

NJ-AAHGS Newsletter

New Jersey Chapter: Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc.

Previously ignored slave quarters now venerated and preserved

Beyond the plantation 'big houses' that have been preserved, rehabilitated and opened to the public for a display of ante-bellum grandeur, sometimes lies the symbols of a painful past - the slave quarters that have been ignored for decades. In most cases they have, in fact, long ceased to exist. Those that still stand have usually been forgotten and have fallen into extreme dis-repair. Given the brutality of slavery, it is not surprising that the houses slaves lived in were allowed to crumble into dust. For decades no one - black or white - wanted to think about what the buildings symbolized. While the "big" houses were preserved, no one wanted to remember the millions of African-American slaves upon whom the plantation system so heavily depended.

Often the only physical traces of the dark-hued people who lived behind the 'big house' and worked the fields, were

those gleaned by archaeological 'digs' that resulted in the discovery of rusty nails, broken pottery, pipe stems, and similar finds.

This incomplete view of history is changing, however, with the growing interest in African-American culture. The few slaves cabins that have survived the ravages of time have become the focus of intense scrutiny in recent years. A new generation of historians is evaluating the structures in an attempt to determine what they say about the people who lived in them. These historians - both black and white- are seeking the dignity and grace of the culture that evolved

under the horrific conditions of slavery.

Today, at Carter's Grove (at Historic Williamsburg) in Virginia, slave cabins have been reconstructed on the sites of the originals. Other cabins have been saved at Sotterly Plantation in Maryland; at Stagville near Durham, North Carolina; and also at Somerset Place, also in North Carolina. A descendent of one of Somerset's slaves, Dorothy Spruill, is now the manager and driving

force behind the establishment of the museum at that plantation.

Mrs. Spruill organized a homecoming at Somerset in 1986. The event has since become biannual, and Spruill has begun organizing the construction of a slave cabin.

This writer recently visited the Arlington House - once the residence of General Robert E. Lee - behind which is preserved a quaint slave residence. Today, this plantation is part of Arlington Cemetery in Arlington Virginia, just outside Washington, D.C.

(This article was based on a story written in the November 1996 issue of House Beautiful, entitled Beyond the Big House)

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**SEE PAGE 7 FOR
INFORMATION
ON DECEMBER
KWAANZA
MEETING**

President's Message

As the year 1996 comes to an end, I want to extend happy holiday greetings to our members. Let's wish for good health and prosperity as well as continued solid researching for more of our roots and heritage. End 1996 with us at our December Holiday/Kwaanza meeting. Bring some books or small gifts to be raffled off. As the new year approaches, let's make a resolution to become more involved in our Chapter activities, and be prepared to renew your membership promptly. We need the support of all our members to continue our successful growth, as we start our 9th year. Each member is encouraged to solicit new membership. AAAHGS-New Jersey progresses forward.

NJ-AAHGS News

MEMBERS ATTEND NATIONAL AAHGS CONFERENCE

Several members of our Chapter traveled to Washington, D.C. to attend the 18th Annual Conference of the (National) Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society. The theme for this year's conference

was *Global Challenges in African-American research*. The conference proved to be interesting and helpful. One of our members in attendance, Sandy Bolden said that her "favorite lecture was 'Barking Up the Bowser Tree', because it was so informative and inspirational to her." Other members who attended the Conference were Genè Ann Polk Home, Glenn Cunningham, Lucius Bowser (who was a presenter), Amanda Edwards and her son Edwin and Ted Brunson. More than 250 people from throughout the nation participated in this learning experience.

Former President to Speak

Lloyd Washington will be sharing his knowledge of genealogy and African-American history again - this time at the Westfield Public Library, Thursday, November 14th, at 1:00 p.m. Lloyd will present a lecture on family history research before the Westfield Genealogical Society. Our former President has uncovered much of his family's past, which includes roots in the South, Connecticut and Ireland.

SON OF AAHGS MEMBER RESEARCHES NEWARK EAGLES BASEBALL TEAM

Edwin Edwards, a college student and the son of long-time AAHGS member Amanda Edwards, has written an excellent paper on the history of the Newark Eagles, one of the most successful baseball teams in the old Negro League. According to Edwards the Eagles came to Newark in 1936, and

was managed by Effa Manley, the wife of the owner, Abe Manley, who allegedly bankrolled the team with money he made as a 'numbers banker.'

