

African-American Genealogical Society - Cleveland, Ohio

NEWSLETTER



Fresh year, fresh start:

In-person
AAGS monthly meetings will resume

NEW:
Beginning this year, sessions will be **“Hybrid”** style--

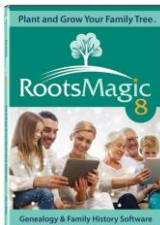
Participants will be able to attend **in the Library** and **by Zoom** (a link will be sent)

January 28 Meeting

Robyn Smith will present “Mining the Census: Are You Finding the Details?”

&

demonstrate how to use **RootsMagic** to organize records



Participants:
Bring your own laptop with RootsMagic installed to follow along.

Future Meetings:

There will be increased hands-on involvement throughout the year.

Members are encouraged to identify their individual research challenges (and submit in advance of meetings) so that others can assist with their expertise.

AAGS MEETINGS

- Held on **4th Saturday** (exc. December) in hybrid format
(In-person, along with Zoom)
Shaker Heights Library
16500 Van Aken Blvd.
Shaker Hts., OH 44120
- 10:00-10:15 a.m. – socialization
10:15-10:30 a.m. – info/announcements
10:30 a.m. – presentations/discussions



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Per calendar year
Fees due by Jan. 31st

Students (to age 21) \$15 • Individual \$30
Couple \$40 • Family \$45 • Organization \$50

NEWSLETTER

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(March, June, September, December)

Editor reserves the right to edit items submitted for publication.
Permission is required to re-publish articles.

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*To
Discover
Your
Ancestors
Is to
Discover
a Part
of You!*

GENEALOGY NEWS

- **National Archives redesigned its catalog** - archives.gov/research/catalog/ngc-preview
- Article from **Eastman’s Online Genealogy Newsletter** discusses **Incomplete Birth Certificates** - <https://www.eogn.com/page-18080/10770722>
- **Cuyahoga County, Ohio property records dating to 1810 are available online** - Cuyahoga.oh.publicsearch.us – See also: cleveland.com/news/2022/11/cuyahoga-county-property-records-dating-to-1810-accessible-through-new-online-database.html
- **PBS “Finding Your Roots”** is looking for regular people to feature in its 10th season - nj.com/entertainment/2022/12/celebrity-genealogy-show-finding-your-roots-wants-your-family-mysteries.html (also includes 2023 ‘season nine’ guest list)
- Over 50 years of **Digitized African-American Funeral Programs from Evans County, Georgia**, are now available for free online - dlg.usg.edu/collection/eccca_aafp-ec
- Cleveland District Round Table now expanded to **North East Ohio Genealogy Round Table** - neogrt.org/
- On January 1, **copyrighted works from 1927 entered the public domain** under U.S. copyright law; free for all to copy, share and build upon - web.law.duke.edu/cspd/publicdomainday/2023/

AAGS Officers

Interim President..... Joseph Houser, Sr.
1st Vice President..... Deborah Abbott
2nd Vice President..... Joseph Houser, Sr.

Treasurer..... Jonathan Stith
Corresponding Sec’y... Maxine Hairston
Financial Secretary..... Gayle Ector

(Source credit for the following article: “Free Family History ‘Stuff’ Keep or Toss Checklist,” by Denise May Levenick. Copyright Yankee Publishing, Inc. URL: <https://familytreemagazine.com/freebie/family-history-stuff-keep-or-toss-checklist/> posted 2022)

Family History “Stuff” Keep or Toss Checklist

by Denise May Levenick

As you sort through an inherited family archive of papers, photos, genealogy records, albums, newspaper clippings, magazines and other assorted “stuff,” you might be tempted to either keep everything or throw everything out. Resist both of these urges. Instead, look at each item and [use] our checklist to help you quickly decide what to save and what to trash (shred any records with sensitive information).

