

New Jersey Chapter AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2, Number 7

September 1990

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

THE NEW JERSEY CHAPTER AAHGS
will meet

Saturday, September 8, 1990

at 12:00 Noon
at the

Afro-American Historical
Society Museum
1841 Kennedy Boulevard
Jersey City, N.J.

AGENDA

1. Plans for Family History
Exhibit and Genealogy
Workshop - 1st Annual
Meeting, NJAAHGS.
2. Report of Business Session
held July 14, 1990, at the
home of Ellen Thorne Morris.

PROGRAM;

**Speaker - MR. ROMAN FOSTER,
author - writer -producer
of the recently televised
documentary, DIGGERS, will
discuss the unsung story of
black participation in the
construction of the Panama
Canal.

PLEASE INVITE YOUR FAMILY AND
FRIENDS TO ATTEND THIS INTER-
ESTING PROGRAM. EVERYONE WEL-
COME!

NOTE:-----Bring a sandwich
and fruit or dessert. We will
provide beverages.

--Thanks to member Carlos R. Edwards
for extending an invitation to
Mr. Foster to speak to our organi-
zation--

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!

Saturday, October 13, 1990
9 a.m.

FIRST ANNUAL MEETING,
GENEALOGY WORKSHOP,
FAMILY HISTORY EXHIBIT,

and

TOUR OF AFRO-AMERICAN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MUSEUM

Sponsored By
the

NEW JERSEY CHAPTER AAHGS

Everyone Welcome - FREE!

Please bring Bag Lunch -Dessert
and beverages will be provided.

FREE

WELCOME - NEW MEMBER

Lamarr Robinson
150 Van Nostrand Avenue
Jersey City, N.J. 07305

OFFICIAL REOPENING

Sunday, October 14, 1990, the
newly decorated Afro-American
Historical Society Museum will
have its official reopening
reception. Volunteers are
needed to help with this program.
Please contact Mr. Theodore Brunson,
Museum Director, and volunteer
your services -(201) 547-5262.
Let's help to make this a joyous
occasion.

JULY 14th MEETING OF NJAAHGS AT
THE HOME OF ELLEN THORNE MORRIS
IN ALLENHURST, NEW JERSEY

The meeting hosted July 14, 1990, by our Monmouth County members at the home of Ellen Thorne Morris was an informative and delightful experience. We learned about Isaac Richardson and his wife, Elizabeth Reevy, of Monmouth County, and their children through their descendants, Carol Nicholas of Neptune, N.J. and Teddi Ashby of Philadelphia, Pa. and followed the presentation visually on a family tree.

We were also happy to meet and network with a distinguished group of Monmouth County guests as we feasted on a delicious buffet. A BIG THANK YOU TO ELLEN AND HER FAMILY, AND TO BERTHA HEATH, ANNA DURHAM, AMANDA EDWARDS AND LENORA MC KAY for their wonderful hospitality!

IN ADDITION TO ALL OF THE ABOVE, we had the pleasure of viewing the extensive historical and genealogical book collection which Ellen has amassed over the years.

We were disappointed that AAHGS President, Sylvia Cooke Martin, was unable to attend due to illness.

NOTE: In the July NJAAHGS Newsletter we failed to mention that the Richardson-Reevy family is of predominantly Indian heritage. This fact was brought out in Carol's and Teddi's presentation.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Lenora W. McKay, a member of NJAAHGS, has offered to coordinate a scrapbook collection of miscellaneous articles of interest concerning Afro-American history and genealogy. Some of us gather such material and put it aside (and perhaps cannot locate it when needed). (Continued - Next Column)

FOR YOUR INFORMATION (Continued)

Send this information to Lenora for future reference. She will keep us advised of these contributions to our archives:

Mrs. Lenora W. McKay
18 Dale Place
Neptune, N.J. 07753

Lenora is also the author of Mama and Papa, Vol. II, The Blacks of Monmouth County (1984), a sequel to The Blacks of Monmouth County.

NJAAHGS FAMILY HISTORY EXHIBIT-
OCTOBER 13, 1990

Glenn D. Cunningham, Program Chairman, and Program Committee Member, Lloyd E. Washington, are requesting each NJAAHGS member to prepare a family history poster for the Annual Meeting, Family History Exhibit, Genealogy Workshop and Museum Tour on October 13, 1990, at the Afro-American Historical Society Museum, 1841 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, N.J.

