

African-American Genealogical Society - Cleveland, Ohio

NEWSLETTER



It's Here! AAGS-Cleveland Website - Redesigned

To Discover Your Ancestors is to Discover a Part of You



African American
Genealogical Society,
Cleveland Ohio

Home



**New Look*

**Easier to Use*

**Same URL -
<https://aagsclev.org>*

**Final updates are in progress and expected to be completed soon*



(Tip of the hat to Carla Cegielski, our website designer/administrator)

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.

Editor: Cathy Neal
newschair@aagsclev.org

Committee Members:
Keisha Bullard • Veronica Ferguson •
Maxine Hairston • Cecelia McFadden •
Ruth Perry • LaVera Wingfield

AAGS • PO Box 201476 • Cleveland, OH
44120-1476 • aagsclev.org



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GENEALOGY NEWS

- **RootsTech 2024** is officially “a wrap” and its **On-Demand Library** of over 1500 sessions is available at <https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/search>
- **AARP article** on professor, historian and TV host **Henry Louis Gates, Jr.** - <https://www.aarp.org/entertainment/celebrities/info-2024/henry-louis-gates-jr-finding-your-roots.html>
- The **Kentucky U.S. Colored Troops (USCT) Project** is among others undertaken by **The Reckoning**, a public radio and podcast series - <https://reckoningradio.org/>
- **FamilySearch blog - Ric Murphy** (educator, lecturer and President General of the Society of the First African Families of English America) discusses his family findings and favorite sources for African American research at <https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/ric-murphy>
- **Christian Science Monitor article**, “Archive detective: **Frazine Taylor** fills in Black family trees” - <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Making-a-difference/2023/1031/Archive-detective-Frazine-Taylor-fills-in-Black-family-trees>

2024-2025 AAGS Officers

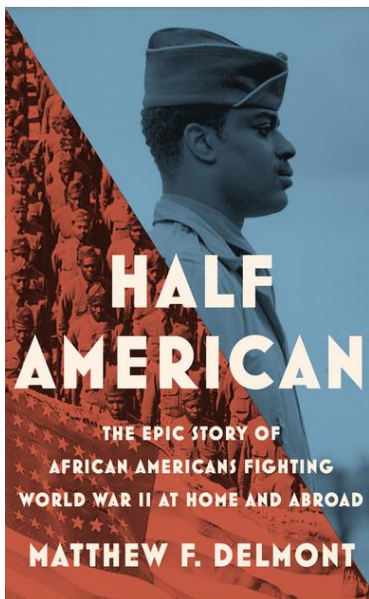
President..... Joseph Houser, Sr.
1st Vice President..... Deborah Abbott
2nd Vice President..... Joseph Jordan

Treasurer..... Gayle Ector
Financial Secretary..... Ellecia Gant
Corresponding Sec’y... Maxine Hairston
Recording Sec’y.....unfilled

Black History / Publications

February was filled with many enriching events recognizing the African American experience.

AAGS member Reginald Barker attended a program hosted by Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) where author Matthew Delmont, a civil rights expert and Dartmouth College history professor, discussed his new book, 'Half American.'



<https://mattdelmont.com/>

'Half American' explores the World War II experience from the African American perspective.

“In these pages are stories of Black heroes such as Thurgood Marshall, the chief lawyer for the NAACP, who investigated and publicized violence against Black troops and veterans; Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., leader of the Tuskegee Airmen, who was at the forefront of the years-long fight to open the Air Force to Black pilots; Ella Baker, the civil rights leader who advocated on the home front for Black soldiers, veterans and their families; James Thompson, the 26-year-old whose letter to a newspaper laying bare the hypocrisy of fighting against fascism abroad when racism still reigned at home set in motion the Double Victory campaign; and poet Langston Hughes, who worked as a war correspondent for the Black press. Their bravery and patriotism in the face of unfathomable racism is both inspiring and galvanizing.”

A seven-minute video by **PBS** entitled, “New book ‘Half American’ details the struggle of Black soldiers in World War II and back home” captures an enlightening conversation with author Matthew Delmont | Feb 16, 2023 - <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/new-book-half-american-details-struggle-of-black-soldiers-in-world-war-ii-and-back-home>

Delmont’s work has also appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post* and multiple academic journals.

Member Spotlight on...