Keep:

- vital records
- graduation, baby, marriage invitations and announcements
- educational records—school report cards, school photos
- military records—discharge papers, letters, awards
- Christmas cards and envelopes
- Christmas card list
- recipes, handwritten favorites
- address books
- bank passbooks
- income tax returns
- journals, diaries, ledgers
- scrapbooks, autograph and photo albums
- correspondence
- employment records—pay stubs, contracts, résumés (keep enough to verify employment and salary)
- telephone books
- city and club directories and rosters
- genealogy and family history charts, narratives, family trees

Skim, then toss:

- church and club newsletters (skim first for family news and consider saving a representative copy)
- cancelled checks, check registers (skim first for purchases of family heirlooms or details on relatives’ cost of living)
- news clippings (skim for news of family or friends)
- travel itineraries and brochures (skim for information on trips or places where relatives might live)
- old calendars (skim for anniversaries and dates of birth)
- receipts (skim for purchases of heirlooms and other important items such as automobiles)
- medical bills and records (extract genealogical information before throwing away)

Toss:

- random newspaper and magazine clippings
- bank statements
- old insurance policies (check first whether they’re still in effect)
- travel brochures

No

Yes

Maybe



CCC Camps (Civilian Conservation Corps)

By author, lecturer Timothy Pinnick

African American genealogical research is a long and arduous journey. Despite the appearance of relative ease portrayed on popular genealogy programs, the search for our ancestors takes us down paths that are unforeseen and unexpected. So, a key question is how do you adequately plan for situations that are unpredictable? The answer, in part, is building what I call an “African American research toolbox” of resources. We all do this to a degree but what is crucial is that researchers become more deliberate and organized with their toolbox creation. Assemble and categorize your toolbox so that when your research quest requires a certain “tool” you can grab it and go to work on the challenge in front of you.

Among the tools in our toolbox should be several for researching and learning about ancestors who may have served in the Civilian Conservation Corps, commonly referred to as the CCC. The CCC *“was a voluntary government work relief program that ran from 1933 to 1942 in the United States for unemployed, unmarried men ages 18–25 and eventually expanded to ages 17–28.”* I took this quote from (gulp) the Wikipedia website. I hope that everyone is no longer clinging to the old belief that it is not a reliable place for information. This particular entry has more than 60 references, many “further reading” suggestions, about a dozen external links and more. I suggest it as the starting point for those unfamiliar with the CCC program and as a bookmark on everyone’s browser: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian_Conservation_Corps

An important resource is the Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy site at <https://ccclegacy.org/>. It is full of a wide array of information, including a listing of CCC camps by state. It is a comprehensive list but not a definitive one. Throughout the list you will see a “-C” and possibly a “-VC,” indicating the camp is African American. There were camps for youth and World War I veterans.

There are numerous “tools” for investigating CCC activities. This article will only touch on a few.

- **Arguably, the most valuable resource available is the large trove of camp newspapers.** Estimates are that 60 to 70 percent of the camps had a paper and well over 5,000 camp papers were published. In addition to the acquisition of useful information on enrollees, the names of various local community members and organizations frequently appear. For example, in the November 15, 1935 edition of the *Pine Needle*, CCC companies in the New Lisbon, New Jersey area report their participation in a social event with the Bethel AME church in Moorestown where they mention both the pastor and female Sunday school superintendent.

The **repository for the camp newspapers** is the Center for Research Libraries. Simple access to the collection content listing, which includes the ability to select “colored,” is here:

<http://catalog-old.crl.edu/search~S3> This catalog is marked for deactivation.

The **recommended site for ease of access** is The Ancestor Hunt, created and maintained by Ken Marks:

https://theancestorhunt.com/blog/historical-civilian-conservation-corps-ccc-newspapers-online/#google_vignette

For an outstanding accounting of CCC newspapers, society members should flex their interlibrary loan muscle and obtain *The CCC Chronicles: Camp Newspapers of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942* by Alfred Emile Cornebise. You will find to your delight that chapter eight is specific to the African American experience.