Poster backgrounds can be a map of the area in which your ancestors lived, a U. S. map showing a migration route, a plain posterboard, or any other creative means of presentation. Family photos and copies of research documents can be affixed to the posters. Any narrative should be limited to brief descriptive information. Posters should reflect pictorial histories of your families. The October newsletter will give specific details concerning when to deliver your posters to the Museum prior to October 13th.

Call Glenn (201) 433-3487 (before 11 am) or Lloyd (201) 763-4949 if you need further information. Note:- Poster size should be approximately 24" x 30".

Our goal is to encourage no less than ten members to prepare a Family History Poster for

LOOKING AHEAD - NJAAHGS MEETINGS:
November 10 - Research Techniques
and Updates by NJAAHGS members -
a "Sharing" Session.

December 8 --Holiday Meeting -
Festivities with a Genealogical
Theme.

DID YOU KNOW?
(Compiled by Lloyd E. Washington)

The largest Caribbean island is Cuba?

The largest of the English speaking
islands is Jamaica?

Major Revolts in the 18th Century
by Enslaved Africans?

1733 St. John	1763 Suriname
1734 Jamaica	1765 Jamaica
1737 Guadeloupe	1769 Jamaica
1746 Jamaica	1772 Suriname
1752 Martinique	1776 Jamaica
1760 Jamaica	1776 Montserrat
1761 Nevis	1795 Grenada
1763 Suriname	1791 Haiti

(Above published by the Carver
Federal Savings Bank -Offices in
Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens &
Nassau Counties, New York - cap-
tioned Footnotes in History.)

DIRECTORY, NJAAHGS OFFICERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

Elizabeth Peale Johnson, Pres.	(201)875-4802
Theodore Brunson, V. Pres.	(201)547-5262
Janice Jenkins, Secy.	(201)451-4940
Odell Washington, Treas. & Finance Chairperson	(201)763-4949
Glenn D. Cunningham, Program Chairman	(201)433-3487
Lucius A. Bowser, Membership Chrmn and Publicity Chr	(201)763-5892
Arnold E. Brown, By-Laws Chairman	(201)567-4628
Lloyd E. Washington, Liaison - NY and NJ AAHGS Chapters	(201)763-4949
Theresa L. Thomas, Coordinator, Assistance to New Genealogists	(201)460-4355

Kindly forward all news by the 15th of the month to:
Elizabeth Peale Johnson (201) 875-4802
R.D. 1, Box 638
Sussex, N.J. 07461

A Brochure entitled "25 Hardly Known Facts
About Achievers of African-American/
Afro-American/Caribbean Descent is avail-
able from the Office of Dean H. B. Matthews,
Box 430, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg,
Pa. 17325.

PRUITT FAMILY HISTORY DISPLAY

An announcement was made at our July 14th
meeting that Billy Pruitt would be dis-
playing a Pruitt family history exhibit
at his home in Jersey City on August 4-5,
1990. Billy has done extensive family
research and collected numerous family
photographs. He is also the incorporator
of Pruitt Family Reunion, Inc. and has
traced seven generations of Pruitt
descendants from "Grandpa Bill" of
Due West, South Carolina, dating from
1821 to the present time. The 1990
Pruitt Family Reunion is being held August 31
to September 2 in Atlanta, Georgia.

DID YOU SEE the recent special issue of
American Visions Magazine (1990) which
lists important black historic sites
in the U.S.? This is a "must" for African-
American researchers. Write to American
Visions, P.O. Box 55219, Boulder, Colorado
80322-3129.

TOUR OF BLACK HISTORIC SITES
IN JERSEY CITY

On Saturday, June 30, 1990, Lloyd and Odell Washington, together with Betty Johnson, participated in a bus tour of selected African-American historic sites in Jersey City, led by the Director of the Afro-American Historical Society Museum, Theodore Brunson. The day was particularly interesting to Odell who grew up in Jersey City and reminisced as we passed old familiar landmarks.

