

# NJ AAHGS Newsletter

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

## Black history month in jeopardy?

NJ AAHGS member, Patricia Barrett has brought some very disturbing news to our attention, concerning the efforts of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) to proclaim February of each year as National American History Month. The following letter was recently mailed to interested persons:

Dear Afro-American Friends:

February, our traditional Black History month is in jeopardy. Chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution nationally and here in Westfield will observe the month of February as a National American History Month.

Jane Stoner, American History Month Chairperson, presented our new mayor, the first Democratic mayor in Westfield since 1912, with a proclamation, and he signed it.

The Daughters of the American Revolution are descended from ancestors who participated in the American Revolution. They were organized on October 11, 1890 in Washington, D.C. The Revolutionary war between the Colonies and England began in Lexington, Massachusetts on April 19, 1775.

Stoner plans for children in the middle school grades to study, read about explorers, settlers and participate in annual contests.

I ask you why the month of February? Why? To blot out (Black History Month) or Afro-American History Month!!!

**See important meeting information, page 6.**

Why didn't they chose April, July, October or November when the Pilgrims sighted Cape Cod on the 19th? Or December, when they finally dropped anchor in what is now known as Plymouth Harbor? Lastly, why didn't they choose to celebrate American History Month in September, when the final treaty was signed in Paris in 1783, and ratified in 1874, making the United States of America free and independent?

I bring these facts to you as Clipping file Coordinator of the NJ Chapter of AAHGS, and a former member of the Westfield Negro History Club.

Sincerely,  
Patricia Barrett

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As spring slowly approaches, let each of us make a determined effort to diligently research at least one relative, birth, marriage, education, hobby, and perhaps, death. Each stone turned over may reveal a previously unearthed surprise. Genealogy is done "one step at a time."

Renewing our memberships at the local and national level is also one step, but a very important step. Memberships that are not renewed before March 31st will cause a disruption in receiving the Newsletter, and knowing what is 'happening.' Don't permit that to happen.

I would also like to take this

opportunity to thank all members of AAHGS-NJ who attended the February meeting, at which I was presented with a 'proclamation' by the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly in recognition of my efforts in the fields of African-American history and genealogy.

I am especially appreciative of State Assemblyman Joseph Charles, of Jersey City, who was the primary sponsor of the proclamation, and personally made the presentation.

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**Hold a friend with both your hands.**  
Niger/Chad/Nigeria  
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## NJHS to move soon

The New Jersey Historical Society, 230 Broadway, Newark, will soon be moving to its new quarters at Park Place, Newark. Hours now through May 1st are Thursday and Fridays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m; 2nd and 3rd Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. On May 1, 1997 the NJHS library will close for almost a year, as everything is catalogued and carted to the new building. Make use of the NJHS files while you still have the opportunity.

Lucius Bowser

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**Let racism be a problem to someone else.... Let it drag them down. Don't use it as an excuse for your own short comings.**

General Colin Powell

## Officers up for re-election

The offices of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer of AAHGS-NJ will be expiring October 1997, and a new slate of officers must be presented to the membership in May. Anyone who would like to hold office should send a letter to the President expressing your interest in serving in a particular office. A formal nominating committee will be appointed by the President soon. Present office-holders cannot succeed themselves.

## Report of the Membership Chairman Aaron L. Keys

Applications for 1997 membership were mailed to all current members by Chairman Keys. There were fifty-six members on the roster as of December 31, 1996. The next report will acknowledge all memberships paid to date.

## Community Update

(The Jersey Journal, February 20, 1997)  
**CUNNINGHAM TO APPEAR ON CABLE TV SHOW**

U.S. Marshal Glenn Cunningham of Jersey City, a historian-genealogist, will teach a segment on tracing one's roots on the cable TV series "Family Historian" at 3:00 p.m., Wednesday on the Cable television Network of New Jersey channel. Sandy Bolden was included in

the credits for her role as production assistant. For more information about the program, contact producer Stephen Conte at 2301-227-4261.

P.S. : This program was televised on Wednesday, February 26th. Any one who would like to purchase a video tape of this program may do so by contacting Mr. Conte at the above telephone number.

## Former President speaks about Civil War Troops

Lloyd Washington presented a lecture entitled 'The Untold Story: Black Participation in the Civil War. The lecture took place during a Black History program at Monmouth Battlefield near Freehold, New Jersey. Lloyd also displayed Civil War artifacts and equipment, including a rifle and bullets. Lloyd is our organization's leading lecturer on the United States Colored Troops.

