

NJ AAHGS Newsletter

New Jersey Chapter: Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society

Blacks in the Civil War: The untold story

Lloyd Washington to give lecture on little known facts about African-Americans who fought in the Civil War

Special lecture to be presented at the May 10th NJ AAHGS meeting in Jersey City

AAHGS members, and other interested members of the public are encouraged to attend the next AAHGS meeting to hear a special presentation on "little known facts" about African-Americans who served in the Civil War, or the "War of the Rebellion" as it was referred to at the time.

Lloyd Washington, past president of NJ AAHGS, is an avid researcher of the African-American experience during the Civil War, and he has agreed to share his knowledge with each of us. Lloyd not only has gathered an extensive collection of facts, but he also has gathered books, photos, and artifacts, including civil war firearms replicas and

GENEALOGY TIP

One of the very best proofs of family lineage is a will. The importance of locating one cannot be stressed too strongly.

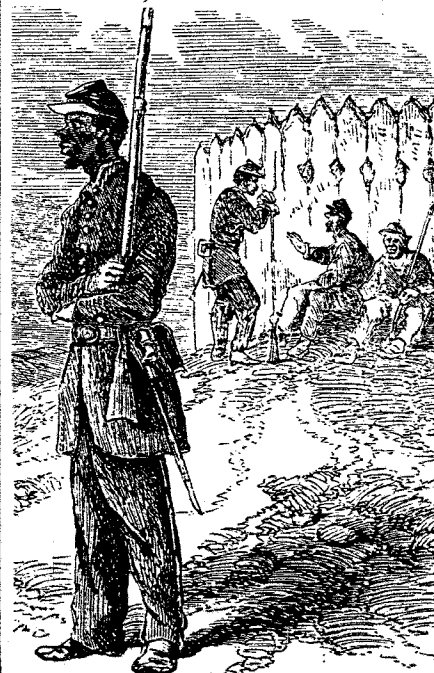


ammunition, which will be on display during the lecture.

African-Americans have served in every war this country fought. Prior to the Civil War, they fought at Bunker Hill and by George Washington's side during the Revolutionary War. They were with Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans. Yet before African-Americans could fight for their own freedom during the Civil War, they first had to fight for the right to join the military.

Frederick Douglass, the lead-

ing African-American civil rights fighter and abolitionist of the 1800s, believed that by fighting for the northern cause the African-American would earn the respect of white Americans, and the freedom that came with it. "With a musket on his shoulders, and bullets in his



pocket, there is no power on

earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States.”

The first authorization to use African-American troops was in the Second Confiscation Act, and the Militia Act of July 17, 1862. But on August 6, 1862, President Lincoln announced that he was still not prepared to accept African-Americans as soldiers. However, some Generals, without official authorization, put black troops in the field. Such was the case of the 1st regiment of South Carolina Volunteers (African Descent), and the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Regiments of the Louisiana Native Guards.

Military expediency, and strong southern armies, forced Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation and a general order which gave the military the authority to recruit free blacks and runaway slaves for combat duty with the northern armies.

Some historians correctly credit the more than 180,000 black troops with ‘turning the tide’ of Civil War towards the Union, and eventual victory. The success of African-American troops - United States Colored troops - as they were called, is well documented. Sixteen African-American soldiers were recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor. Eight sailors were recipients of this highest military honor. Also, thirteen white officers who led black

troops were presented with the medal.

On May 10th, Lloyd Washington will help us to better understand this important era of United States history, and some “little known facts” about the role of African-Americans in that war. Let’s try to be there.

WHAT’S IN THE POPULATION CENSUS OF 1870?

The census records for 1870 are very important to African-American family history researchers - arguably the most important. Prior to the Civil war, African-Americans would only be listed in the census records if they were free.

Free African-Americans would generate many of the same records as any other person if they owned property, went to court, got married, etc. But most African-Americans were enslaved, and were excluded from generating these records.

The first census taken after the Civil War was in 1870. Now, even former slaves could legally marry, buy land, sue, etc., generating these types of official records.