Part II of the Tour will be given on Saturday, October 27, 1990, by Mr. Brunson, beginning at 9:15 am at the Museum, 1841 Kennedy Blvd., Jersey City, N.J. Everyone welcome. Cost of \$15.00 includes lunch. For information and reservations, contact the Museum at (201) 547-5262. These tours are part of a project developed by the African/Afro-American Studies Program of Jersey City State College and the Afro-American Historical Society Museum under a grant from the New Jersey Committee for the Humanities, and the State Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Kay Amory-Moshier, one of our newest members, invites us to a program sponsored by the Peekskill Museum in celebration of The First Annual Peekskill Patriot's Day:-

- (1) Friday, September 21, 1990,
Gala Banquet, at the Bear Mountain Lodge. Keynote Speaker,-
Maurice Barboza, Pres./Founder of Patriots Foundation, Wash., D. C.
Cocktail Hour 7 p.m., Dinner 8 p.m.
\$50.00 per Person; \$45.00 Per Member.
For reservations contact Kay at (914) 737-2606.
- (2) Saturday, September 22, 1990 -12:30 pm
Rededicating: "America's Most Famous Cannon" Revolutionary War - 1775-1783.
At the Peekskill Museum, 124 Union Ave., Peekskill, N.Y. FREE ADMISSION

CONDOLENCES

To NJAAHGS Member, Janie E. Stout of Asbury Park, N.J. in the loss of her Mother on 15 June 1990.

AAHGS CHAPTER NEWS

The INDIANA CHAPTER, under the Presidency of Coy D. Robbins, held its first Annual Meeting on Saturday, June 23, 1990, at 1:30 p.m. in Indianapolis. The theme was "Digging for Black Family Roots in Indiana." The program included a brief history of Indiana AAHGS by the President, a slide presentation on "Research Facilities at Indiana Historical Society" by Wilma L. Dulin, IHS Archivist, and Committee reports.
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE INDIANA CHAPTER AND BEST WISHES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD FROM YOUR FRIENDS IN NEW JERSEY!

Agnes Kane Callum, President of the BALTIMORE CHAPTER, is the founder and editor of Flowers of the Forest, a Black Genealogical Magazine. It carries articles containing information on vital records, census records, slave records, military records, and other material of interest to persons involved in genealogical research. \$5.00 per copy plus \$1.00 for postage and handling. Order from
Agnes Kane Callum
822 Bonaparte Ave.
Baltimore, Md. 21218.

Also inquire about her most recently published book: Colored Volunteers of Maryland, Civil War 7th Regiment, United States Colored Troops, 1863-1866 (1990). Write to her at the above address concerning availability.

The CENTRAL MARYLAND CHAPTER is a distributor of the 1990 Blackfax Calendar. Although only a few months remain in 1990, this calendar is valuable for the important historical facts it contains about African-Americans each day of the year. Contact Meach Buckner (301) 730-3172 concerning availability.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION - September 28-30-African-American Heritage Tour of Boston by Schomburg Corp. Contact Dr. Michael Webb week-days (212) 678-3433 re: availability of reservations. Cost \$225.00.

NJAAHGS Members who attended the February 10, 1990, meeting will remember that Ellen Thorne Morris introduced her guest, Eileen Moon, reporter for the Asbury Park Press. Ms. Moon interviewed a number of our members, and her article subsequently appeared on February 27, 1990, in the Asbury Park Press. We are including copy of it in this Newsletter for the benefit of those who live outside of the Asbury Park area. Thanks to Anna Durham for supplying this copy.

Asbury Park Press/Tuesday, February 27, 1990

Looking for their family roots

By **EILEEN MOON**
Press Correspondent

When author Alex Haley published his book "Roots" in 1976, many Americans heard for the first time the voices of the African men, women and children whose experiences received scant mention in history books.

But to black Americans, the voices of Haley's ancestors were familiar, and the tales they told mirrored those they had heard from their own parents and grandparents.

Anna Durham, of Middletown Township, had a great-grandfather in Pennsylvania who served in the Union Army during the Civil War as a member of the U.S. Colored Troops.

Lenora McKay, of Neptune, who is in her 70s, learned about slavery from an aunt who was born a slave and lived into her 90s in the 1940s.

Amanda Edwards, of Middletown, discovered that an ancestor of hers



DAVID GAMBLE/Asbury Park Press

Anna Durham (left) and Amanda Edwards at work in library.

came to Monmouth County as a free black woman in the early 1800s to teach newly arrived slaves the English language.

