

NJ-AAHGS Newsletter

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

Former Governor Wilder calls for Slavery Museum in Virginia

Robert J. Wilder grew up the son of slaves, and what his parents had to endure was something he wouldn't talk about, not even to his son.

When asked about it, he would bite down hard on his pipe and keep his silence, recalled L. Douglas Wilder, who became the nation's first black elected governor.

But the son believes so strongly that slavery should be discussed that he wants to build what would be the nation's first museum entirely devoted to remembering and honoring slaves.

"African-Americans have not relished that story. They want to say, 'We've moved beyond that,'" Wilder said in an interview from Richmond, where he teaches politics at Virginia Commonwealth University.

"But if everybody moves beyond that, there is a plethora of ignorance consequently. So much has been lost from that period. So much is misunderstood. The thing that's more frustrating to me than anything is that it robs of us an accurate portrayal of our history as a country."

The United States has more than 100 black history museums, but none is focused entirely on slavery, said Juanita Moore, president of the African-American Museums Association in Wilberforce, Ohio.

Our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting.
(Freedom Charter-South Africa)

Wilder envisions a museum that will include artifacts such as manacles, slave-owners records and a replica of a slave ship. Wilder, who was Virginia's governor from 1990 to 1994, first proposed the museum in 1993 while on a trade trip to Africa. He was inspired by a stop at Goree Island on the coast of Senegal, from which Africans were first shipped as slaves to America.

(By Sonja Barisic, Associated Press)

The President's Message

Celebrate Black History Month in February at our regular meeting by a 'show and tell' of some family heirloom item, photo, book, clothing, that has been in your family for many years. Surely, each of us has a memento or two that we can share that depicts our history or culture, for which we proudly represent.

Additionally, we plan to have a visit to the National Archives in New York for a hands-on session for both novice and experienced members. One can always find a new piece of information on every visit. Date and time will be provided later.

AAHGS-NJ must have some moving sensations and grandeur, as our member Carlos Edwards, called from Panama City, Panama to relate what glad tidings and warm feeling he gets when he receives the monthly newsletter. He wishes good health and prosperity to

every member, and will make every effort to stop by when he returns for a visit in April. He states that he knows the society is growing and becoming a major activity in New Jersey. In return, we wished him well. Even in Panama, AAHGS-NJ is known.

AAHGS-NJ is your organization and your leaders look forward to your continued support and growth.

Lucius Bowser

Time to re-new memberships

It's that time of the year, again. An organization cannot exist without membership, and the financial support the membership provides. If you have not yet paid your dues for 1997, please do so as soon as possible. For your convenience, an application form and explanation of an increase in national membership dues is included in this newsletter.

'OTHERS' in Hudson County
In the 1990 census more than 10 per cent of the county's 553,099 residents identified their race as 'other.'

White: 380,612

Black: 79,770

Other: 54,480

Asian/Pacific: 36,777

American Indian: 1,460

Heath Center to host Black History Month program

An afternoon of meeting authors, songwriters and musicians, and purchasing their wares, was the theme of this year's Black History Month kick-off at the Heath Center, Tatum Park. The park comes under the auspices of the Monmouth County Park Commission, and is located in Middletown, N.J.

Each year, NJ-AAHGS member Bertha Heath displays the works of African-Americans during the last week in January. Spirited discussions and lecturers on many topics take place at the Heath center. The land on which the center is located was donated to the county by the Heath Family of Middletown.

Bertha Heath, the driving force behind this project, has been a member of NJ-AAHGS almost from its inception. She grew up on the Heath farm, when the surrounding area was still rural.

(Thank you Lucius Bowser)

Goree Memorial Museum

(Emerge Magazine)

Amid reports that Holiday Inn wants to erect a hotel and make a tourist attraction out of Goree Island, where Africans were held in dungeons off the coast of Senegal before being forced into slavery in the Western Hemisphere, an international group of architects is determined to honor those captives in a more solemn manner. Alioune Traore, secretary to the International Peace prize, appointed architects, including Senegal's Pierre Goudieby and Howard University's Harry Robinson, to an international commission on Goree.

"The goal (of the commission) will be to raise additional money and to popularize the idea of the Goree Museum and to get it international recognition," says Robinson. He is hoping to collect \$75 million to \$100 million from governments, foundations and private contributors for a museum to be built along the coast of Dakar. He estimates an eighteen month design phase and four to five years for construction. Robinson hopes that U.S. Blacks will be especially supportive: "African-Americans have a responsibility to memorialize that act of slavery."

Census changes with the times

The United States Census has been anything but consistent on race and ethnic matters over the years. In 1890 during the first census, the government counted only 'free white males,' 'free white females,' 'all other free persons,' and 'slaves.' During the 1800s, the census paid close attention to race, categorizing people not only as black, but as 'mulatto,' 'quadroon' (one-fourth black), and 'octoroon' (one-eighth black).