Maxine Hairston



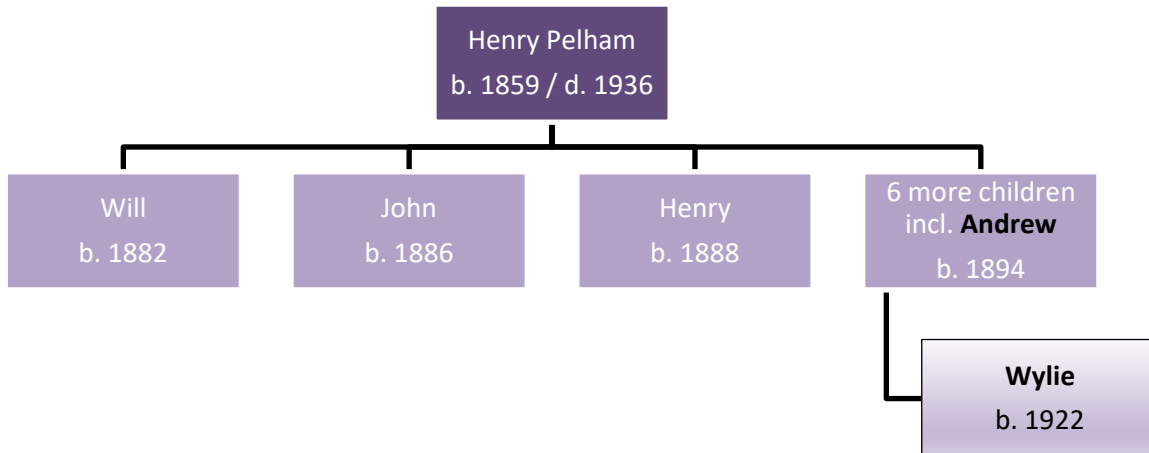
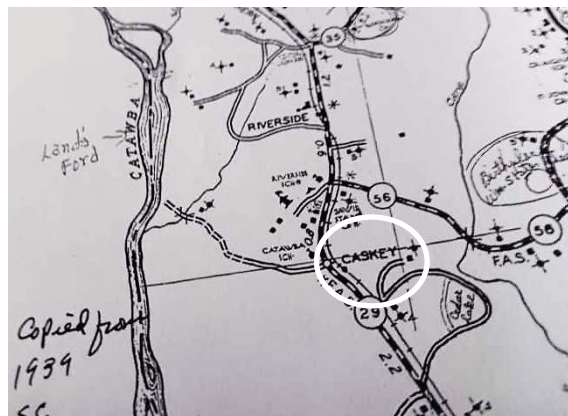
Oral History – How True is It? My 40-Year Question

Sometimes we hear a family story that’s been passed down through the years and it remains just that—an oral tale without documented evidence.

For me, I learned about a bit of family lore in 1981 after attending a family reunion. I was tasked with pulling together the family history (with little to go on), so I turned to my father, Wylie M. Pelham (born in 1922) and questioned him about the Pelhams. He had spent some time caring for his paternal grandfather Henry (born in 1859) in his later years. This is how the story went regarding two of Henry’s older sons:

One “boy” left home (claimed to be due to a misunderstanding). After about a week, the other “boy” went to find the first. When they found each other and came back home, they died of pneumonia—on the same day, one hour apart.

My father said the family was living in Lancaster County, South Carolina at “Caskey Station” which he called a small “slave farm.” During my early research, genealogy was not as popular and documents were not readily available. At that time, I was very fortunate to have been put in touch with Nancy Crockett. (She was a well-known county historian, educator, DAR member, author, and had even recorded county births.) We met at the Lancaster County Library where she provided me with many worthwhile records, including a land map of the “tucked away” Caskey hamlet.