"By 1937 the Manleys had the *Million Dollar Infield*, which consisted of first baseman George 'Mule' Suttles, second baseman Dick Seay, shortstop Willie Wells, and third baseman Ray Dandridge." Fans believe that if these players were in the major leagues their contracts would have demanded a large sum - therefore their nickname the Million Dollar Infield. (By the way, this writer knew Dick Seay when he was a City Hall parking lot attendant in Jersey City, but had no idea of his greatness). Edwards went on to explain the close relationship between the team and Newark's black community. He did an excellent job in researching this important subject. I'm sure that his proud mother Amanda will make a copy of his paper available to any member.

Directory of NJ- AAHGS Officers

President	
Lucius Bowser	201-763-5892
Vice-President	
Glenn D. Cunningham	201-433-3487
Secretary	
Bernice Jackson	201-837-0642
Treasurer	
Sandra Bolden	201-792-3142
Membership Chairperson	
Aaron Keys	908-756-1731
Family Reunion Chairperson	
Billy Pruitt	201-332-3330
Queries	
Amanda Edwards	908-671-1216
Clipping File Coordinator	
Patricia Barrett	908-232-343

BUS RIDE IN OUR FUTURE?

Lloyd Washington is working on two events. One involves preparation for a genealogy workshop to be sponsored by NJ AAHGS. The second project is a possible 2-3 day bus ride to a historic African-American location. If any one has any ideas, or a potential site that could be visited, please see Lloyd at the December meeting, or call him at 201-763-4949.

BARKING UP THE BOWSER FAMILY TREE

More than sixty people attended Lucius Bowser's presentation on his family history at the National AAHGS Conference. Even those of us who know Lucius well were surprised, and proud, to discover that our own President made New Jersey history. While we knew that Lucius was a Pharmacist, we didn't know that he was the **first** African-American Pharmacist in the State of New Jersey.

The Ancestor Hunter's Forum

Do's and Don'ts of Document Preservation

- Do not store materials you would like to preserve in the attic or basement.
- Do store them in a cool, well ventilated space.
- Do store items in boxes to prevent exposure to lights and dust.
- Do not fold or roll items to fit into folders or boxes.
- Do store items in the proper size

container and folder

- Do flatten any items that are rolled or folded.
- Do not touch photographs, except on outer edges.
- Do use cotton gloves when handling photographs.
- Do not use cellophane tape on photos or documents.
- Do remove all rubber bands, paper clips and staples.
- Do copy newspaper clippings as they will deteriorate over time.

From the CGS Newsletter November/December 1996

(Forwarded by Lloyd Washington)

Researching Federal Employees

Persons researching federal employees during the late 1800s and early 1900s should be aware that there was a register published every two years listing the names of all employees, their city and state of birth, their position and work location, and their annual salaries. The register's title is "Official register of the United States, Containing a list of Officers and Employees of the Civil, Military, and Naval Service, Together with a List of Vessels Belonging to the United States. Volume 2 covers the Post Office and Postal Service. A complete set of these registers are at the Library of Congress.

Military Newspaper Repository

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin is the self-appointed central depository of newspapers of the Air Force and other U.S. services. The collection started as a small in the Wisconsin Governor's office in 1854 and has grown to more than 2.8 million printed and microfilmed items of history, genealogy and related topics. The library provides reference and information

service by mail and telephone. Write to James P.Danky, Newspapers and periodicals, 816 State Street, Madison, WI, 537606, or call 608-264-6598.

THE AFRIGENEAS FAQ

Are you in to computers? Well, you might want to get acquainted with Afrigeneas, on the Internet. Afrigeneas is a place to focus on African-American genealogy to whatever degree you, the researcher decide. Browse, post and interact to share your genealogical research and resources in general, and your African Ancestry in particular at this place on the net and in cyberspace. Afrigeneas currently has a home page under development. This is our place and it will grow in accord with your needs over time. You can reach Afrigeneas on the net at AFRIGENEAS@msstate.edu. This service is based at Mississippi State University.

GENEALOGY COMING TO PBS TELEVISION IN JANUARY

Genealogy is a topic of a series to be aired on PBS television starting in January 1997. This ten part series entitled "ANCESTORS" is an introduction to genealogy and family history. The ten episodes will be: Getting started; Looking at home; Gathering family stories; The paper trail; Libraries and Archives; Your medical heritage; High tech help; African American families; and Leaving a legacy. (Note: You may want to ask your local PBS station if they plan to carry this series.