After 1920, according to census the Census Bureau stopped splitting hairs and counted people with mixed ancestry as black. Period. The census hasn't been consistent with cultural groups, either. People from India, for example, were labeled 'Hindus' in census records from 1920 to 1940, as 'white' from 1950 to 1970, and as 'Asians or Pacific Islanders' in 1980 and 1990.

The term 'Hispanic,' a huge category, didn't make its debut until 1980. People whose ancestry was Latin American were counted as white, until after they became a protected group.

Historically, whatever labels the census used, they were arrived at subjectively. Until the middle of this century, the Census Bureau sent enumerators to homes. Their perceptions

of race went on record.

(Extracted from Newhouse News Service)

DETECTIVE CHARLES JACKSON



Whenever one sees news or video captions of Martin Luther King Jr. presenting his famous "I Have A Dream Speech" at the March on Washington, there is **Charlie Jackson**, a retired Jersey City police detective. According to Glenn Cunningham, Detective Jackson served on the police department for more than 30 years. He accumulated more than 20 awards and decorations during his tenure. In Jersey City, Det. Jackson is best remembered for his work in organizing the Police Community Relations Bureau during the turbulent 1960s. Charlie has been retired for more than ten years, and he now resides in Jamesburg, New Jersey.

During the March on Washington, Det. Jackson served as special marshal and bodyguard for the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He can usually be observed standing over Dr. King's right shoulder. He wears a small white hat. The Jersey Journal recently featured Det. Jackson's experiences.

Positive images in Profile

This month's profile features M.L. Mickens Banks. A native of Newark, New Jersey, he now resides in

East Orange. He has been a member of NJ-AAHGS for five years. Mr. Banks is a widower, and only admits to World War 2 vintage when asked about his age.

He has three children, James, (now a sergeant), Jeffrey and Gary Nelson. An avid investigator of his family history and roots, **Mr. Banks**, is researching his family history and roots in Chesterfield and Prince Edwards (Farmville) Counties in Virginia. He is equally interested in African-American history and culture. Other hobbies include: traveling, music, art and writing. A major contribution made by Mr. banks to NJ-AAHGS was his research of African-Americans in the New Jersey 1880 census records.

N J State Assembly to honor Lucius Bowser

Our president, Lucius Bowser has recently been commended for his activities and contributions to genealogy, African-American history and NJ-AAHGS. State Assemblyman Joseph Charles, who represents the 31st Legislative District, has informed us that he will present a resolution honoring Lucius at the next NJ-AAHGS meeting, Saturday, February 8, 1997.

An African American history Test

- 1) What college did Mary Mc Leod Bethune found?
 a - Bethune-Cookman College
 b - Mary Mc Leod Bethune College -
 c. Tuskegee Institute

2) James Beckworth started a trading post that led to what settlement?

- a - Sacramento, California
 b - Pueblo, Colorado
 c - Taos, New Mexico

3) Amiri Baraka's Dutchman, The Baptism, The Slave, and The Toilet were:

- a - Novels
 b - Plays
 c - Collections of Poetry

4) In 1979, what forced Arthur Ashe to retire from professional tennis?

- a - HIV infection
 b - leg injuries
 c - heart attack

5) What was Louis Armstrong's nickname?

- a - Satchmo
 b - Bebop
 c - Dixie

6) Paul Cuffee established a lucrative trade partnership with what African country?

- a - Zimbabwe
 b - Uganda
 c - Sierra Leone

7) Frederick Douglass was Ambassador to:

- a - Liberia
 b - Haiti
 c - Panama

8) Charles Drew spearheaded the world's first:

- a - organ donor program
 b - heart transplant
 c - blood bank program

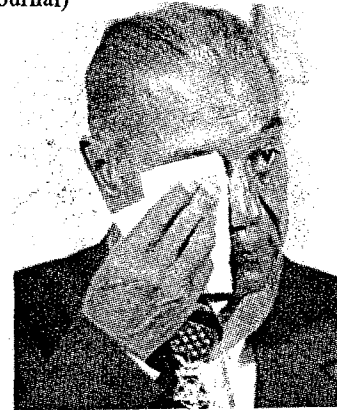
9) Barbara Jordan became the South's first African American:

- a - governor
 b - congresswoman
 c - mayor

(For answers to the above quiz, please see page 4)

Black Medal of Honor Winners Finally win Justice

(partially extracted from the Jersey Journal)



Vernon Baker is not bitter that, because of his color, it has taken half a century for him to receive his nation's top military honor for heroism under fire. Baker was recently awarded the Medal of Honor for actions he took in World War 2. Although 1.7 million blacks served in WW2, they did not receive a single one of the 432 Medals of Honor awarded. Vernon Baker, in fact, was presented with the second highest award - the Distinguished Service Cross.