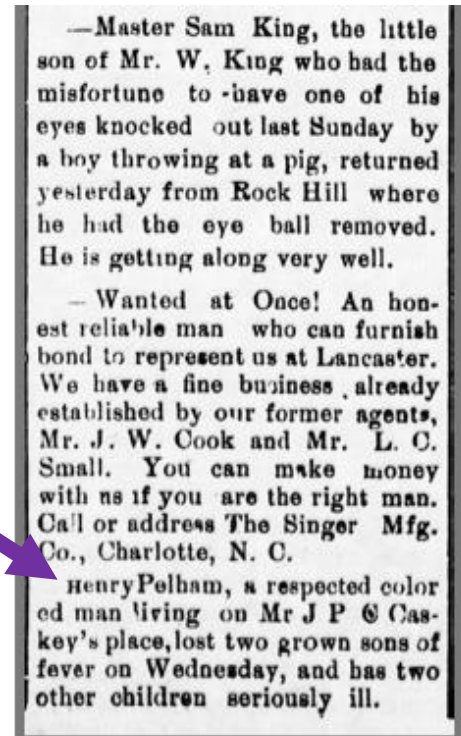
Censuses showed Henry Pelham in 1880 as a young adult and by 1900 with his wife and family in Cane Creek Township. Using the little information I had, over the years I looked for Henry's first three boys. They were in the 1900 census but I could not find anything going forward. I looked through censuses, city directories (in Lancaster and surrounding counties), and I found a few family death records. In earlier research years I also visited archives where some records were so fragile, I couldn't read them. I briefly researched newspapers (on microfilm at the time).

I eventually moved on to other family research, putting that Pelham story on the back burner.

But I never completely left it alone. Recently, doing random checking, I clicked on my tree in Ancestry™ on the Pelham side. It showed a suggested record, which was a 1904 newspaper article from Newspapers.com by Ancestry.™

After reading through each item mentioned in the column, I reached the bottom—and there was my Pelham family. I was really excited.

[Portion of original image from *The Lancaster News* (Lancaster, South Carolina), 3 Dec 1904, Sat, Page 3]



The newspaper article was probably newly digitized.

Even though the two sons are not named, it helps prove the story. Their deaths in 1904 are the reason they were not in later censuses. This now opens up the door for me to focus on death records for a specific range. I will also be looking on the FamilySearch Wiki.

I'm glad that one of the questions that I had as a beginning family historian can finally be answered. It's encouraging to think that more answers are still out there, no matter how long it takes.

AAGS ACTIVITIES

Supporting Genealogy In-House & In the Community



January 27 | AAGS Meeting

"Researching in Georgia: An Exploration of Genealogy-related Records" |

Presenter: **Tamika Strong**, Reference Archivist at the Georgia Archives and president of the Georgia Genealogical Society

From AAGS member Quintilla Draper: "The presentation on researching in Georgia by Tamika Strong was excellent.

Even though the focus was on Georgia, I feel her techniques could apply to researching in any state. For example, her topics of "Getting to know your Georgia Research Subjects" and "Researching in the Peach State (factors of dates, locations and where to look)" can all be transferred to my Alabama research.

Even her list of online resources can be switched to whatever state you are researching to come up with comparable sites. For example, she lists the Digital Library of Georgia. I typed in the Digital Library of Alabama and was referred to the Virtual Library of Alabama.

All in all, I found this a very useful presentation and handout."



February 24 | AAGS Meeting

"Birth & Death Records to Identify Clues that will Help Genealogical Success"

| Presenter: **Dr. Deborah Abbott**

Debbie discussed how critical it is to analyze birth records, be they original, amended or delayed. States have different practices concerning their records and she covered where info might be found (vital records office, health department, state archive, etc.). She also gave examples of birth and death data obtained from various sources: FamilySearch Wiki, Freedmen's Bureau, indexes of slave births, military pension files and mortality schedules.



Ready to research at ACPL?
AAGS-Cleveland is hosting an August bus trip

Contact: Ellecia Gant
aagsocelegant1@gmail.com

To assist with readiness, at the June 22 AAGS meeting, Curt Witcher, Director of ACPL Special Collections, will present "Preparing for Your Research Trip: Using the ACPL Catalog"



5 Strategies for Deciphering Old Handwriting on Documents

By Danny Arsenault | Family Tree Magazine
familytreemagazine.com/records/documentary-evidence/

(NOTE: The following is an excerpt; the full article has more detail for each step, including handwriting examples)

1. Make a Photocopy

Don't try to decipher the handwriting directly from the original document, especially if you're looking at it in an archive or courthouse. You'll need to take plenty of time to examine the writing, so make photocopies, take digital pictures or — best of all — scan the document. If you're viewing a microfilmed record, make a printout.

2. Study Spelling and Abbreviation

Spelling wasn't standardized until relatively recently, and people often wrote words the way they sounded. The further back you go, the more phonetic spelling you'll find.

3. Familiarize Yourself with Letters

When you read an old document, you'll find yourself wrestling with the unfamiliar ways people formed letters way back when. Everyone who learned, say, the Palmer Method, a common writing style in the early 1900s or the Elizabethan Secretary Hand, used during the 1500s and 1600s, shows certain class characteristics in his or her letter formation.