- **African American newspapers are another valuable toolbox asset for CCC research.** These papers magnified African American activities. Through standalone stories and community social columns, news related to the many camps were captured and preserved. A case in point can be seen in the *Philadelphia Tribune* from February 29, 1940. The article "CCC Holds Elimination Bouts For Corps Finals At Shore" reported the results of numerous boxing matches. Among those defeated was Edsel McLeon of Company 1269, Port Republic, New Jersey. A short amount of work on Ancestry.com unearthed a World War II draft card for him dated October of 1940 indicating that he was still in the employ of the federal government at a camp in the Garden State.

As you grow your toolbox with CCC tools of the trade, a few words of advice. Camps were created and disbanded throughout the program's existence. Men were transferred to other camps and sometimes the camps changed locations. Also be aware of the fact that sometimes camp papers changed names. **Share your success stories with AAGS membership and contact me if you have questions at pinnick.aabooks@gmail.com.**

Local Newspapers/Columns

CAMP MUSKINGUM'S BIG FIVE



Camp Muskingum's Big Five
 of Co. 1221, CCC located in
 Massville League their basket-
 ball season to a successful
 close by winning the Massville
 most basketball tournament
 after emerging from the trials
 as a dark horse.
 Participating in the Exhila-

tional Correlation Tourney at
 Newark, Ohio the team con-
 sidered its winning ways by elim-
 inating a win over Mansfield
 ing not a win over Mansfield
 in the final.
 Featured above the boys are
 (reading left to right): first
 row, James Quincey, Herman
 Wark, Richard Peesley, Ed-
 ward T. Baker, second, second
 row, Edward T. Baker, camp
 educational advisor, Harold
 Franklin, Ed Willis, Raymond
 Bosley, and Coach Debbis
 Royson. Missing from the pic-
 ture are Jacobus Patterson, Sol-
 bert Jones and Paul Taylor.

Call n Post - April 5, 1941

[World War II draft card for Edsel McLeon indicating employer as CCC, in the National Archives Collection]

SERIAL NUMBER 3111	1. NAME (Print) EDSEL McAFEE McLEON	ORDER 6
2. ADDRESS (Print) 576 BRAMHALL AVE	JERSEY CITY HUDSON	
3. TELEPHONE	4. AGE IN YEARS 21	5. PLACE OF BIRTH FAIRFELLSVILLE
6. DATE OF BIRTH AUG 4 1919	7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS MRS ALICE MARY McLEON	8. RELATIONSHIP MOTHER
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON 576 BRAMHALL AVE	JERSEY CITY HUDSON	
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME CCC	11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS CAMP FWS-V	
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.		
REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. SOUTH	Edsel M	

HONORABLE
Certificate of Discharge
 from
Civilian Conservation Corps

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:
 THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT * Pierson Barnett McFarland /CC-101974
 2065th COMPANY C. O. C.
 CAMP ALEDO, ILLINOIS MEMBER OF THE
 CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS, WHO WAS ENROLLED July 2, 1936
 AT
 ALEDO, ILLINOIS
 IS HEREBY DISCHARGED THEREFROM, BY REASON
 OF ** EXPIRATION OF TERM OF ENROLLMENT FOR CONVENIENCE OF U. S.

SAID Pierson Barnett McFarland WAS BORN IN Pine River
 IN THE STATE OF Minnesota WHEN ENROLLED HE WAS 18 YEARS
 OF AGE AND BY OCCUPATION A TRUCK FARM HE HAD Brown EYES,
 Black HAIR, Dark Brown COMPLEXION, AND WAS Five FEET
 Three INCHES IN HEIGHT. HIS COLOR WAS colored
 GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL THIS Thirty First DAY
 OF March ALEDO, ILLINOIS ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND Thirty Seven

G. W. HARRY
 CHIEF ENGINEER
 CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS
 2065th Co., CCC

C. C. Form No. 2
 (April, 1935)

*Not valid to "John J. Doe"
 **Not valid for discharge

[Discharge document discovered in the personal estate of (cousin) Pierson McFarland]