## First Black General Honored by Post Office Stamp

Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. the first African-American to attain the rank of Brigadier General in the United States Army, was recently honored by being made the subject of a U.S. Postal Service commemorative stamp in the Black Heritage Series. The stamp was released during Black History Month. Retired General Colin Powell was on hand for the ceremonies in Washington, D.C.,



along with Davis' son, Benjamin O. Davis Jr., himself a retired Air Force general. B.O. Davis Jr. led the elite Tuskegee Airmen (fighter pilots) during World War 2.

## Silas Reeves mentioned in history book

During last month's 'show and tell' meeting, Amanda Edwards brought to our attention the publication of a new book about African-American history in New Jersey. The book, "Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665-1865, listed Silas Reeves as soldier serving in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War. Silas is an ancestor/relative of our own Amanda Edwards.

According to the publication, Silas suffered from chronic bronchitis and rheumatism, which he contracted in rainy weather during a Virginia campaign.

The book was researched and written by Graham Russell Hodges.

## Burned Courthouses

Sooner or later, as one does his/her genealogical research, they may

encounter the problems posed by the loss of records due to a courthouse fire, or perhaps some other disaster. Often, your research is not hopeless, because there are other sources through which you can continue your research.

You should consider the following research steps:

1 - Make use of all the records which might have survived the fire. Question court officials to determine that the records are, in fact, destroyed. Perhaps some survived and are located in a different depository.

2 - Closely examine the post-fire records. Often they contain references to events that took place much earlier. Sometimes records may have been reconstituted, or made over.

3 - Read everything you can find on the county and its history. Check on county, state and local libraries and archives to be sure you are not missing any possibilities.

4 - Check the records of surrounding counties, and the original county from which your research county is derived.

5 - Check all state records that might pertain to the county you are researching, i.e. birth, death, census, divorce, land and military records.

6 - Be sure to use all national records which apply to the county, i.e. bounty land, census, farm census, federal court, slave census and tax records.

7 - Check non-government sources of information about your ancestors. These records might include, but are not limited to attorneys records, cemetery records, church records, city directories, employment and school records, etc.

## Atlases can help

If your ancestor lived in a major city, an atlas published at that time can be

helpful. Atlases contain detailed maps showing streets, buildings, ward boundaries, and sometimes names of individual land owners. City atlases can be indispensable for locating ancestors in census records since census schedules are arranged by ward, and city atlases give these wards, saving you hours of research.

## City Directories

Thousands of city directories dated from 1789 through 1881 are available on microfilm. Sometimes, as in the case in Jersey City, you can view the original directories. These directories can be very helpful to researchers who had relatives living in urban areas. The directories were the forerunners of the modern telephone book. In addition to the name of a resident, the directory would usually provide the address and occupation of that person.

Also, very helpful to African-American researchers is the fact that the race of the individual was usually provided (African-Americans were described as 'colored'). In Jersey City directories, the racial description was given until after the civil war.

Over 200 cities have these directories. Often the directories are located in the city or town public library, and are easily accessed.

## Colonial Florida Fort Recalls Shining Moment in Black History

(from National Geographic, Feb. 1997)

Hidden in the salt marshes of northern St. Augustine, Florida, the frontier outpost of Fort Mose might be forgotten today except for one startling fact: It was the first free black colonial town in

what is now the United States.

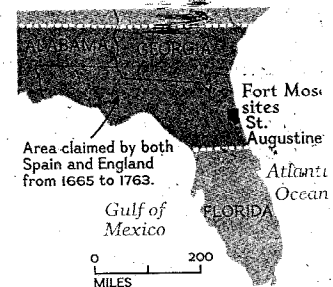
Its residents, African slaves from British plantations to the north, had found refuge by escaping to Spanish Florida - an converting to Catholicism.

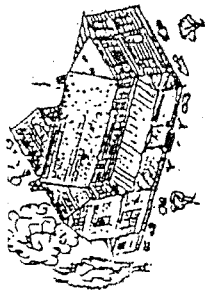
Declared a national historic landmark in 1994, Fort Mose was brought back to life after a search of Spanish records by historian Jane Landers, now at Vanderbilt University, and two years of excavations led by archaeologist Kathleen Deagan.