A special team of military historians was assigned to research the impact that race had on the recommendations for medals during WW 2. The committee concluded that racial attitudes in the military at the time presented qualified 'heroes' from being properly recognized.

Last spring a special Army Senior Officer Awards Board recommended that seven black soldiers be awarded the Medal of Honor, six of them posthumously. Baker was the only recipient still living. He remained in the Army, retiring after 28 years. He moved to northern Idaho after his wife died in 1987. Married again, he hunts and lives quietly in his adopted state.

Answers to quiz on page 3

- 1 - Bethune-Cookman College
- 2 - Pueblo, Colorado
- 3 - Plays
- 4 - Heart Attack
- 5 - Jazz
- 6 - Satchmo
- 7 - Sierra Leone
- 8 - Haiti
- 9 - Blood bank program
- 10 - Congresswoman

Grandma's family recipe puts descendant in business

Michele Hoskins has turned her grandmother's secret Honey Creme syrup into a new business. She now manufactures and sells that product, having secured a \$3 million a year contract. The idea to market the syrup was a little sticky at first, because the recipe had traditionally been passed down to the third daughter of each generation. Hoskins is an 'only' daughter, so she had to convince her relatives to break the tradition. Hoskin's great-grandmother, an Arkansas slave named America, created the syrup out of honey, churned butter and cream for her master. It was America's decision to pass the recipe down to the third daughter of each generation. Hopkin's's persevered for years before her product paid off. She

said 'My dream was not to pass my daughter a recipe, but to pass her a business. I think deep, deep down, my great grandmother is saying, 'Finally, somebody got the message.'"

The Atlantic slave trade data base project

(source Genealogical Helper 6/94)

You may be interested in a new project being undertaken by the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research, which is based at Harvard University. Known as the Atlantic Slave Trade Data Base Project, its goal is to consolidate a variety of published and unpublished sets of information into a single computerized database on the slave trade which operated in the Atlantic Ocean for three hundred years.

The slave voyages expected to be represented by this database include ships departing from various locations in Africa, with destinations in Cuba, Brazil, the Southern states, and elsewhere. Although the amount of data for every entry is expected to vary, the database is planned to include fields for over 200 items, such as names of vessels, captains and shipowners, ports of debarkation, the numbers of passengers with their ages and gender, etc.

When completed, the database is expected to include information on over 20,000 trans-Atlantic voyages, making it invaluable for demographers, historians, economists, and of course, genealogists.

The project is funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is expected to be completed within three to five years, and should become available on the Internet.

Want more information? Contact David Eltis, Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3N6, Canada.

Blacks in the Military



Although it is seldom acknowledged, over 5,000 African-American patriots fought and served in the American Revolutionary War. Some were slaves. Some were free. Sometimes slaves were placed in service in the place of their owners. Yet, these slaves and free blacks entered the war - and fight they did. For themselves, for future generations, for their country, and for freedom. Yet, when it was all over, and the United States was born, slavery continued. So did segregation and discrimination. The legacy of these brave patriots had all but disappeared in the dustbin of history.

According to geologists, North Carolina was once connected to Africa. In the beginning they were both part of the prehistoric continent called pangaea.

APPLICATION National AAHGS SOCIETY APPLICATION: AAHGS-N.J. CHAPTER

Name: _____ Name: _____

Full name of Spouse: _____ Full name of Spouse: _____

Mailing address: _____ Mailing Address: _____
(St., Ave, La, Ct, Apt #, PO Box #) (St., Ave., La., Ct., Apt #, PO Box #)

City: _____ St _____ Zip _____ City: _____ St _____ Zip _____

Tel. No. (_____) _____ Tel. No.: (_____) _____

Date of Birth Month _____ Day _____

FEES: Youth	Indiv.	Family	Company	FEES: Indiv.	Family	Company	Patron
(circle one)	\$25	\$35	\$45	Circle one)	\$12	\$20	\$250
		\$40	\$45			\$35	

Signature: _____ Date _____ Signature: _____ Date _____

New Application: _____ Renewal _____ New Application: _____ Renewal: _____

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL PERIOD

Membership renewal time for the year 1997 has arrived and you are asked to complete the above applications and submit separate checks, payable to AAHGS for the national society and AAHGS-NJ for our New Jersey Chapter dues. Our Chapter dues remain the same as before which provides you with a monthly newsletter, important meetings, often with outside speakers and a great comraderie.

Unfortunately, our national society's Board of Directors and President aware of a shortfall in income for that group, voted a \$10 increase in national dues as shown above on the left. Your president and officers are working for a more favorable arrangement with national to keep dues down to permit greater participation by current members and to reach out for future new members. We ask that you renew promptly to show our solidarity and support in this year's membership drive.

Send both check and applications to AAHGS-NJ, 1841 Kennedy Blvd, 2nd floor, Jersey City, NJ 07305.