AAGS ACTIVITIES

Supporting Genealogy In-House & In the Community



“A Primer on Law and African American Genealogy”

LaBrenda Garrett-Nelson

AAGS Meeting - September 24

The law. Not necessarily front of mind for a researcher. However, LaBrenda showed why it should be held to the fore, particularly when looking for records over a hundred years ago. Since it's difficult to find direct evidence for enslaved African Americans, she laid out the importance of knowing how U.S. slave states were established and how laws for Blacks were set up and changed over the years.

She served up full-on explanations dealing with common laws (which focused on property rights) and civil laws (which focused on personal rights and encompassed the enslaved), offering examples of each.

Early Black Codes, emancipation legislature, public safety laws creating bans on manumissions, apprenticeship policies, Freedmen's Bureau marriage rules...she covered them all, and thoroughly. She also referenced multiple resources that were included in her handout.



“Following a South Carolina Criminal Case!”

Dr. Deborah Abbott

AAGS Meeting - October 22

When it comes to investigating family history, there's nothing like following the trail of a notorious tale.

Deborah described the approach she took to prove, disprove, clarify, and/or solve the oral history story related to the incarceration of her grandfather's nephew.

Using genealogy basics, collateral genealogy, social history and critical thinking, she was able to determine what actually occurred, confirming and expounding on the oral history.

Researching the prison system, locale and timeframe led to the appropriate resources to explore: the County Courthouse, the South Carolina Department of Archives & History and the University of South Carolina. These resources held court case info, trial transcripts and newspapers filled with the material that was needed.

(Members receive helpful handouts and have access to recordings of the monthly sessions.)

Joe & Penny Jordan

provided a generous overview of:

- Where they are with their research
 - › Demonstrated how they use RootsMagic to catalog their genealogical info
 - › Explained tracing Penny’s family back to the ancestral plantation
 - › Mentioned obtaining documentation re: slave ancestors and the slaveholder
 - › Touched on oral history indicating ancestors are from Dahomey, Africa
 - › Recounted how they traveled and took photos of several hundred southern gravesites
- Where they want to go
 - › Determine whether a grave-stone with a family surname belongs to a relative
 - › Find a way to share their large collection of gravesite photos
 - › Learn more about the slaveholder’s connection to France

Gayle Ector

“The importance of using FAN charts”

The goal: find out “who and where is Mumfrey Ector?” Gayle began with her grand and great grandfather’s names in a Meriwether, Georgia census. With little else to go on, the next step was to create a FAN chart (cluster research to track friends, associates & neighbors).

This would involve reviewing a lot of data. Gayle learned how to create FAN charts using Excel through Genealogy TV and recommended checking out genealogist Constance Knox on youtube.

She then showed how to download, extract and filter columns from multiple censuses into a single spreadsheet with separate tabs. This made it easy to compare groups of censuses all at once. Connecting people through proximity and variant spellings led to other documents and eventual success.

AAGS Meeting

November 26

“Open Forum”

Members shared their research pursuits and the course they took to attain results

Regina Vaughn

encouraged passing along **oral history** and writing it down.

Regina had digitized recordings in her possession that she hadn’t listened to. So, as a project during the pandemic, she transcribed the notes.

She then incorporated some of the recordings into family presentations. As an example, she showed an excerpt of her presentation:

“Hampton Tribble’s Son
Tom Moses “Uncle Moke” Stewart
Describes His Father”

Attendees got a visual depiction of her family history which also included direct verbal accounts of family stories.

It was very effective.

Joseph Houser

“Following up on oral history”

Family didn’t talk much about his grandmother’s death (she was killed by a vehicle). Joe later learned that it involved voluntary manslaughter.

