



Celebrating Family History Month

Heritage Newsletter

California African American Genealogical Society

October 2015 Volume 27 Number 8

Ten Issues Published Annually
ISSN 1083-8937

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

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

Tips for Reading Handwriting

“If only the typewriter had been invented a few centuries earlier!” That’s often the cry of people trying to read older records. Old fashioned handwriting often gives older documents charm, but it also can be difficult to decipher. Below are a few clues that may help you out.

First, read slowly and with care. Make sure that the words make sense, and don’t assume anything.

Watch out for double S’s. The first S in a pair was often written to look like a lower case F.

The following capital letters often look the same: I and J, L and S, L and T, M and N, T and F, and U and V.

Don’t forget the possibility of abbreviations. Names were abbreviated quite often, as well as common words. For example, you may find “sd” for “said,” “dec’d” for “deceased,” “do” for “ditto,” “chh” for “church,” and “rect” for “receipt.” Double letters were often written as single letters with a line or tilde above them. Name abbreviations usually consist of the first three or four letters plus the last letter. Both name and word abbreviations are normally written with the last letter of the abbreviation raised.

If you’re having trouble deciphering a word, try saying it out loud in several different ways.

If you can, read the remainder of the sentence and try to figure out what word would make sense.

Find other words in the document that you can read, and use the letters in those words to piece together the letters in the words that you can’t read.

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

Use a handwriting book to help piece the letters together. Two books that you can use are *The Handwriting of American Records for a Period of 300 Years*, by E. Kay Kirkham and *Understanding Colonial Handwriting*, by Harriet Strykker-Rodda.

If all else fails, you may need to consult a handwriting expert.

Taken from Genealogy.com

2015 Calendar of Events

On going

CAAGS Writers Group, Fourth Friday monthly 10-12
Check our website for meeting details, www.caags.org

October 17

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

November 21

CAAGS Board meeting, 10 am - 11:30 am
Beginner/Intermediate Classes, 11:45 am - 12:45 pm
General membership meeting/Elections, 1-3pm

December 19

CAAGS Holiday Party

March 17-19, 2016

CAAGS 30th Anniversary Conference. For the most up to date information please continually check our website, www.caags.org

** Calendar is subject to change without notice*

CAAGS 30th Anniversary Conference

March 17-19, 2016

Call for Presenters

Deadline for submission of conference proposals is

Saturday, **November 14, 2015**

Proposals should be submitted by email to conference@caags.org

2015 Election of Officers

November is CAAGS election month. We will be looking for candidates to fill several offices. If you would like to nominate yourself to run for an office or be on the nomination committee please contact Carolyn Conway at fam.histr@yahoo.com

CAAGS members who are also members of Southern California Genealogical Society (SCGS), please consider voting for **Stanley B. Viltz, Ed.D.**, CAAGS Parliamentarian, who has been nominated for a SCGS Board position. Stanley volunteered to publicize and increase African American participation in the 2015 Jamboree, which was successful. She was also a roundtable leader representing African Americans attendees on the free day at the Jamboree. Ballots will be mailed to SCGS members in mid-October and must be returned by 4pm on December 9th, 2015. Thank you for your support. S B Viltz

Condolences to the following CAAGS members on the loss of family members

- ❖ Odessa Yocum on the loss of her sister, Willie Washington, who passed away on September 16th
- ❖ CAAGS member Emma Willie who was part of our Society for approximately 15 years.
- ❖ Colette DeVerge's sister, Barbara Denise Moncrief made her transition on August 10th after a very long illness
- ❖ Ronald Higgins on the loss of his daughter, Renita Higgins, who died suddenly on July 27th, in Birmingham, AL.
- ❖ Cartellia Marie Bryant on the loss of her brother Herman on August 29th

CAAGS Surname Badges

Final orders will be collected at the October meeting, with the order delivery planned for the November meeting.

