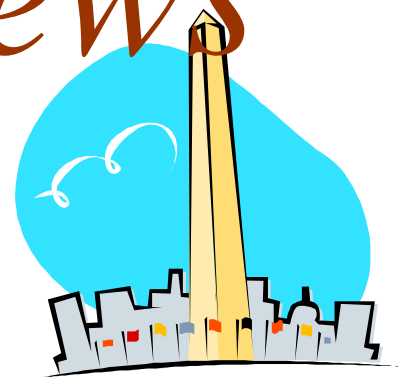


Gene news

“A PEOPLE WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF ITS HISTORY, IS LIKE A TREE WITHOUT ROOTS” ~ MARCUS GARVEY

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- ◆ Gullah Geechee embody unique African American culture



Washington Mall Monument to Black Revolutionary War Patriots Gets Another Shot

By Dick Eastman

Most accounts of the Revolutionary War give the impression that America's independence from Britain was won by brave white men, but Maurice A. Barboza wants to tell the rest of the story.

Mr. Barboza is trying to revive an effort that stalled three years ago due to fundraising and management problems to build the first monument on the Mall honoring black Colonial soldiers.

"They were Americans, and they should be honored," Mr. Barboza said. "They were founders of the country."

Congress first approved the idea for a memorial to black Revolutionary War soldiers at a site between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument more than 20 years ago, but the effort has since become stuck in Washington's bureaucratic maze.

You can read more about the effort in the Associated Press story that is available in many places, including at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/aug/10/mall-monument-to-black-patriots-gets-another-shot/>. Another story about the same efforts may be found at <http://www.libertyfunddc.org/>.

In Memoriam

A Message from the President:

This issue is dedicated to our Recording Secretary, Melissa Ann Holloway. It is with deep regret that I notify our members of her death on July 17, 2008. It was a complete shock to me to learn of her passing. Many of us were unaware of her life and career in New Jersey politics before she became a member of AAGG. Melissa joined AAGG in 2006 and by June 2007 she was elected as Recording Secretary. I remember seeing her at one of our meetings, prior to her joining, and thinking how knowledgeable she was about genealogy. Melissa was a wonderful person who gave freely of herself to assist members researching their families.

Melissa Holloway, 46, died on July 18, 2008 as a result of a stroke while in intensive care at the Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia. Melissa had been hospitalized since July 7th after what family members believe was an apparent aneurysm the previous evening. She was a former councilwoman from Jersey City, NJ who cut her ties with the city after an unsuccessful 2005 campaign for mayor. Previously, Melissa was elected Ward F councilwoman in 1993 and reelected in 1997. She was a cousin of Mayor Glenn D. Cunningham, the city's first black mayor.

Melissa is survived by two brothers and a host of nieces, nephews and other relatives. The funeral service was held July 25, 2008 at the Metropolitan AME Zion Church in Jersey City, NJ and the interment was in Bayview Cemetery, Jersey City, NJ.

~ Robert Scott



The Daughters of the American Revolution

By Dick Eastman

The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) was founded in 1890. Today this women's lineage organization has about 168,000 members. Any woman 18 or older who can prove a lineal bloodline descent from a patriot of the American Revolution is eligible for membership. The DAR promotes patriotism, preservation of American history, and education. As a sideline of those goals, the DAR also collects and makes available a lot of genealogy information.

In order to "prove a lineal bloodline descent from a patriot of the American Revolution," members must study their family trees closely, find a patriot, and then submit carefully documented proof of that descent. As such, many of the newer membership applications contained the highest-quality genealogy research you can find.

NOTE: In years past, the qualifying standards of the DAR were not as strict as they are today. Scholarship has improved over the years, and now all submitted documentation is analyzed carefully. Even if your mother or grandmother was accepted as a member based on their ancestry, you cannot join today by simply resubmitting lineage information from their membership applications. You must do your own research and conform to higher academic standards than they did.