Her team, with assistance from black Florida legislators such as former State Representative Bill Clark, uncovered everyday items used for cooking, clothing, shelter and defense. It also found a handcrafted silver medal with an image of St. Christopher on one side and a sailor's compass rose on the other. Many escaped slaves served as crewmen aboard Spanish ships.

At one time when both England and Spain claimed northern Florida, "slaves in the Carolinas knew of the possibility of freedom in Spanish Florida."

In 1738 the Spanish formed a freedmen's militia and moved one hundred black men, women and children from St. Augustine to build a 65 square foot Fort Mose. Two years later a British attack forced residents to flee to St. Augustine. After 1752, blacks returned to a new, larger Fort Mose nearby.





Heath Farm House

# MOSES D. HEATH FARM

*"For Land Sake"*

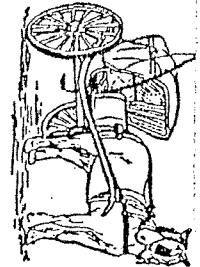
Corner Harmony Road and Peace Lane  
Middletown, New Jersey

Trees • Fruit • Flowers • Small Game Preserve

Memorial Garden

Antique Farm Equipment Exhibit

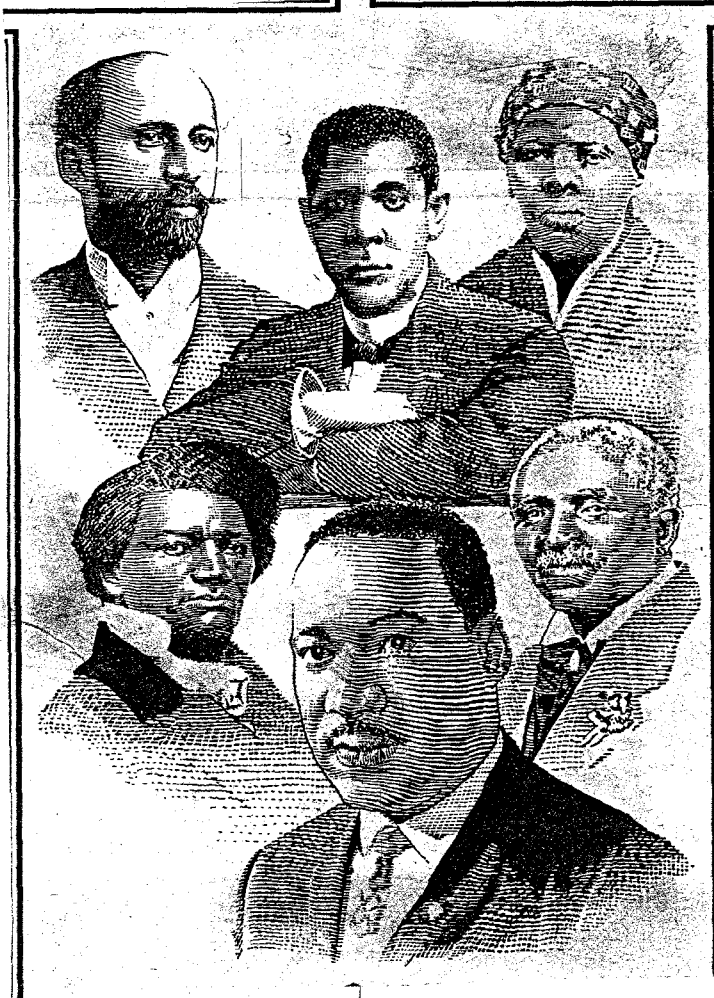
**908-671-0566**



**Who are these  
black heroes?**

A stumble is  
not a fall

**Big Mama's Old  
Black Pot - A Recipe**



(answers on page 5)

### Chicken and Cream Gravy

1 chicken	1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon pepper	1 teaspoon paprika
1 egg	½ cup of water
1 cup flour	1 ½ cups milk
1/1/2 cup light cream	

Cut chicken into frying pieces. Sprinkle ½ teaspoon salt, 1/1 teaspoon pepper and ½ teaspoon paprika over chicken. Set aside for one hour. Beat egg and ½ cup water. Dip chicken in batter and roll in flour. Set aside 4 tablespoons flour to be used for gravy. Pan fry until thoroughly cooked. Remove from pan and drain. Pour all but 4 tablespoons drippings from pan. Blend flour with drippings and stir until brown. Add ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper. Slowly add 1 ½ cups chicken broth and ½ cup light cream. Add chicken gravy

Simmer 5 - 10 minutes

Serves 5-7

### FAMILY BIBLES

Family bibles are often very useful genealogical sources, since they usually show names and dates of births, baptisms, marriages and deaths. In addition, they sometimes contain information on relationships, places and biographical items.

