join the SCGS Group on Facebook and add Jamboree to your list of events. Join our group on Linked In.

**Save the Date**  
CAAGS 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference  
March 18-19, 2016  
Call for Papers Coming Soon