He also learned that **newspapers** give good leads. Citing an article clipped from the *Lexington Herald* (Kentucky), he showed how he took the article and methodically pulled EVERYTHING he could out of it (date, location of occurrence, the injured, perpetrator, ages, court dates, officer details, etc.), to further follow up.

Since he plans to write a family history story, he wants to ensure info is truthful, not hearsay, and is backed up by documentation. Mark Lowe suggested adding witness background and a civil case filed, claiming damages. There’s a good chance of it having depositions.

AAGS conducted Family History Research Clinics

at Cleveland Public Library (CPL), Main Campus

October 15, November 19 & December 10, 2022

(2023 Dates: file:///C:/Users/freed/Downloads/2023-genealogy-clinic-flyer.pdf)



**Sheryl Cleggett
Blakemore**
(long-time AAGS member)
died June 20, 2022

Condolences
to the family

RECENT FOLLOW-UP NOTE FROM A CPL VISITOR:

I have been working on my mom's dad's family history off and on—it's so addictive I go for hours and get nothing done at home that I'm supposed to. I have been to the Beachwood County Library once so far for Ancestry.com and have been busy going thru archived Jewish news articles—the older newspapers of goings-on in the Jewish community—[while] at home. Still not having luck finding photos, though, thru these sites. Been working at home a lot (once I e-mail materials to myself from Ancestry.com at the library). Used familysearch at home. I want to put together a book of family history, anecdotes and cultural background, along with old and current photos of family members. I would like to go back to the Poland area for research since that's where my great-grandparents came from. Remember me to Debby Abbott. Amazing what you can find using census, city directory, local papers, draft registration, etc.

~ Lois



Informative Tour of Lake View Cemetery Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH

From Maxine Hairston, AAGS member

During a tour of this historic cemetery, I not only got to see the beautiful surroundings and hear about well-known, influential African-Americans and others buried there, Quintilla Draper and I also came across the final resting location of AAGS-Cleveland's fourth president. It was a pleasant surprise to see the names of Nancy Brittenum and her husband.



(Photos courtesy of Maxine Hairston)

UPCOMING - Cleveland Public Library will host:

“Uncovering our Roots: Three-Part African American Genealogy”
Presented by **Dr. Deborah Abbott** via Zoom (registration required)

- Feb. 2 Part One: Introduction to Genealogy
- Feb. 9 Part Two: Importance of Necessary Records & Other Sources
- Feb. 16 Part Three: Strategies & Techniques Tracking a Family from Slavery to Freedom

2023 Genealogical Events

Conferences: In-person and virtual

MAR 2-4 † **RootsTech Connect 2023**
In-person (Salt Lake City, UT) and **virtual (free)** •
 180+ in-person classes, 200+ on-demand sessions,
 research support, digital chats, expo hall (including
 virtual) • rootstech.org • Registration is open •
<https://www.familysearch.org/rootstech/home>

APR 26-29 † **OGS** (Ohio Genealogical Society)
In-person conference • “What Brought Them Here” •
 Kalahari Resort and Convention Center, Sandusky, OH •
ogsconference.org

MAY 31-JUN 3 † **NGS Family History Conference**
 (National Genealogical Society) • **In-person**, Richmond,
 VA • “Virginia, The Deep Roots of a Nation” • **Online at
 Home**, June 1-3 • nsgenealogy.org/conferences/

JUN 18-23 & JUL 9-14 † **GRIP**
 (Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh) • (Jun)
Virtual courses via Zoom • (Jul) **In-person** LaRoche
 College • Pittsburgh, PA • gripitt.org • Registration
 opens Feb. 22

JUL 11-13 † **MAAGI**
 (Midwest African American Genealogy Institute) •
Virtual • maagiinstitute.org

JUL 23-28 † **IGHR**
 (Institute of Genealogy & Historical Research/ Georgia
 Genealogical Society) • **Virtual**, Athens, GA •
ighr.gagensociety.org • facebook.com/IGHR.Georgia •
 Registration begins Mar 4

OCT † **AAHGS**
 (Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society) •
 Usually held in October • aahgs.org