### ANSWERS TO "WHO ARE THESE BLACK HEROES:

TOP ROW L to R, W.E.B.Dubois, Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman

BOTTOM ROW L to R, Frederick Douglass, M.L.King jr., George Washington Carver.

## Lisa Crawley's book now for sale

Lisa Crawley's new publication is truly an oral history "work of art." Lisa completed her graduate degree in Museum studies recently, and A Life In Newport News: An Oral History of Inettie Banks Edwards was part of her course requirements. The sixty page book reads well, and is filled with photos and a pre-1950 city map of Newport News.

A Life in Newport News tells the story of Inettie Banks Edwards, a retired school teacher and active volunteer who made many contributions to her shipyard hometown. The Banks family originally arrived in Newport News in 1023. Lisa states that their story is typical of the many families who migrated to the "peninsula" from places further south.

This story is told from a black woman's perspective. In the tradition of the Foxfire Series, this work consists of oral history vignettes that capture important memories of Mrs. Edward's life and community.

Congratulations are due Lisa on this great literary effort.

The book sells for about \$9.00

**The North- East National Archives Regional Center is located at 201 Varick Street, New York City (Manhattan).**

**The Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives is located at Ninth and Market Streets, Room 1350, Philadelphia, PA.**

## Free Publications

The following are available from the national Archives. To receive a free copy, write to Publications Distribution, National Archives, Room G-9, 7th and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC, 20408. Requests may be faxed to 202-501-7170

Aids for genealogical Research lists publications of particular interest to both beginning and experienced genealogists and gives information about genealogy workshops at the national Archives, and instruction on how to order National Archives documents through the mail.

Charters of Freedom describes more than 50 publications, gifts and audio-visual programs that relate to the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

World War 2 Resources from the National Archives and its National Audiovisual Center lists books, posters and poster exhibits, teaching aids, videotapes, and gift items, all

related to World War 2.

Posters and Facimilies From the National Archives illustrates in full color popular historical and contemporary posters, postcards, facsimilies and booklets.

## NAACP to Cite "Black History Makers"

AAHGS members Ted Brunson and Glenn Cunningham will be cited by the Jersey City branch of the NAACP on Tuesday, February 25, 1997, at the Afro-American Historical Society Museum building, as Black History Makers, during it's Black History Month Observance program. Ted established the first state-wide African American Museum, and Glenn is the first African-American to be appointed U.S Marshal for New Jersey - a Presidential appointment.

## Stamp in future for Madam CJ Walker?

A'Lelia Bundles, The great-great-granddaughter of madam C.J.Walker has organized a petition drive to gather signatures requesting Postal Service to issue a commemorative stamp in honor of her accomplished ancestor. Mrs. walker was the first female self-made millionaire. So far, Ms. Bundles has collected more than 50,000 signatures. One volunteer, alone gathered 10,000 names. Ms.Bundles never met Madam Walker, who died in 1919.

## MEETING NOTICE

Please take note that the next AAHGS-NJ meeting will take place at our regular meeting-place at the Afro-American Historical Society Museum, located at 1841 Kennedy Blvd, Jersey City, N.J. The meeting will begin at the usual time.

At the last meeting it was suggested that the next meeting take place in South Jersey. Amanda Edwards, who checked into a possible location, has informed the newsletter editor that a location could not be secured in time for the next meeting. **See you'all at the Museum.**

## Freedom Papers part of proud family heritage

The last meeting's 'show and tell' session generated a lot of interesting stories, books, and yes, 'freedom papers.' Dr. Gene-Ann Horne Polk and her sister are still in possession of the manumission papers, also know as freedom papers that were issued to their ancestors during the slavery era.

These documents are priceless to a family that recognizes their significance. Indeed, the Horne family went to considerable expense to preserve these papers for future generations.

Following is a transcription of two of these manumission/freedom papers:

Virginia, Isle of Wight County:

I hereby certify that the bearer hereof Amey, a Negro woman of dark complexion, five feet, six inches high, about fifty years of age, has no mark or scar visible, was *emancipated* by Thomas Smilly(?) Deceased, in his last will and testament which is of record in the court of the aforesaid county - and that the said Amey, by order of said county court made the fourth day of March 1839 was registered in my office according to law.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed this seal of my said county this 23rd day of March 1839.