The 1870 census documents one’s name; age; race; occupation; birthplace; month of birth if born within the year; month of marriage if married within the year; value of personal estate, school attendance; literacy; whether deaf, dumb, blind, insane or idiotic, and other statistical information.

Directory of N.J. AAHGS Officers and Newsletter Staff

Lucius A. Bowser	President
Glenn Cunningham	Vice Pres
Bernice Jackson	Secretary
Sandra A. Bolden	Treasurer
Aaron L. Keys	
	Membership chairman
Billy Pruitt	
	Family Re-union Chairman
Amanda Edwards	Queries
Patricia Barrett	Clip file
Nettie Johnson	Photos

Newsletter Editor
Glenn D. Cunningham

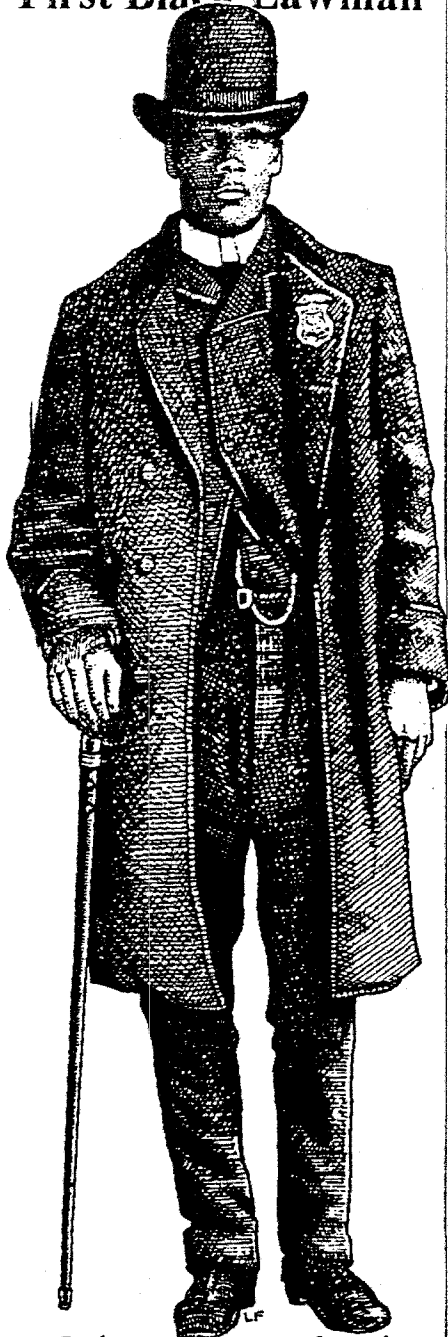
Publication Assistant
Sandra A. Bolden

Anyone wishing to contribute articles or written ideas to the N.J. AAHGS Newsletter, should give same to the editor or publication assistant at the monthly meeting, or mail it to the editor at 126 Cottonwood Street, Jersey City, N.J. 07305.

NJ AAHGS Member’s Letter Gets Response from “Daughters of American Revolution”

A letter written by Mrs. Patricia Barrett, and printed in the NJ AAHGS Newsletter in March, under the title Black History Month In Jeopardy?, was re-printed in the Mar/April 1997 issue of the National AAHGS News, and was responded to by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. See the National AAHGS News, pp. 7-9 for this controversy.

JOSHUA BRYANT Cranford's (NJ) First Black Lawman



Joshua Bryant was elected to the position of "Constable" in the town of Cranford in 1881, becoming the first African-American to be elected to any

post, and the town's first law enforcement officer of African descent. Although the position was part-time, he had the authority of a sworn officer. The fact that he was elected three times, and served for nine years, is indicative of his success.

Bryant was born in Virginia about 1852, the son of Rachel and George Bryant. He was born 13 years before slavery was abolished, but it is not known whether he was born free or slave. Bryant migrated to Cranford in 1873 and took a job as a coachman. He paid his poll tax in 1876, qualifying himself to vote, so he must have been able to read and write by then. On February 26, 1880, at age 27, Bryant married Margaret Taylor at the Baptist Church in Westfield.

