



Gene news

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

in This issue:

- ◆ Philadelphia to Close All Free Libraries
- ◆ AAGG 20th Anniversary Celebration
- ◆ Upcoming Genealogy Events

A Message from the President:

We're turned 20 this year, and our anniversary luncheon will allow us to celebrate that milestone. It will also allow us to honor those individuals who have helped make the African American Genealogy a successful and thriving organization. Please stop for a moment and make sure you have mailed or turned in your ticket request. Don't forget your ads. Space is still available and the deadline for ad submission has been extended to September 22nd. If you have questions contact Bonnie Pollard at 215.248.2643.

~ Robert Scott

African American Woman works to gain entrance to DAR

**By Erin Rossiter
Athens-Banner Herald**

Keep trying.

That's the message Yvonne Studevan received from the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Her membership application had been unusual in every sense. It was larger than most, loaded with historical support and centered on her connection to a slave.

Richard Allen shuttled salt to Continental Army troops. And his great-great-great-great granddaughter proved it. Or, so she thought.

But the DAR needs more to satisfy their membership rules.

"The only thing we're missing (is a document saying) Negro or black man Richard was paid for hauling that salt," Studevan said. "We need that record proving it for them."

Problem is: That paperwork might not exist.

When Studevan began tracing her genealogy to Richard Allen - a slave who earned his freedom before founding the first A.M.E. Church known as Mother Bethel in Philadel-

phia - she never imagined it would take her to an organization once tied to discrimination.

Eleanor Roosevelt quit the DAR in the 1930s because it barred singer Marian Anderson from performing at Constitution Hall. Not until a 1984 controversy involving a black woman being denied membership did the DAR formally prevent discrimination on the basis of "race or creed." Even as a young girl in Philadelphia, Studevan ignored DAR scholarship applications, *(continued on page 4)* *(continued from page 3)* thinking the money was set aside for white students.

So why then would she want to become a member? Friends within the black community wanted to know. "Why not?" Studevan asked. "This is a step."

Her application process started in Athens after a speaking engagement at a local church. She talked about Allen and the importance of church archives. Such paperwork strengthened her connection to the man who wrote about earning his freedom after carting salt to Gen. George Washington's Armies.

Members of the local DAR chapter approached Studevan after the presentation. They invited her to a meeting and encouraged her to join.

No one was more surprised than Studevan. She recalled moving to the South in the 1970s fearful of what racial hatred she'd encounter. Yet decades later, her Athens neighbors were promoting her membership in a group she once opposed.

"I cannot believe this," she said, of her thinking at the time. "Here they are coming out of the woodwork to gather documentation."

Local DAR members helped Studevan solid-

ify her own ties to Allen through wills and census materials. They also joined her search for formal proof Allen worked for the Patriots.

Manumission papers - documenting the terms of his freedom - helped describe his role as a supplier. His autobiography detailed his work, as well. Additionally, Studevan connected Allen's master, Stokeley Sturgiss, to the Continental Army, making Allen's patriotic role all the more probable.

But the DAR standard called for more - muster rolls, bills of sale with vendor names, and in the case of Allen, mention of his status as a black man or slave. Not even letters of support from historians, nor Allen's inclusion in a June 1993 program commemorating the Patriots of African Descent Monument at Valley Forge National Historic Park, sufficed.

"They really do want him to be a part of the DAR," Studevan said. "The rules are so stringent. They had to adhere to them."

Numerous obstacles related to slaves and record keeping stand in Studevan's way, however. As if finding the paperwork won't be difficult enough, there are name discrepancies and distinct differences with how slaves and freedmen were documented verses whites.

Philadelphia to Close All Free Libraries

From the pages of the Free Library's web site at <http://libwww.freelibrary.org/closing/>.

All Free Library of Philadelphia Customers,

We deeply regret to inform you that without the necessary budgetary legislation by the State Legislature in Harrisburg, the City of Philadelphia will not have the funds to operate our neighborhood branch libraries, regional libraries, or the Parkway Central Library after October 2, 2009.

Specifically, the following will take effect after the close of business, October 2, 2009:

- * All branch and regional library programs, including programs for children and teens, after school programs, computer classes, and programs for adults, will be cancelled
- * All Parkway Central Library programs, including children programs, programs to support small businesses and job seekers, computer classes and after school programs,

In Allen's case, payment from the Army might have gone to the person who owned the carriage rather than its driver, eliminating proof at all.

The challenges again beg the question, why bother?

Studevan, a career educator, continues to assert, "Why not?"

Lessons related to Allen and men like him prove that the contributions blacks made to the country and its history date far beyond President Obama and Martin Luther King, Jr.

"That's my main reason for wanting to be a member is saying, 'Yes, blacks served in the American Revolution and here is one person I know in my family who served,'" she said. "We have been investing in the building of America since America began."

Another reason for her persistence relates to the local women with the DAR.

Even as her paperwork challenges mount, Studevan thanks them and others for supporting her own patriotic cause.

"I'm going to keep on digging. I will do my part in trying to find the information," Studevan said. "But if not, I'm still going to continue to tell the story, because the story is true. It may not have a DAR ending, but the story is going to get told."