The three women are members of the New Jersey chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, a national organization formed in the late 1970s to encourage research into black family history.

Members of the New Jersey chapter, which formed last October, meet monthly at the Greenville Public Library in Jersey City to share their re-

search and build genealogical skills through field trips, speakers and films.

While members say they always had an interest in their family histories, Haley's book encouraged them to pursue their own family pasts despite the obstacles that the experience of slavery created.

"It kind of inspired you," says Mrs. McKay. "Before 'Roots,' you felt that there was no way you could trace your ancestry from a slave

See **ROOTS**, page B11

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Looking for Their Roots by Eileen Moon, Asbury Park Press, Tuesday, February 27, 1990.

Roots

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background."

Mrs. McKay has had a head start on her own genealogical research because her father collected black historical data. In the mid-1970s, she was asked to compile a local black history book in conjunction with the nation's Bicentennial celebration. Her research for that led her to churches, cemeteries and libraries throughout Monmouth County. The book, "The Blacks of Monmouth County," was the first local black history book published.

Society member and Allenhurst genealogist Ellen Morris contacted Mrs. McKay for help when she began researching her pamphlet "By the Wayside: Indian and Black Family History in Monmouth County, New Jersey."

Mrs. Morris, then a part-time librarian at Brookdale Community College, Middletown Township, noticed in her research that while blacks, both slave and free, were in Monmouth County as early as the 1600s, their presence had been largely overlooked in local history books.

Collecting genealogical data on early black families was complicated by the fact that many early records grouped native Americans and blacks under the general category of "people of color" and marriages among blacks, Indians and Europeans were common, which contributed to discrepancies in the classifications of families from generation to generation.

Using as her starting point the oral traditions and family documents of the Berry clan of Tinton Falls, Mrs. Morris was able to build a genealogical resource for use by other researchers.

She shared her techniques and discoveries with other society members at their February meeting. "My greatest delight is to find a record sitting on a shelf that needs to be indexed and published," Mrs. Morris says.

"Those are the kind of people who provide the plums for the genealogist," says society member Glenn Cunningham. "Without them, this kind of research would be impossible."

Cunningham is descended from a wealthy white planter in North Carolina and a slave whose name appears, along with her mother's, on plantation documents that included a list of slaves and their market values.

The documents supported the family legend about the slave Mary, who had to choose between being sold with her husband or being sold with her daughter. She chose to be sold with her daughter, Sylvia, who became housekeeper to the plantation owner and mother of his black sons.

Cunningham's father told him that he could recall his own father telling how the white Cunningham sons and the black Cunningham sons called each other "brother."

Chapter president Elizabeth Johnson, of Sussex, also found the names of her ancestors on a slave document. Her great-grandparents were married as slaves in North Carolina.

"It's a feeling you can't describe to read back and obtain information like this," she says. "It's indescribable."

To do it, researchers sift through family papers, visit courthouses and rummage in archives.

Mrs. Durham, who is tracing her own and her husband's family history, clips obituaries when she recognizes a family name so that she can contact the family in future searches for common ancestors.

"No matter where you go, you always turn up something," says Mrs. Durham. To date, she has traced her family to the 1860s and hopes to uncover several more generations before she writes her own family's "Roots."

Mrs. Durham has discovered several aunts and cousins that her family hadn't known existed.

Her research helped her create keepsake booklets tracing each branch of her family tree for distribution at her ever-expanding family reunions.

Mrs. Edwards recalls listening to tales her mother told so often that she felt as if she lived them. But when her mother died in 1987, she found a number of pictures of people that she knew were relatives but couldn't name.

Starting with the family stories, Mrs. Edwards traced her family history in Monmouth County all the way back to her great-grandfather's grave in a long-forgotten county cemetery.

"If my grandfather was born in 1820, there's a possibility that there may have been two generations here before him and possibly there's a direct landing from Africa because one of the ports of entry (for slaves) was Perth Amboy."

Society members invite anyone interested in Afro-American genealogy to contact membership chairman Lucius Bowser, 758 Stirling Drive E., South Orange, N.J. 07079-2425, for meeting information.