During his political career he had his 'ups and downs' with the Republican Party leadership, but that leadership always maintained respect for Bryant's influence with Cranford's African-American community. He became a prominent member of Cranford's First Baptist Church - a beautiful edifice which still stands at 100 High Street, and is 110 years old. Betty Crawley, an active NJ AAHGS member, has attended First Baptist for 10 years. (Thank you Betty Crawley)

The only protection against injustice in man is power - physical, financial and scientific
MARCUS GARVEY

Who was Jim Crow?

The original Jim Crow was comedian Thomas A Rice, known as the father of American minstrels, who around 1830, devised a song and dance whose theme went: "Wheel about, turn about, do just so. Every time I wheel about, I jump Jim Crow." The act was a great success. Rice changed his billing to "Jim Crow" Rice and was a smash hit in London the following year (1836). The expression "Jim Crow" came to symbolize every form of segregation and discrimination imposed upon African-Americans by the white power structure. It gave rise to such terms as "Jim Crow laws" and Jim "Crow schools."

S.C. Governor Apologizes but still wants to keep Confederate Flag



Civil rights activists have protested S.C.'s GOP governor's proclamation naming April "Confederate History

Month. Governor Allen apologized after the uproar but left his proclamation in tact. The cause Allen celebrates sought to perpetuate slavery in America.

Where Are Yesterday's records located today?

Local Historical or University Library

Doctors/Dentists
Employment
Freight Company
Gazateers
Hotels/Inns
Lawyers
Ledgers
Manuscript Collections
Midwives
Military
Monument-makers
Justice of the Peace

Courthouse/Town hall

Ear Marks
Freight Company
Highway
Indentured Servants
Marriage Records
Mortgages
Police Records

Living Descendants

Family Oral History
Family Records
Family Bibles
Memorial Cards

National Archives

America Indians
Census records
Military Records
Confederate records
Immigration Records

President's Message

It is encouraging to see that in spite of the difficulty in raising funds for museums and other cultural events, that the City of Detroit has managed to build the largest museum dedicated to African-American history and culture in America.

There are important, yet chilling, displays at the \$38 million facility. For instance, the exhibition, as it relates to slavery and the middle passage, is graphic and hard-hitting.

According to a New York times article, "The museum reflects a new notion of museum design that has gained wide acceptance over the past two decades." For instance, it tries to tell the story of the African-American experience with an exhibit that includes a life-size model of a slave ship on which is engraved the names of many of the slave ships that transported human chattel to America. The museum also displays life-size replicas of captured bondsmen.

Nearer to home, our own African-American Historical Society-Museum, directed by NJ AAHGS member Ted Brunson, continues its exhibit, *Crossing the River: African-American Burial and Funeral Customs*, through May 30, 1997. The first part of the exhibit deals with cultural retention and is narrated by art

historian Rosalind Jeffries. The second part highlights some of the slave burial sites in New Jersey, as researched by AAHGS member Arnold Brown.

In closing, I'd like to encourage all members who have not yet paid dues, to do so. Also, all members are urged to participate, at least by their attendance, in the upcoming NJ AAHGS Chapter family history workshop, which will take place on May 24th, in East orange. See the details in this newsletter.

African Textiles at Tenafly Museum

An exhibit on African Textiles opened recently at the African Art Museum of the African Missions Fathers, in Tenafly, New Jersey. The exhibit is entitled "African textiles As Symbols of Power and Prestige."

The museum is open daily from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Admission is free, but group tours should be made by appointment. For more information about the exhibit and other museum events for 1997, call Robert Koenig, museum director, at 201-894-8611.

Genealogy Tip

For very large listings of genealogical and local history books, along with where they may be purchased, check Genealogical and Local History Books in Print, by N. Schreiner-Yantis.