* * *



will be cancelled. We are exploring the possibility of relocating the Philadelphia Author Series programs to other non-library facilities.

* All library visits to schools, day care centers, senior centers and other community centers will cease.

* All community meetings at our branch and regional libraries, and the Parkway Central Library, will be cancelled.

* All GED, ABE and ESL programs held at Free Library branches will be discontinued, students should contact their teacher to see if other arrangements are being made.

* In addition, all library materials will be due on October 1, 2009. This will result in a diminishing borrowing period for books and other library materials, beginning September 11, 2009. No library materials will be able to be borrowed after September 30, 2009.

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 us at:
215-365-3077.

AFRICAN AMERICAN GENEALOGY GROUP

P.O. Box 27356
Philadelphia, PA 19118

FREE EMAIL ACCOUNTS

As another added member benefit, we would like to offer all our members the opportunity to email in style! If you are interested in an AAGG email address, please send your request to Natasha at:
nscott@aagg.org.

Even as we remain hopeful that the State Legislature will act and pass the enabling funding legislation, we wanted to notify all of our customers of this very possible outcome. If you have any questions about impacts to Free Library services, call 215-686-5322, or visit the Free Library of Philadelphia website at: www.freelibrary.org. If you have questions about changes to City services, or if you want to be kept informed about this situation, we encourage you to contact Philly 311 by calling 3-1-1 between the hours of 8am-8pm Monday-Friday, and 9am-5pm Saturdays, email: philly311@phila.gov, or visit the City of Philadelphia website at: www.phila.gov.

We thank you for your understanding, patience, and continued support of the Free Library of Philadelphia during these difficult times.

Siobhan Reardon, President and Director,
Free Library of Philadelphia

AAGG 20th Anniversary Celebration

The 20th Anniversary Celebration of our African American Genealogy Group is just around the corner. The Anniversary Committee is working hard to come up with an event that you will be proud of. We look forward to your attendance, and hope you and your guest will join us at this historic luncheon.

In order for this celebration to be successful, we will also need your cooperation in soliciting ads for the 20th Anniversary Souvenir Booklet. We appreciate being able to include you in our Souvenir Booklet and look forward to receiving your Advertisement. Our Souvenir Booklet will be 8" x 11" in size and printed in black and white.

Souvenir Booklet Advertising Rates

Sizes	Rates
Outside back cover	\$125
Inside cover	\$100
Full page	\$75
Half page	\$50
Quarter page/ Business Card	\$25

Anniversary Celebration Featured Luncheon Presentation

The African American Genealogy Group is honored to have as our feature luncheon presentation the

"LEST WE FORGET" – TRAVELING SLAVERY MUSEUM

A PRIVATE COLLECTION of SLAVERY ARTIFACTS & JIM CROW MEMORABILIA

The "Lest We Forget" collection and presentation provides an opportunity to examine and explore the factual aspects of the African American Slave Trade experience. It offers a hands-on approach to describing an appalling period in American history along with the opportunity to see and touch items from that period which brings history alive and gives meaning to the pain and suffering endured by Africans in America. They examine the harsh realities of slavery and offer a truthful account of what slavery was like for Africans captured primarily for enslavement. They describe the period following Reconstruction the "Jim Crow" era that further fed the fires of bigotry by creating misconceptions of Blacks that created a lasting prejudice towards Blacks. They also describe how compassionate white abolitionists created the Underground Railroad network and contributed to the abolishment of slavery. The artifact exhibit and factual presentation "brings history alive". While "Lest We Forget" offers a candid examination of a dark and tragic period in American history it also provides a healthy appreciation for the enduring strength and spirit of African American people.

The husband and wife team of J. Justin & Gwen Ragsdale will facilitate the different aspects of slavery and demonstrate how the artifacts were used. The Ragsdale's riveting presentations are interspersed with little-known Black History facts that were conveniently left out of most history books. Mr. Ragsdale has been collecting slavery artifacts and Jim Crow memorabilia for more than 35 years and has acquired over 5,000 rare items.



Genealogy conferences are the frosting on the cake for many genealogists. Learn why you should put attending a genealogy conference on your "must do" list, along with tips for making the most of your experience and links to upcoming genealogy conferences and other events.

Upcoming Events

October 10, 2009 - African American Genealogy Group 20th Anniversary Luncheon, Germantown Historical Society, 5501 Germantown Ave, Philadelphia, PA for members and guests only. Visit www.aagg.org for more information.

October 17, 2009 - Mid-Atlantic Family History Conference 2009, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 252 E. Evesham Road, Cherry Hill, NJ. Visit www.MAFHC.org for more information.

October 29-31, 2009 - International Black Genealogy Summit, Fort Wayne, IN. Visit www.blackgenealogysummit.com for more information.

April 28 – May 1, 2010 - National Genealogical Society Annual Family History Conference, Salt Lake City, UT. Visit www.ngsgenealogy.org for more information.

August 18-21, 2010 - Federation of Genealogical Societies Conference (Rediscovering America's First Frontier) at the Knoxville Convention Center, Knoxville, TN. Visit www.fgs.org for more information.



African American
Genealogy Group
P.O. Box 27356
Philadelphia, PA 19118

AAGG 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



Join us for our next meeting
on Tuesday, September 8th