The DAR Library in Washington, D.C. is one of the largest genealogical centers in the United States. Founded in 1896, this library now contains 170,000 volumes, 300,000 files, 65,000 microforms, and manuscript collections, as well as other important historical and genealogical materials. In an article on the DAR web site, Library Director Eric Grundset wrote:

"Generally, DAR collections compliment and partially duplicate those of the Library of Congress and the National Archives. Although much smaller than these massive institutions, so much unique material resides at DAR that researchers frequently comment that they have found genealogical gold they could not find anywhere else. The holdings themselves, which do not circulate, coupled with open bookstacks in

the Library, quick processing of new materials for use, and major in-house finding aids, draw researchers from across the nation every day. American Genealogical Research at the DAR presents the DAR's research materials, gathered for over a century, to American genealogists with the hope that more will visit and find what they could not find elsewhere."

The DAR collections are not limited to famous individuals, supposedly "blue-blood" families, or those with colonial English ancestry. While a high percentage of the Revolutionary soldiers, sailors, and marines had English ancestry, their descendants have married into every ethnic group. The DAR collects lineage information for all ethnic groups in order to assist would-be members with their applications. Indeed, not all members of the DAR live in the United States since families have emigrated over the years. Women who can document descent from any Revolutionary War patriot are accepted as members of the Daughters of the American Revolution, regardless of location or ethnicity. Today's DAR members live in Canada, England, Australia, Singapore, Mexico, and even mainland China. In many cases, the descendants of Revolutionary War patriots emigrated and then raised families outside the U.S.

Luckily, the same information is available to the general public, whether applying for membership or not. Men may visit the DAR library and access all the information there, as can women who are not applying for membership in the organization. All visitors are welcome.

A book published by the DAR, *African American and American Indian Patriots of the Revolutionary War* (2001), lists some 3,000 individuals for whom proof of Revolutionary War service has been found and provides introductory historical information on their roles in the struggle for independence, organized by state. The DAR Library also has two special collections on African American and American Indian history and genealogy.

alogy.

1776 and the years immediately after are obviously the focus of the organization. However, in order to properly serve members, the library continues to obtain as much genealogy information as possible, including whatever information becomes available for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Probably 99% of the information available at the DAR Library in Washington, D.C. has not been computerized and is not available online. Indeed, some of the information found in that library is not available anywhere else. Among the most important materials in the DAR Library are approximately 17,000 volumes of typescripts collectively titled the *Genealogical Records Committee Reports*. This committee begins at the chapter and state levels. Its purpose since 1913 has been to encourage DAR members to transcribe such historically and genealogically important sources as cemetery, Bible, church, *cont.* military, county, town, and family *continued from page 2* records. Only the DAR Library has the entire national set of these typescripts.

The library's File Collection contains an estimated 300,000 file folders. The bulk of the material in this important segment of the library consists of the documentation sent to support DAR membership application papers. The files contain much genealogy information that is difficult or impossible to find elsewhere. The files of later years will contain source citations as to where the original information was found. However, files of earlier years were not as well documented.

A personal visit is necessary in order to examine the millions of available records. The library is housed in the DAR's national headquarters complex. The library's catalog is available online at www.dar.org. With a bit of preparation before leaving home, the visiting researcher can save a lot of time by

continued from page 2 arriving at the library with a planned agenda and a printed list of items to be examined.



The library of the DAR is one of the greatest resources for American historical and genealogical researchers. A visit there may uncover information not available elsewhere.

For more information about the Daughters of the American Revolution and its excellent genealogy library, visit <http://www.dar.org>.

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Free People of Color of Texas Project

By Dick Eastman

Mic Barnette is conducting a project for possible future publication. The project attempts to identify all Free People of Color who lived in Texas prior to the Civil War and any Free Person of Color born in Texas who lived outside Texas prior to the Civil War. To date there are approximately 250 families in and outside Texas with about 150 different surnames identified. The project is not a study of slaves emancipated as a result of the Civil War in 1865.

In many cases those identified as Free People of Color were born free and their families may have been free stretching back into the Colonial United States. In other cases they may have been slaves recently (prior to the Civil War) manumitted by their owners for faithful service or because they were the offspring or family member of the owner. Also of interest is the number of Free People of Color who owned slaves, themselves. In some cases those slaves were family members, while in other cases they were slaves inherited or purchased.

While the project is not intended to be an intensive genealogical study of each Free Person of Color or family of Free People of Color it does collect as much genealogical and biographical information as may conveniently be found without extensive research. The keyword being "identify" and the intent is to identify more than just the names of the people.