FamilySearch Blog

Discover Your Ancestors in Obituaries

By Steve Anderson

Obituaries are a treasure trove of information. Almost anyone searching for information about their family will tell you that obituaries are one of the best record sources available for getting great information about a person. That's because many obituaries contain not just dates and places, but they often provide valuable information about the children, parents, spouse, and siblings of the deceased as well as their religious affiliation, life accomplishments, and much more. In a single obituary you could find dozens of valuable clues that could unlock secrets to your family in ways you never dreamed possible. In other cases, an obituary might simply mention an ancestor's name without any additional information.

FamilySearch.org now makes it easier than ever to find out if an obituary is available for your ancestors. To get an idea of what you might find in the FamilySearch.org obituary database, go to the Discover Your Ancestors in Obituaries

page. The search engine will look through a small sampling of obituaries and show you what could be in them about some of your ancestors. This search will not be an exhaustive search, but it will give a small sampling of what you could find in the millions of obituaries now in the FamilySearch.org database.

You can do a more exhaustive search using FamilySearch's database of more than 1.1 billion unique names to see what additional obituaries might exist for your ancestors. As FamilySearch.org continues to grow, millions of new obituaries will be added to its database on a regular basis. If you don't find the obituary you are looking for, check again later; it may be in one of the updates.

So come to FamilySearch.org today, and see if you can find an obituary for one of your ancestors. Finding an obituary has never been easier.

Seton Shields Genealogy Grants

Is awarding a grant once each quarter – but you can apply anytime and submissions remain active for six months from the date of receipt. To get a feel for the types of cool projects contributed to over the years, check out the retrospective posts on the blog featuring a number of them (or just go to megansmolenyak.com and do a search for “grants”).

While there, apply for a Seton Shields grant, fill out and submit the form. Why not give it a go?

<http://www.megansmolenyak.com/genealogical-grants/grant-application/>

8 Ways to Celebrate Family History Month Shared from About.com

October is designated in many places as “Family History Month,” and genealogists everywhere have adopted the month as their own. Whether you're new to genealogy, or have devoted a lifetime to it, celebrate Family History Month with your family this October by trying one (or more) of these ten wonderful ways to craft and commemorate your past.

1. Record Family Stories

Every family has its own history - the events, personalities, and traditions that make the family unique - and collecting these singular stories and memories is one of the most meaningful ways you and your family can honor your older relatives and preserve family traditions. Recording family stories on audiotape, videotape, or in legacy journals,

brings family members closer together, bridges generation gaps, and ensures that your family stories will be preserved for future generations.

2. Uncover Your Family Health History

Also known as medical genealogy, tracing your family health history is a fun, and potentially lifesaving, project. Experts state that about 3000 of the 10,000 known diseases have genetic links, and that many diseases “run in families,” including colon cancer, heart disease, alcoholism, and high blood pressure. Creating a family health history can be a useful tool to aid you and your medical care provider in interpreting patterns of health, illness and genetic traits for you and your descendants. What you learn now could potentially save a family member's life tomorrow.

3. Take a Trip Back in Time

Grab a map, and hop in the car for a family adventure! A fun way to celebrate your family history is to visit sites of importance to your family - the old family homestead, the house where you were born, the country from which your ancestors migrated, the hillside where you played as a child, or the cemetery where great-grandpa is buried. If none of these locations is near to your home, then consider a trip to a historical museum, battlefield, or re-enactment event that relates to the history of your family.

4. Scrapbook Your Family Heritage

The perfect place to showcase and protect your precious family photos, heirlooms, and memories, a heritage scrapbook album is wonderful way to document your family's history and create a lasting gift for future generations. While it may seem a daunting task when faced with boxes of dusty old photos, scrapbooking is actually both fun and more easy than you might think!

5. Start a Family Website

If your extended family, like mine, relies on email to stay in touch, then a family Web site may be for you. Serving as a digital scrapbook and meeting spot, a family Web site allows you and your kids to share family photos, favorite recipes, funny stories, and even your family tree research. If you or someone in your family is a Web designer, by all means go to town. If you're more of a beginner, however, don't worry - there are plenty of free online services that make creating a family Web site a snap!