Reading Old handwriting can be Challenging

Handwriting- like every other art, has had its periods of growth and decay. Various styles of handwriting have come and gone, but fortunately for us researchers, the end product - manuscripts - are still with us, although they are often buried in libraries and archives.

It has only been in recent generations that the formal spelling of words has become standardized. Previously, words varied in their spelling within documents. Sometimes the writer spelled the same word differently in the same letter or document. Generally spelling was based on the way a word sounded to the writer. (That's why so many of the same surnames are spelled differently).

In the past there have been two divisions of writings - formal and private. The first type, by educated persons, and the latter by laymen. While the formal division varied only slightly, the writing of the laymen varied greatly. This is one reason 'old' writing is so difficult to read.

The letter "S" is the most variable and troublesome letter in manuscript (handwriting). Examples of this letter in manuscript is provided for you here. Take a look. It might convince you to review some of your earlier research. Good luck.

Roop = ROSS	Rofs = ROSS
Proper = PROSSER	Sorrow = SORROWS
Baput = BASSET	Bap = BASS
croop = CROSS	Mops = MOSS
Papey = PASSEY	Douglas = DOUGLASS
proofer = PRODUSED	
Chopon = CHOSEN	Chester = CHESTER
Toft = TEST	Besides = BESIDES
Sallery = SALLEREY	Ensign = ENSIGN
Claripa = CLARISSA	Cassidy = CASSIDY
Susana = SUSANNA	August = AUGUST
Map = MASSACHUSETTS	Missouri = MISSOURI
Mississippi = MISSISSIPPI	Ch = CHARLES
Tennessee = TENNESSEE	



Abraham-Black Seminole

A runaway slave, who escaped to Florida, where he became a valued interpreter and leader among the Seminoles. He played a key role in the 2nd Seminole War (ca. 1852), which was triggered by the slave-catchers stealing blacks who were living among the Seminoles.

Discussions and Announcements at the Last Meeting

Lisa Crawley announced that **Glenn Cunningham** would be the featured speaker at the First Baptist Church of Cranford's Pan Cake Breakfast on Saturday, April 25, 1997. The topic of his lecture will be **African-American History in the U.S. Marshals Service.**

Resident Lucius Bowser polled the membership about their interest in spending a few hours at the National Archives in New York City on May 13th. Several members indicated that they would like to go. Please contact Lucius if you want to add your name to the list.

Lloyd Washington spoke to the members about the fascinating ways in which computers can be used for genealogical research.

President **Bowser** asked **Arnold Brown** to pass information on to the membership about Afro-Genia, a computer inter-net program.

Billy Pruitt initiated a lively discussion about migration pattern of African Americans. **Lloyd** said it is important to read local histories because they provide a lot of information

about migration. **Glenn** suggested books about the social dynamics can be useful in determining migration pattern. **Arnold** informed us that **Giles Wright** is conducting an on-going research project about Blacks in New Jersey - his research might be helpful. **Lisa** said that some people wanted new identities, moved north and changed names. Other members suggested migration due to search for jobs, "passing" for white in north, and a search for a better education.

Among our visitors were **Shashonda Cunningham** - no relation to **Glenn** (that we know of), and **Ossie Edmonds** from East orange.

AAHGS member **Glenn Cunningham** spoke at the Jersey City Public Library's "Local History Day" program on April 14th. His subject was "Hidden Footprints: African-Americans in Jersey City." His honorarium was donated to the Museum.

NJ AAHGS to sponsor Family Tree Workshop

A free Family History Tree research workshop is being planned for May 24, 1997, at

East orange Public Library, 21 So. Arlington Avenue, beginning at 12:30 P.M. and ending at 4:00 P.M. **Lloyd Washington** has accepted the responsibility to organize the program. All speakers will be NJ AAHGS members, including **Lloyd**, **Lucius Bowser**, **Elizabeth Johnson** and **Glenn Cunningham**. **Sandra Bolden** will give introductory comments and serve as Mistress of Ceremony.