The course of history can be changed but not halted (Paul Roberson)

Positive Images In Profile

Each month a different member of NJ-AAHGS will be introduced to you in this newsletter. This month our focus is on **Dr. Gene-Ann Polk Home, M.D.** who became a member of our Chapter in 1995, after meeting some of our members at the National AAHGS Conference. Dr. Polk-Home, who has resided in Englewood (NJ) since 1959, is a pediatrician. She established a private practice, and served on staff in hospitals in New Jersey and New York, most recently at Harlem Hospital, where she was the Director of the Ambulatory Care Clinic until her retirement.

While Dr. Polk-Home is no longer a practicing pediatrician, she now spends much of her time healing the wounds caused by the distortion of African-American history. Dr. Polk-Home is currently the Historian for the Susan Smith McKinney-Stewart Medical Society, which draws its membership from the New York - New Jersey - Connecticut tri-state area.

She is collecting information and materials on Black female physicians in cooperation with the Shomberg Research Center. Dr. Polk-Home has helped to document African-American physicians who practiced at Harlem Hospital, and has frequently lectured on history subjects at that facility. In New Jersey, she has worked with the National Medical Association, accumulating information on black doctors in this state.

Dr. Polk-Home is proud of the fact that her Godmother, Myra Smith-Kearse, was one of the first female African-American physicians in New Jersey, having followed Jersey City's Dr. Lena Edwards by one year.

This enthusiastic researcher has also successfully traced her own family history to the Smiley Family, of historic Lawnside, New Jersey. Her Lawnside ancestors came to New Jersey in 1840,

bringing their manumission -or freedom papers- with them. Dr. Polk-Home still possesses these important documents, and just recently had them restored so that future generations can maintain this important link with the past.

This past summer, Dr. Polk-Home and her sisters, Barbara Riley-Scott and Josephine Polk Matthews, went to Smithfield, Virginia to visit a restored plantation house that is part of their family history.

NJ-AAHGS is proud to have this doctor in the house.

**Any ideas for our newsletter?
Pass your information on to
newsletter editor Glenn
Cunningham, 126 Cottonwood
St. Jersey City, NJ, 07305, or
tel. # 201-433-3487**

Time-line in Black History

1862 - Slavery abolished in the District of Columbia.

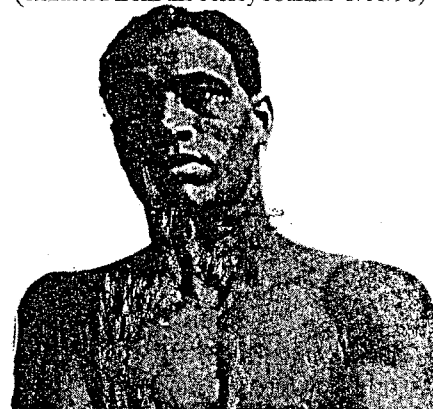
1863 - Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation.

1863 - New York City draft riots start on July 13th. Hundreds of blacks Americans killed or wounded.

1863 - The 54th Massachusetts Volunteers, the all black Civil War regiment attack Fort Wagner on July 18th.

Joe Jeannette: Union City's forgotten boxer

(extracted from the Jersey Journal -3/11/96)



For most Union City (NJ) residents, Jeanette Street is just another quiet side street in a bustling city. But Joe Jeannette, for whom the street was named was one of the most renowned African-American heavyweight fighters in the world at the turn of the century.

Born in what came to be known as North Bergen in 1881, Jeanette rapidly rose to fame at a time when racism was viciously prevalent in the United States.

Heavyweight Jack Johnson was the reigning king of the ring in the early 1900s, but according to the local news media, many boxing connoisseurs felt Jeanette was a much better fighter. Jeanette, however, was never given the opportunity to take the title from Johnson.

Jeanette's daughter-in-law, 82 year old Angie Jeannette maintains a collection of clippings, photographs, posters, and a scrap book of this great pugilist. Another Jeanette relative - **Ancola Cole** - of Jersey City is determined to reacquire this hero of yester-year with the present generation. Mrs. Cole, of Woodlawn Avenue in Jersey City is a member of NJ-AAHGS. The story of Joe Jeanette should be told over and over again.

December calendar of events

4 Wednesday 7:00 p.m.:

Conversation with Dr. John Henrik Clarke and Dr. Yosef ben-Jochannan. At the Shomberg Research Center

7 Saturday 11:00 a.m.

Film and video screenings on the global black experience. At the Shomberg Research Center

7 Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

"Tracing your Black South Carolina Ancestors". Harlem State Office Building, 163 W.125th St. NYC. Donation \$15.00. Sponsored by the Jean Sampson Scott Greater New York Chapter, et. Al.

18 Wednesday 8:00 p.m.

"Slavery's Buried Past: The New York African Burial Ground" will air an episode in the PBS science documentary series, The New Explorers. For more in call 212-432-5707

Patriotic mission to honor Vets

(By Claude Lewis, Philadelphia, extracts)

For more than a decade the Black Patriots Foundation has been trying to raise \$6.5 million to build a memorial

honoring the 5000 black soldiers who fought in the American Revolution. The monument is expected to be constructed between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. The design features two curved walls and a 90 foot bronze sculpture. One of the walls will be dedicated to a narrative describing the heroic efforts of the many slaves and freed African-American men who joined in the fight against the British for the independence of the colonies.

General Motors recently pledged one million dollars to the cause. That commitment helped generate new fund raising momentum. Other companies lending a hand are Coca Cola and Dupont.

African - American firsts

1970 - Donald M. Payne was the first black to head the National Council of the YMCA. In 1989 he was elected as New Jersey's first black congressman.

1788 - The African Union Society of Newport, Rhode island, was the first black organization to advocate the emigration of blacks to Africa. His position was challenged by the Free African Society of Philadelphia.

1960 - Marion S. Barry, Jr., was the first national chairman of the Student Non-violent Coordinating committee. A native of Itta Bena, Mississippi, Barry became the mayor of Washington, D.C. in 1979.

1871 - The first black Masonic lodge recognized by the white masonry in the United States was Alpha lodge of New Jersey, Number 116, Free and Accepted Masons. The first meeting was held on January 31, 1871, under its first master, Nathan Mingus.

1991 - Maryann Coffey was the first black, and the first woman. Co-chair of the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

1977 - Lucius Bowser, President of NJ AHHGH became the first Pharmacist of African-American descent in New Jersey.

1987 - Sandra Bolden of NJ-AAHGS, became the first African-American to be appointed Executive Director of a County Bar Association in the United States.

1996 - Glenn Cunningham, a member of NJ-AAHGS, was appointed U. S. Marshal for District of NJ, the first African-American to hold that position.

1913 - Daniel H. Williams became the first black elected to the American College of Surgeons on Nov. 13, 1913.

1990 - George Stallings established the African-American catholic Church on May 13, 1990. He was its first bishop. Stallings broke with the Roman Catholic Church over what he saw as its neglect of the spiritual need of blacks.

1920 - Harold Ellis was the first black to obtain a degree in neurology. He eventually held an appointment with the rank of Chief of Service in neurology at Harlem Hospital

Manumission Records

A manumission paper is a formal statement that a slave has been granted freedom. These records appear in different forms and may be part of a will or a separate document. These documents may be found as a part of public records, or in the possession of private families. Libraries noted for their holdings in this category are The U. Of Virginia, Duke University, and University of North Carolina.

Big Mama's "Old Black Pot recipe

(Source: Big Momma's Old Black Pot Recipes)

Big Mama, Julia Pettaway, was born in 1880 in Keatchie, Louisiana, a small rural community near Shreveport. She acquired the name Big Mama, not because of stature, but because of her determined iron will to face challenges head-on and make the most of them. Married at the early age of fourteen, she was later to face the task of raising a family of six boys and three girls alone. Big Mama raised her own cattle, and grew her own crops on 100 acres of land she eventually bought.

Following is one of Big Mama's many recipes:

Big mama's Pumpkin Bread

3 cups of flour ;
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
2 eggs (beaten)
1-1/4 cups cooked pumpkin
1 cup of milk
1 cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 cup cooking oil
1 cup of pecans

Sift flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves together. In another bowl, mix eggs, pumpkin, milk, sugar, baking soda and oil. Gradually add flour mixture and fold in pecans. Pour into loaf pan. Bake 350 degrees, for 1 hour and ten minutes. Makes two loaves.

—•••••
 Treat your family like friends and your friends like family

The Story of Peter Still

The Kidnapped and the Ransomed (as presented by the Still Family)

Peter Still, at the age of six, and his brother Levin, age eight, were kidnapped and sold into slavery by a man named Kincaid to John Fisher for a hundred and fifty dollars each. The six year old boy had no way of knowing that it would be more than forty years before he saw his mother, Charity, again.