Nath'l Young

countersigned

Josiah Eley(?) J.P.

Note: The laws of Virginia, and other southern states required freed(manumitted) slaves to move out of the state after a designated period of time after gaining their freedom. The reason for this law was due to the belief that "free Negroes" were a negative influence on blacks who remained in bondage. Sometimes, with the support of white citizens who vouched for the former slave, the requirement that the newly freed bondsman vacate the state could be waived. Such was the case for Amey, as we can see by the next document.

Whereas the Laws of Virginia require that persons who have been emancipated by their owners, shall after twelve months from the date of their emancipation leave the state, and Amey the bearer of this paper having ben emancipated by the last will and

testament of her owner Thomas Smilly of the County of isle of Wight and being now about to migrate to some other free state of the - This is to certify that we the subscribers have long known the said Amey, and that she has always borne a moist excellent character for honesty, industry and fidelity, strictly discharged all the duties imposed on her by her late owner - and we recommend her to favorable consideration of any community which may offer her an asylum.

Nansemond County, March 25, 1840

## Civil War Records - USCT

Looking for your Civil War ancestor or other relative who fought in that war? You know he served, you even found his name and appropriate file numbers on the listing of soldiers who served? Yet, when you try to have his records pulled to review and copy, you're told that they can't be found? Well don't give up. I was looking for a United States Colored Troops soldier while at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. recently. After getting the proper file number for my soldier, I was told the records were not at the national Archives. But they do exist!

This particular veteran's pension was passed on to his wife, who did not die until 1927 - 66 years after the Civil War. So, the records for this pensioner are considered recent, or modern era. The records, as it turns out, are still in the possession of the

Veteran's Administration. I have contacted the Newark regional veterans office, and requested the documents. I have been told that the documents will be forwarded to Newark, at which location I will be able to review and copy them.

Glenn Cunningham

## Interesting Book

### **Black History: A Guide to Civilian Records in the National Archives**

Compiled by Debra L. Newman  
Winner of the C.F. Choker Prize,  
Society of American Archivists,  
1985.

This award-winning research guide provides accurate, concise information about civilian records held by the National Archives - textual, photographs, and audiovisual - that can be used to survey the history of African Americans. Records of more than 140 nonmilitary federal agencies are described. Information is provided about each agency that explains why the agency was involved with African-Americans as well as the volume and characteristics of the records.

This book can be purchased through the National Archives.

**J. Madison Bell, an African American, was the private secretary of John Brown, the famed abolitionist and martyr.**

## Black Surgeon of the Civil War

The National Museum of Civil War Medicine, located at Frederick, Maryland, has a unique Black History Month display this year. "Dr. Augusta, Black Surgeon." opened on February 1st. The display features artifacts belonging to Dr. Alexander Augusta, who served as regimental surgeon for the 7th U.S. Colored Troops, director of the Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C., and the medical examiner of Black recruits in South Carolina and Baltimore, Md.

Augusta was the first of only eight black physicians to obtain a commission in the Union Army during the Civil War.

The National Museum of Civil War Medicine is located at 48 East Patrick Street, in Frederick. It is open Tuesday-Friday, 10:00 a.m. -4:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 12-4 p.m.

## What's In The census records?

1790  
name of family head; free white males of 16 years and up; free white males under 16; free white females; slaves; other persons.

1800  
name of head of family; if white, age and sex; race; slaves.

1810  
name of head of family; if white, age and sex; race; slaves.

1820  
name of head of family; age; sex; race; foreigners not naturalized; slaves; industry (agriculture, commerce, manufactures)

(More next month)

500 armed African-American slaves saved the white people of South Carolina from being exterminated by the Yemassee Indians in 1715



## That old time handwriting

In early American documents, be on the lookout for what is known as the "long s" ( f ). This letter looks a lot like today's "f," but it was often used in colonial times as the first "s" when two appeared together: Congrefs, progrefs, blefsing. For good examples of this, see if you can find a copy of the handwritten Declaration of Independence.

Capital letters can be especially hard to figure out. L and T often look the same; M and N, I and J, L and S, and U and V all can be hard to differentiate. The best way to tackle any old document is to become familiar with the writer's style. Look through the document for obvious words, noting how the writer made capitals and small letters.

If you are stumped on a letter, make a list of all letters it could possibly be, and then search for them in the document. By process of elimination you may determine what letter you are looking for.

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



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