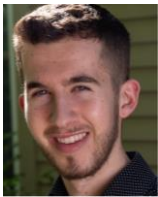
Check Sites for Additional Events

- **AAGHSC** (Afro-American Genealogical and Historical Society of Chicago) • aaghsc.org
- **NEOGR**T (North East Ohio Genealogy Round Table (previously Cleveland District RT)) • <https://neogrt.org/>
- **Detroit Public Library** Family History Festival • Fred Hart Williams Genealogical Society • fhwgs.org
- **Franklin County Genealogical Historical Society** Columbus, OH • fcghs-oh.org
- **Indiana African American Genealogy Group** • iaagg.org
- **Oberlin African-American Genealogy & History Group** • oaaghg.com

Webinars / Free Online Resources

- **Allen County Public Library** genealogy programs - acpl-cms.wise.oclc.org/genealogy
- **Genealogy QuickStart** (hosted by Shamele Jordon) - broadcasts / videos / discussions • youtube.com/c/GenealogyQuickStart • facebook.com/GenealogyQuickStartTV
- **GeneaWebinars, Online Meetings & Hangouts** - blog.geneawebinars.com/p/calendar.html
- **Georgia Genealogical Society Webinars** - gagensociety.org/events/webinars
- **Legacy Family Tree Webinars** - familytreewebinars.com
(Closed captioning added for those with difficulty hearing or with understanding English)
- **Southern California Genealogical Society Webinar Series** - scgsenealogy.com/
- **BlackProGen LIVE** (hosted by Nicka Smith) - web broadcasts / videos / chats • facebook.com/BlackProGenLIVE • youtube.com/user/whoisnickasmith

My Experience at ASALH* 2022:



*(Excerpt) Submitted by Eli Kirshner, genealogical and historical researcher
AAGS-Cleveland member and Oberlin African-American Genealogy & History Group Officer*

(*Association for the Study of African American Life and History)
October 2022 – Montgomery, Alabama

Day 1 of the conference. Everything felt so new and exciting for me. I attended a session in the morning where several historians presented their papers related to Black Healing and Resistance. Ms. Anne Sherrell Bouie, an independent historian, spoke about how enslaved African-Americans utilized garden plots as both a source for survival (e.g., growing food) and for their own autonomy. She referenced her own grandmother’s routine of sweeping the yard and taking diligent care of that important space. Ms. Bouie talked about how enslaved people created “family out of no family,” creating kinship ties that were spiritual and not just biological; Bouie provided historical context for the origins of play cousins, uncles/aunts etc.

Next, I attended a really interesting roundtable discussion titled “Traces of Black Health and Wellness in the Archives of Enslavement.” Dr. Mary Niall Mitchell from the University of New Orleans presented about the Freedom on the Move project – which centers the themes of empowerment and liberation in its digitization of newspaper articles from the Antebellum south with wanted ads for freedom-seekers. Dr. Dallas Hanbury, the archivist for Montgomery County, Alabama, analyzed the data of the 1860 U.S. Census Slave Schedule for its use of four health conditions, several with severely outdated terms (i.e., blind, deaf/dumb, insanity, idiocy). He also showed us examples of doctor bills in estate files of white enslaver families as a means to learn about the physical and mental health/wellness of enslaved individuals who appear in probate records.

I had the privilege to attend the first day’s luncheon and hear a moving appeal from the venerable Mr. Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative. Mr. Stevenson called on all of us to tell the truth about U.S. history without fear, countering that “silence is not a pathway to strength.” From a genealogical perspective, Mr. Stevenson told us a story about when his grandmother took him as a boy to a one-room cabin in a rural field and told him, “[just listen.](#)” Her father was born into slavery, in that very cabin.