Peter's life-long wish was to buy himself out of slavery. Friedman, a money lender in Tuscumbia, Alabama, charged Peter \$500.00 for his freedom. He was taken to Cincinnati in July 1850 because Alabama law forbade the freeing of slaves under any circumstances.

Peter, now in his late 40s, traveled to Philadelphia where he made inquiries at the black churches about his family. Ironically, Peter was introduced to his brother William Still, who helped to reunite him with his mother, brothers and sisters, who were living in the New Jersey Pine Barrens.

Peter returned to Alabama and secured the freedom of his wife and children from B. McKiernon for \$5000.00. He moved his family to Burlington County, N. J., where he bought a ten acre farm.

Note: William was the brother of William Still, author of the Underground railroad, and James Still, the "Doctor of the Pines."

Phyllis Wheatley: First to publish



Source: American Legacy, Winter 97)

Born in Africa around 1753, Phillis Wheatley arrived in Boston on a slave ship when she was about 8 years old. She was bought by an affluent tailor and merchant named John Wheatley. A bright child, Phillis was given a broad education by the Wheatley family, who encouraged her talent for poetry.

She was just a teenager when she wrote and published an eulogy on the death of Rev. George Whitefield, a noted evangelist. Two years later, in 1772, the Wheatleys tried to publish a volume of her poems, but the publishers refused to believe that Phillis was the poet. A group of prominent Bostonians questioned her and then wrote an introduction attesting to her ability.

In 1773, while in England, Phillis' collection *Poems on Various Subjects, religious, and Moral* was printed. This was the first book of any kind to be published by an African-American.

Phyllis' life began a downward spiral when, after marrying, her husband mistreated her, two children died, and the third baby perished in December 1784, on the same day that she herself died.

Surviving Slave Structures

(Source: Home Beautiful-Nov. 1996)

Aiken-Rhett House - a two storied stucco brick building behind William Aikens Charleston house, 48 Elizabeth Street, Charleston SC

Bellamy Mansion - a 2 story Italianate brick slave's house behind this urban mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington, NC.

Former Greg & Wallace Plantation - now the site of Francis Marion University, 4822 East Palmetto St., Florence, SC. Two single family, one room dwellings built of pine logs.

The Hermitage - 4580 Rachel lane, Hermitage, Tn. Three intact slave cabins at Andrew Jackson's former estate.

McLeod Plantation - Charleston, SC. Five white clapboard buildings, each divided into two spaces.

Mount Vernon - Mount Vernon, Virginia, barracks style slave quarters, reconstructed in 1950s, originally built in 1792.

Oakley Plantation - St. Francisville, LA, two one room wood cabins were moved from a nearby plantation to this site. Audubon created many of his famous bird paintings here.

Prestwold - Clarksville, Virginia. This cabin, typical of the slave cabins in America, was begun in 1780 and remodeled in the late 1790s to house two families.

Boone Hall - Carters Grove, Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia.

Somerset Place - Crestwell, NC
Sotterly Mansion - Hollywood, MD
Stagsville Center - Durham, NC

BENEFITS OF CREATING A FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM

- Preserves the past
- Enriches the present
- Inspires hope for the future
- Protects your photograph

KWAANZA and CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION AT NEXT MEETING

The next meeting, scheduled for December 14th, is the last meeting before the Christmas holidays and the new year. We are planning to make this the best meeting of the year.

Kwaanza celebration

There will be a special Kwaanza celebration. The seven principles of Kwaanza will be explained to the membership.

Auction

All members are requested to bring in a book or some other item that you would be willing to put up for a chinese auction. This event should generate funds for the NJ- AAHGS Chapter.

Holiday Spirit

Our December 14th meeting will be the last one before the holidays. Be sure to come and greet your genealogy and history friends. Share the Holiday spirit as well as genealogical and family history.

PRESERVATION TIPS

Photo copy your newspaper articles on acid-free paper. The copy can be displayed safely in your photo album and the originals can be put in a file stored in a cool, dry, dark place to slow down the acid deterioration. Photocopy is usually not acid-free, but because the paper is, it will increase the lifetime of the paper article.

LOOK BACK TO THE PAST
FOR YOUR ROOTS
LET US HELP!



**New Jersey Chapter
Afro American Historical
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Jersey City, New Jersey 07305

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