6. Preserve Your Family Pictures

Make this the month that you *finally* get the family photos out of the shoeboxes or bags in the back of your closet; track down the photo you've never seen of your great-grandparents; or ask your Grandma to help you put names to the faces of all of those unmarked photos in your family

album. Try your hand at scanning them into your computer, or hire someone to do it for you, and then store the originals in acid-free photo boxes or albums. Same thing goes for the family movies! Then share some of your photo finds with the family, by creating a [family photo calendar](#) or a [family photo book](#)!

7. Get the Next Generation Involved

Most children will learn to appreciate their family history if you turn it into a detective game. Start your children or grandchildren on a lifelong journey of discovery by introducing them to genealogy. Here are some wonderful projects to do with your children this month including games, family history and heritage projects and online lessons.

8. Craft a Heritage Gift

From picture frame Christmas ornaments to heritage quilts, your family history makes a great gift! Homemade gifts are often inexpensive but are favorites with the recipients. They don't have to be anything complicated either. Something as simple as a framed photo of a favorite ancestor can bring tears to someone's eyes. Best of all, making a family heritage gift is often more fun than giving one!

October is Family History Month Host a Family Tree Party

In October, genealogy is the buzzword. Why, because October is Family History Month and it seems that everyone is on a mission to honor their ancestors. Genealogy internet sites are holding contests, sweepstakes and giveaways, genealogy bloggers are busily posting, Twitter is a-tweet with the news and Facebook is getting frantic. There is no better time to get together with your relatives and shake the branches of your family tree. So what is all of the fuss about? It is about the natural human curiosity we all share in wanting to know everything we can about our heritage.

Perhaps, it is mostly about family pride and honoring the ancestors who made great sacrifices, so that we may enjoy the lives we have today.

Family History Month is the perfect time to connect with your family members and host a Family Tree party. To throw a Family Tree Party all you need to do is, ask family members to bring a special family heirloom; it could be a photograph, newspaper clipping, recipe or simply a favorite memory about a family member. Sharing the stories from your common past can help bring present and future generations closer together, while at the same time preserving your heritage. For relatives that are more

geographically distant try to arrange for them to attend through a group Skype call.

While you have everyone together, you have the opportunity to:

✓ **Work on your family tree**

With everyone together, this is the ideal time to update your family tree. Have there been any births, marriages or deaths since the last update? What about occupation changes, education news or recent research that needs to be added?

✓ **Start a family cookbook**

Does your family have any traditional dishes, what about grandma's homemade bread or Uncle Joe's Horseradish sauce? Hosting a Family Tree Party may be the opportunity you have been waiting for to gather up these delectable family treats and finally start that family cookbook project.

✓ **Profile a family member**

Profiling a family member is an excellent way to enrich your family history one forebear at a time. Is there someone in your family tree who is famous or infamous? Is there a mystery to be solved? Every ancestor has a story to tell, by profiling an individual, you give yourselves the ability to fully flesh out those stories that define family history.

✓ **Create a family Facebook page**

With everyone together, it is a good time to discuss creating a family Facebook page. Family Facebook pages are a wonderful way to stay in touch, share information and work together on your family history projects. You can use them to share photographs, documents and the latest news. Family Facebook pages are free; they are also easy to set up. Another bonus is that they are a great way for others researching your family name to find you.

Do not forget to check out some of the leading genealogy websites and take advantage of their Family History Month celebrations.

Taken from Genealogy Beginner – Oct. 9, 2011 by Ramona

In commemoration of our 30th Anniversary celebration CAAGS members Norman Bates and Tommie Mallet will be crafting an Underground Railroad themed quilted wall hanging to be raffled at our conference in March 2016. More details to come on this as we get closer to the event.

If you haven't done so please pre-register for the conference today and invite a friend (or two) to attend as well. Registration forms are available at the general meetings and on our website, www.caags.org.