For the first day’s plenary session, I had the chance to attend an on-stage discussion facilitated by past ASALH President and legendary historian, Professor Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. The theme of the conversation was the history of the Supreme Court when it comes to the civil and human rights of African-Americans. The most powerful part for me was hearing Mr. Fred Gray, likewise legendary civil rights attorney, talk about his memories of John Lewis, Rosa Parks, Claudette Colvin and other civil rights icons as if it were just yesterday.

Day 2 As if the first day of ASALH was not enough, the second day was awesome as well! I enjoyed myself and continued to learn a lot. In the morning, I attended a paper session called “The Power of Oral History.” One of the themes that emerged in this session continued a through-line during the entire conference: the key difference between the words desegregation and integration, and the purging of Black public schoolteachers after Brown v. Board of Education.

Mr. Justin Rudder from the Alabama Department of Archives of History spoke to us about the cultural agency of African-Americans in the Black Belt of Alabama in naming communities, landmarks, and neighborhoods.

The real highlight of the second day for me was going with Tim Pinnick to hear a film screening and discussion. The film is titled *The Six Triple Eight: No Mail, Low Morale*. We had the immense privilege to hear from Private Romay Davis, a 102-year-old WWII veteran, as she told us her vivid memories from serving as a motorist in the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion -- the only all-Black Female U.S Army unit overseas during the second world war. The film chronicles the history of the unit and its mission to conquer a severe backlog in mail distribution in the European Theater. Media coverage of the 6888th spiked recently, when Ms. Davis and the half dozen remaining living members (out of over 800) were honored with the Congressional Gold Medal by President Biden at the White House this year. As a really cool grace note, Ms. Davis was introduced by Col. Eries Mentzer, who recently finished her service as the commander of Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery. As the first Black woman to hold that role, Col. Mentzer spoke with tears about how women like Ms. Davis and Lt. Col. Adams paved the way for her to be able to wear her uniform today and command an Air Force base.

During the lunch break, Tim and I walked to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. This is the memorial park of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) that commemorates the lives of victims of white supremacist terrorism. I also saw how intentional that Mr. Stevenson and the EJI were in creating this memorial so that it truly remembers and keeps alive the thousands of individual names and dates.

That afternoon there was another interesting plenary session called "The Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area: Healing Through History & Culture." Mr. Phillip Howard of the Conservation Fund spoke powerfully about efforts to preserve the campsites and homes of families in Lowndes County, Alabama who housed SNCC organizers in the 1960s.

Day 3 I attended an excellent panel session facilitated by Dr. Bernadette Pruitt of Sam Houston State University. Scholars presented their research on freedom colonies in Texas, the recruitment of Black schoolteachers in Beloit, Wisconsin amidst the backdrop of the Great Migration, and marriage strategies of mixed-status (free/enslaved) Black couples in Antebellum Virginia. I really enjoyed this session, and I felt like Dr. Pruitt tied all three topics together through the theme of community agency.

Finally, I had the pleasure to attend a roundtable discussion titled "The Legacy of Lowndes County and its Diaspora." As a genealogy researcher, this was fantastic! Dr. David Walton moderated the discussion. This panel emphasized the point that radicalization in the civil rights era happened first in the South (in places like the Black Belt of Alabama), as opposed to the Black Power Movement starting only in northern cities. Another key theme was the genealogical/Great Migration connection between those northern cities.

At the end of Saturday, Tim and I went to Selma and walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. We reflected on the modern-day battle against racist voter suppression. I thought of what Mr. Bryan Stevenson shared on Thursday about his grandmother's ask of him that time in the one-room cabin: I closed my eyes as we ascended the bridge, heading east in the same direction of the marchers in 1965, and I **just listened**. For a brief moment, I heard the footsteps of John Lewis and other heroes. Then, I heard loud noises and screaming--and opened my eyes and ears again to the cars and trucks passing by.

**Eli heads ExploreStory, a genealogical and historical research business
specializing in African-American and Jewish family history
<https://www.explorestory.co/>**

**He also provides a "clerk service" for individuals to obtain original Tennessee records
that are on indexes, yet are not available online.**



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