

Genealogical News

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The Multicultural Genealogical Center



*May Peace and Beauty, Hope and Love
Be with you through the year;
May the Love of Friends and Family
Bring you lots of Cheer*

*May everlasting Joy and Faith
Always fill your Heart with Praise;
May the Wondrous Holiday Season
Bless you all your days.*

*Happy Holidays
from all of us at MGC*

Triracial Groups at Cutler, Chesterhill, & Zanesville, Ohio

Thank you readers for your positive response to the series we began with the last issue of the Genealogical News entitled "Triracial Isolates". These excerpts from an address give by Richard Walker, Ph.D. in McConnellsville, Ohio on March 13, 2000 before the Morgan County Historical

Society and the community are most interesting. Our thanks to Dr. Walker for permitting us to publish this series.

What's In A Name?

The fact that some triracial isolates do not adopt a name for themselves does not mean that they do not have one. They almost always do. But the labels they bear come, not from themselves, but their neighbors. In most instances these outsider-imposed labels—Redbones

(Louisiana), Guineas (West Virginia), Melungeons (Tennessee), Brass Ankles (South Carolina), Jackson Whites (New Jersey), Black Coes (Kentucky), Ramps (Virginia)—are intended as and understood to be epithets. The local triracials detest these labels. Traditionally, one does not use any of these terms in front of them without risk. For example, White males in the Muskingum Valley may refer to triracials using racial epithets, but they do

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Triracial Groups (continued)

so only behind their backs. About 1980 an informant in Hancock County, Tennessee, told researcher Anthony Caverder, "Twenty years ago if you called one of them a Melungeon, he would have beat the h___ out of you. It's still that way with some of them".

The triracials' strident reaction and resistance to such labels goes far beyond an immediate response to the speaker's insult, animus, or ignorance. The purpose of these labels is not merely to slur the individual, but to maintain social barriers between a dominant majority and a subordinate minority; i.e., to identify minority members and "keep them in their place".

Historically, as you know, these classifications have had important legal and social consequences. Such classifications—especially in the era of legal racial segregation, especially in the South—determines birth certificates, which schools children could (and could not) attend, assignment to military units, property rights, voting rights, who could testify in court, and so on—even when or where one could hunt, fish, watch a movie, get a haircut, or do the laundry.

The stakes for consorting with Blacks—even for Indians—have usually been high. In the 1800s, Indian reservations were often havens for African-Americans, both for free Blacks and escaped

slaves. As early as 1811 the State of Virginia legally terminated the Ginkaskin Indian Reservation in Northampton County because the tribe's White neighbors claimed that the tribe had "at least half" African-American blood and served as an "asylum for free negroes", "there being at this time not more than 3 or 4 genuine Indians at most..." Virginia parceled the reservation into allotments in 1813. By 1832 Whites owned most of it. In 1824, Virginia terminated the Nottoway Reservation in Southampton County for the same reason. Likewise, the Weanock tribe. And in 1843 Virginia attempted—but failed—to deprive the Pamunkey Indians of their reservation because they had mixed with Blacks.

In the 1950s to be classified as a "Guinea" in Philippi in Barbour County, West Virginia, was tantamount to being classified as "Negro" in the Deep South. Even though, in terms of physical appearance Guineas were (and are) usually indistinguishable from Whites, they have a triracial heritage. Designation as a Guinea determined where one could shop, work, eat, drink, sit at movies, attend school, worship, live, and socialize. It even dictated the color of one's school teacher and classmates and, of course, whom one could date and marry.

In two Guinea families in Barbour and Taylor counties (Grafton), West Virginia, 102 of 112 marriages from 1856 to 1931 were to other persons in the group. And those marriages included only 11 different surnames. A large plurality of the families of West Virginia Guineas are named Mayle. In 1948 the prominent surnames were Adams, Collins, Croston, Dalton, Kennedy, Mayle, Miner, Newman, Norris, and Pritchard.

Thus "Guinea" was a marker in an economic and social caste system. Despite their White or almost White appearance, Guineas understood that "White trade only" signs in store windows meant that they, as well as the Blacks in the community, were not welcome. And they sorely resented and resisted it. As one observed in Barbour County note, "To refer to them as 'Negroes,'...is resented every bit as much as a Negro resents the [n-word]". Yet, the practical basis for classification into this caste system rested on one's last name—i.e., one's triracial ancestry.

Definition: Some scholars refer to racially mixed groups that are socially and geographically segregated from the surrounding majority as "Triracial Isolates".



To be continued in the next issue.

Membership Drive (see insert for application)

Included in this newsletter is the membership application and renewal form. Your support of the Multicultural Genealogical Center is vital to the continued growth of the organization. Annual memberships are due by January 31st for the coming year. You may want to consider giving an annual membership as a gift or you may want to become a lifetime member.

As many of you know, the Adams family requested that a donation to the MGC Building Fund be made in lieu of flowers in remembering Alvin Adams (1937-2004), co-founder of MGC. Al was interested in a research center and museum. You may also use the form to contribute to this building fund.

Our membership meetings are the second Tuesday of each

month at 7:00 p.m. We generally meet at the Friends' Meeting House on State Route 555, in Chesterhill, Ohio. We always have a good program with time to visit with others following the program. Consider volunteering for one of the committees that make these meetings possible.

We appreciate all the support the members have given in 2004. We know next year will be even better.

Annual regular memberships
\$15.00

Annual student membership
\$6.00

Annual senior-citizen membership (age 50 and over)
\$10.00

Lifetime membership
\$125.00

MGC Membership Mtg.

December 14 Meeting
Lyons Club,
Chesterhill, Ohio

*The Art of Cooking
with History*

Drive beyond the Quaker Meeting House on Rt. 555 for a potluck dinner with music for our end of the year meeting. Choose a dish from either of our cookbooks to share.



MGC Books Make Great Holiday Gifts (see insert to order)

Looking for that "just right" holiday gift? Why not give a MGC book. These books are collector items, that will be cherished down through generations to come. For the first time a concentrated effort has been made of the local history of the multicultural people of this region and as a result some fascinating publications have arisen.

Heritage Cookbook

Volume 1 (110 pages)
and

Heritage Cookbook

Volume 2 (109 pages)

These cookbooks contain favorite and historical recipes and stories from members. Each is illustrated, 8-1/2 x 11 with soft laminated covers and spiral binding.

As Long As Hearts Remember (175 pages)

This collection of tributes to deceased family members is edited by Alvin C. Adams. It includes obituaries, poems, stories, and photographs. Linen paper cover, perfect binding, 8-1/2 x 11

A Significant Presence (60 pages, 185 photos)

A pictorial glimpse of the Black Experience in Athens County, Ohio, by Ada Woodson Adams and Nancy E. Aiken. A brief look at nearly 200 years of black history at Ohio University and Athens County. Soft cover, saddle stitch binding.

Hold Tight to the Hames (158 pages)

Collection of stories by Alvin C. Adams about growing up in black rural Athens, County. Soft cover, perfect binding.

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Membership Information

- Annual Membership runs from January 1 through December 31
- To become a member of MGC, simply fill out an application form (applications can be obtained by contacting the address below) and send it along with your dues to:

The Multicultural Genealogical Center
P. O. Box 125
Chesterhill, Ohio 43728-0125

Or bring it to the monthly meeting at The Friends Meeting House on St. Rt. 555 next to the fire station in Chesterhill. Monthly meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month.

If you would like to take advantage of the installment plan for a lifetime membership, please contact **Mildred Vore, Treasurer**, at the monthly meeting.