Genealogists and historians descended from or who know about a Texas Free Person of Color identified or not identified in the project, thus far, are invited to contact Barnette at mic@micbarnette.com. The Free People of Color of Texas project has a website containing a list of the surnames and residences of most of those Free People of Color identified to date. The website may be accessed at <http://micbarnette.bravepages.com/fpc.texas.html>.

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Gullah Geechee embody unique African American culture

By Tamie Dehler
Special to the Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE — The Gullah Geechee people embody a unique African American culture made up of the descendants of West African slaves. They occupy the islands and coastal regions of the eastern United States from Jacksonville, North Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida. The largest groups live in South Carolina, where they are called Gullahs, and in Georgia, where they are called Geechees. Their culture and language represent a unique blend of African and American elements.

About 300 years ago, slaves were captured from the "rice coast" of west Africa that is now Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. They were brought to the coastal areas of the colonies to exploit their skills in growing rice. By the mid-1700s these low country coastal areas and sea islands in the colonies were covered by rice fields. Besides having rice cultivation skills, the Africans were

MEETING INFORMATION

African American Genealogy Group
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Philadelphia, PA 19118
Tele: 215-572-6063
www.aagg.org

Our group meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month from September to June at 7 pm at the Community College of Philadelphia located at 4725 Chestnut Street in West Philadelphia

Would you like to be a speaker?

AAGG receives a number of speaking requests throughout the year, and in order to provide the requested speaking support the Speakers Bureau needs genealogy speakers. The Speakers' Bureau is a volunteer-driven service to promote genealogical research in the African American community.

If you are interested in being a speaker for the Speakers' Bureau, please contact Tom Davis via e-mail at: tg.davis@comcast.net or phone at: 215-365-3077.



continued resistant to many of the tropical fevers like malaria and yellow fever and could withstand the humid climate.

The white plantation owners in the low country often left the area during the rainy season (spring and summer) to go inland to their summer homes. They left their rice plantations in charge of black overseers called "rice drivers," who ran the operation without much intervention from the whites. In time, the slaves on these isolated plantations developed their own culture that reflected their west African heritage.

continued from page 3 During the Civil War, the white plantation owners abandoned the islands and fled to the mainland. The Union forces arrived on these islands in 1861 and found the Gullahs there. These were the first places where slaves were freed in the South. Many Gullahs subsequently served in the Union Army with the 1st SC Volunteers.

After, the Civil War, the islands and low country again became isolated as the white plantation owners did not return. The freed slaves purchased the land that their ancestors had been working on because no one else wanted these flooded and swampy areas. They practiced their unique culture without interruption until the middle of the 20th century, when development and tourism started encroaching.

Their language is called Gullah and it is a mixture of Elizabethan English (16th and 17th century) and various African dialects. In the 1930s, a linguist visited the area and studied their language.

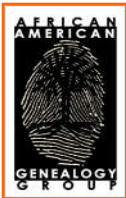
He found Gullah people who could recite many African words and phrases, and one woman knew four lines of a Mende funeral song that she had learned from her grandmother. Gullah was identified as a creole language that includes elements of the Via, Mande, Twi, Ewe, Housa, Yourba, Ibo, and Kikongo dialects from Africa.



Today, there are 750,000 Gullah Geechee people along the southeastern coast. Most live south of Charleston, SC, in south Carolina and Georgia. 250,000 of these people can speak the Gullah language. They live peaceful and simple lives close to the environment, practice wood carving, needlework, fishing, shrimping, crabbing, and

growing rice, tomatoes, okra, and yams. Their diet is healthful and they are known for their longevity. Their religion is a mixture of Baptist and Methodist combined with African beliefs. They have translated the New Testament into their language.

Today, the Gullah Geechee people are threatened by big developers on the east coast. Some are having problems proving ownership to the land that was passed on from one generation another without written wills. Others have migrated to Harlem, Brooklyn, and Queens, in New York, where they try to keep their culture intact and often visit home. The Gullahs are led by Queen Quet and are trying to save their unique culture. They want to be recognized as a nation and to have self-determination, similar to the status of Indian tribes. In 2006 the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor was established by the National Park Service in an effort to preserve this unique African and American culture.



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