4. Create an Alphabet Key

You may need to bring in the big guns and make an alphabet. Forensic examiners frequently use this technique. Make a key by cutting and pasting (digitally or on paper) examples of identified letters. Add examples of every letter you know with a reasonable degree of certainty.

5. More Tricks of the Trade

- **Turn the paper upside down.** The new perspective may jump-start your mind.
- **Read the words aloud.** Hearing them can help with phonetic spellings.
- **Type strange names and words into a search engine.** The alternate spellings Google suggests could be just the words you're looking for.
- **Show the document to someone else.** This person can give it a fresh look.
- **Enhance your view of microfilm.** Lay a sheet of colored paper on the microfilm reader's projection surface. Also try cleaning the reader's glass plates or moving to the darkest part of the library.
- **Keep at it!** When you're frustrated, set aside the document and come back to it later. Decoding that seemingly indecipherable record will get easier as you become more familiar with the writing.

(Source credit - "5 Strategies for Deciphering Old Handwriting on Documents," by Danny Arsenault. Copyright Yankee Publishing, Inc. URL: <https://familytreemagazine.com/records/documentary-evidence/>)



Makeover Your

To-Do's

By Cecelia McFadden

Welcome to our second article of the year. In our first edition, we talked about online safety and how to protect you and your family history data using password hygiene, secure browsers, anti-virus software, secure wireless services and device updates by regular restarts. If you worked through those recommendations, you undoubtedly made a physical or virtual list and checked off your items as they were completed. We've all had success with checklists. If you read on, learn about **software that can transform your list habits** into efficiencies, productivity and virtual genealogy organization. And what's even better, **it's free!** Since there's no cost, there's no barrier to getting started.

Todoist. With over 35 million users, Todoist is the number one **mobile application for task management and planning.** Todoist gives users the ability to organize tasks, assign follow up reminders, create plans and projects and see visual progress in real time. This app has templates that can assist any family historian at any stage of their work. Once you download the tool, you can access a wide range of templates to organize genealogy work and your personal productivity. The application has an Android and iOS version and information in either version can be transferred if you change platforms. Todoist is also accessible on your desktop and your wearable devices.

Getting Started. The complimentary version of the tool allows the creation of five personal projects, unlimited list and board layouts, and integrations with over 80 other applications. These features, combined with selected default templates, will keep your genealogy projects organized and running smoothly. You can connect with your current email application and calendar and then import lists that you may be keeping in other software. Recommended templates for genealogy enthusiasts include the goal tracker, project tracker, elf on the shelf ideas, business travel and reading list templates. Each of these templates can support the research that is already underway as well as the future research that needs planning. For example, the business travel template allows the user to capture all of the elements required for a successful genealogy travel trip. The reading list template is a place to capture what you've read about your research area as well as what you're planning to read. The elf on the shelf ideas template allows a place for you to store topics and research areas that have not yet started or have been completed. The goal and project tracker allows you to consolidate elements of your current research questions. You are able to prioritize and time box tasks, set reminders and view progress visually.

Conclusion. Hopefully this overview has piqued your interest, and you are visiting your phone's app store right now to download this exciting tool. Whether you decide to try Todoist or not, make sure that you are maintaining a method of organization that applies to your family history activities. It may be intuitive to have a physical organization system, but a virtual system may not have seemed as pertinent. Now is the time to get started with your virtual system. Other technology trends like artificial intelligence (AI) can't be incorporated into your genealogy tool kit if you don't establish an online system. We're here to support you if you have issues. We're always here to help. Contact us at newschair@agsclev.org.

The Importance of Donating your Research

Genealogists devote a significant amount of time and effort to obtain oral history, follow up on leads, trek through clues, analyze documents, unearth and verify facts, then pull their research together in a comprehensible manner. Will yours go to waste? Even if you have a person in mind to pass along your research for posterity, also consider donating to an organization (hometown local library, genealogy group, etc.). If you have worthwhile information to share, others may find it useful also.

AAGS member **Barbara Flewellyn** can attest to the impact of contributing her research.

About Barbara

Barbara was born and raised in a coal mining culture and witnessed the lack and inequality of healthcare within the local towns of West Virginia. She graduated from St. Mary's Hospital School of Nursing, leading to a career as a nurse and later an administrator. Now retired, she is a genealogical researcher and author of family and town histories and memoirs.

St. Mary's left a lasting impression and resulted in Barbara researching its history, conducting interviews with those associated with the school and authoring a book to preserve its enduring legacy on students, staff and the community.

In her words:

"St. Mary's Nuns were the first to integrate their school and healthcare in the hospital for both Black females (1949) and for male nurses as well. It truly was a special place that changed the direction of my life and that of the 23 other Black female students placed under their care. I devoted a chapter to the Nuns' fight and united efforts to maintain their beliefs, regardless of West Virginia segregation laws and resistance from White nurses in other hospitals to integrate the staff.

They 'walked the talk,' held fast, won the battles and gained respect from many.

A Special Place



St. Mary's Hospital School of Nursing
Clarksburg, West Virginia
1905 - 1969

Compiled & Edited by

Barbara W. Flewellyn

The school closed in 1969 and the hospital closed several years later; the land surrounding it would not allow expansion of a larger facility. Interestingly, the Protestant hospital nearby was also seeking more space to expand and could not carry out their plans. Board members of both institutions agreed to merge and build a joint hospital on a new plot of land outside of the city. Today, it is a beautiful campus with all modern facilities. I was hosted by their directors and given a tour, met staff and shared history. They, too, realized (during the merger and moving) that school records of St. Mary's were lost and assisted me in every way to research and find memorabilia. (I was recently notified that a new floor is being added to the hospital, which will be a new school of nursing!! I have been invited to come down and tour the space.)

Not only was the school's history lost but the hospital and school structures were razed and are now a branch of Fairmont, WV College and parking lot.

I have continued my association with the archive department at WV University-Morgantown to establish displays in their new medical museum. They provided financing for my book. As a graduate of the school, it was a special treat to research and speak with classmates after 50 years!! I've been blessed to have my research material/memorabilia placed in archives under 'Flewellyn Pages,' much of which I hope will be on display in the museum. It was hard to believe that all records of the school were lost except memorabilia saved by graduates (ages 75-93) and documents and photos in the vault of The Sisters of St. Joseph, in Wheeling. They were just wonderfully supportive, with lunches, contacts and searches to assist in amassing data. I've had several printings of my book. Most touching were letters from families of St. Mary's grads who had died or alumnae who were unable to participate in my research. It made my efforts so rewarding.

The St. Mary's experience was another example of the importance of genealogy and the work of AAGS."

Human Interest Stories



"Missing her mother's voice, then a stranger finds a tape"

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/she-hadnt-heard-her-mom-s-voice-in-decades-then-a-stranger-found-an-old-tape/ar-AA1czZIK>

"Texas woman, 114, has simple tips for long life"

<https://www.today.com/healthy/womens-health/114-year-old-woman-shares-tips-for-living-long-rcna100039>

"Korean War Hero: Missing But Not Forgotten"

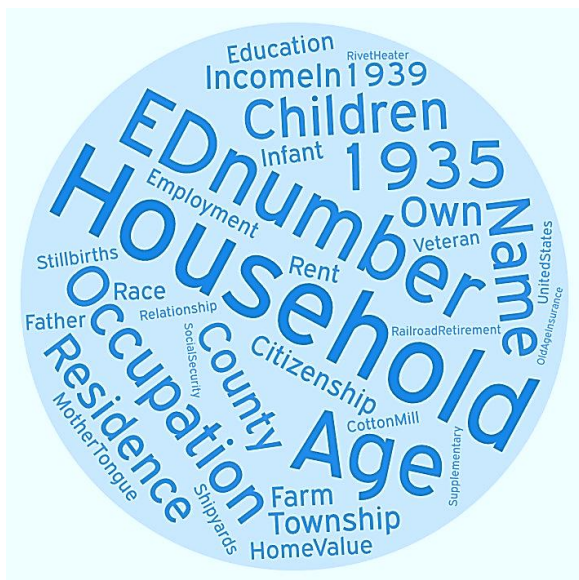
https://blog.fold3.com/korean-war-hero-missing-but-not-forgotten/?xid=7348&utm_source=Internal&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=Find_March-2024

Word Clusters:

Can you figure out
the item (A)
and topic (B)
associated with the words
in each cluster?

(Answers on page 12)

(A) Genealogy related



(B) Black History related





P.O. Box 201476
Cleveland, Ohio 44120-1476
aagsclev.org

Answers for page 11 Word Clusters:

(A) 1940 U.S. Census

(B) Tuskegee Airmen