Lloyd will have handouts available at the May meeting. All members are asked to help distribute the flyers and "talk up" the event. And., of course, it is very important that our membership attempt to be in attendance at this worthy program.

Refreshments will be served. Hope to see you all there.

Report of membership Chairman Keys

Aaron Keys submitted the following report at the April meeting:

Members listed on roll:	58
Members paying dues since last report	40
Members still delinquent in 1997 dues.	18

“Personality” Profile

Featuring former President Elizabeth Peale Johnson

Mrs. Elizabeth “Betty” Johnson has been a member of N.J. AAHGS since its inception. Not only is she a founding member, but she was the organizations first President, and served for a total of four years.

Betty has also been active in several other historical and genealogical groups, including the New Jersey Historical Society and that group’s Genealogy Club. She is a member of the National Genealogical Society and has completed the Society’s training course, American Genealogy: The Basic Course. She is also involved in Sussex County historical and civic organizations, including the League of Women Voters.

Betty published our organizations first newsletter, and only recently gave up that task. She is an avid genealogist, and is a frequent speaker at family history programs.

Betty has a Bachelors Degree from Rutgers University, and completed her Masters degree at New York University.

She was married for many years to the late Rawley Johnson, who just recently passed away. Now retired Elizabeth Peale Johnson continues to make her mark in genealogy, history and community activities.

Born in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, Betty is researching Henry County Alabama, and Northampton County, North Carolina.

Computers and Genealogy

There are many resources for budding genealogists, both off and on line. Many programs such as Incline Software’s Ancestral Quest can organize information about family members and create family trees with photos and sound cards. Some programs, such as Broderbund’s Family Tree maker Deluxe Edition, even come with research tools. Family Tree Maker comes with a CD Rom that includes a family finder index., which lets you search for family members, and suggests other sources if it can’t find what you are looking for.

Several web sites also offer family history resources. The national Genealogy Society offers beginners a course in the basics of genealogy, as well as links to bulletin boards and fee-based research. Everton’s Genealogical Helper is another site that includes a tutorial and links to fee-based databases.

Black Land Loss Summit Planned In North Carolina

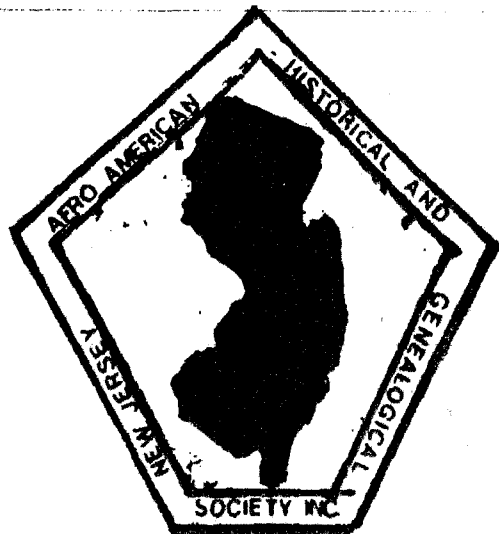
AAHGS member M.L. Banks sent the following information to the attention of the editor. He began a short note with the statement, “We’re losing ground.

(Extracted from the New York Amsterdam News, 3-8-97)

Historic Tillery, N.C., and Franklinton Center at Bricks, N.C. were the sites of the first Southwide Black Land Loss Summit in March. The goals of the conference, according to the planning committee, was “to stop the trend of African American land loss and the disappearance of family farms; establish a regional network in support of the sustainable economic development of rural resources; communicate the rural voice of Americans effectively across all cultural, racial and geographic boundaries; serve as a clearing house to disseminate ideas and alternatives in response to poverty and injustice in North Carolina and the world.”

Besides the decline of African-American family farmers and landowners, many rural southern families have endured environmental degradation, health risks, and loss of economic vitality as part of a nationwide trend of environmental racism.

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



**New Jersey Chapter
Afro American Historical
and Genealogical Society, Inc.**
1841 Kennedy Boulevard, 2nd Floor
Jersey City, New Jersey 07305

TO: