

Genealogical News

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Booker T. Washington & the Road to Freedom

The seeds of freedom that were brought to southeastern Ohio by free Tri-racial and African American settlers long before the Civil War contributed to the abolition of slavery and to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Of interest to MGC, is that along the course of establishing his dream as an educator, Booker T. Washington's path crossed southeastern Ohio and he was exposed in a positive way to the seeds of freedom sown by the Tri-racial and African American Community of southern Ohio. This is but one significant anthology about the road to freedom.

Booker T. Washington was born in 1856 on a small tobacco farm in Franklin County, Virginia, which is called a "plantation". His mother was a cook there and his father was a white man from a nearby farm. In his autobiography Booker wrote: *"The early years of my life, which were spent in the little cabin, were not very different from those of other slaves."* At the time Booker was born it was illegal to educate slaves, but Booker later wrote: *"I had the feeling that to get into a school house and study would be about the same as getting into paradise"*. Booker T. Washington experienced the reality of the African American transition from slavery to freedom. Booker T. Washington fulfilled his dream by founding Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, in 1881, and earned the recognition as the nation's foremost black educator!

In April 1865, the Emancipation Proclamation was read to the joyful ex-slaves at the Burrough Plantation. Booker's family soon left to join his stepfather, Washington Ferguson, who was employed in the salt industry in Malden, West Virginia. From 1865 until 1872, when he left to attend Hampton Institute, Book T. Washington lived in Malden, West Virginia in what was then called the Kanawha Salines.

From around 1899 until after the Civil War, Kanawha Salines was the largest salt producing region in the United States.



BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

Systematic salt production had begun in 1794 when Joseph Ruffner, a prosperous Shenandoah Valley farmer, bought a tract of land and began salt making by the crude process of dipping brine from the springs and boiling it in kettles. Ruffner brought his slaves along to do

the work. The salt industry at Kanawha Salines expanded and the slave population expanded to 3,140 by 1860. This was the largest concentration of slaves in the counties of "Western" Virginia and many of the fugitive slaves who crossed through the southeastern Ohio Underground Railroad were from Kanawha Salines.

Malden, near present day Charleston, West Virginia, was a river town in a border state, a place of black mobility. In 1865, none of the free blacks of Malden, even Lewis Rice, the Baptist preacher, could read or write. One day Booker saw a large crowd gathered around a young Negro to hear him read the newspaper. The man was from Ohio, where the Black Laws before the Civil War had denied public schools to Negroes but still allowed them to attend private schools. Booker was consumed by Davis' ability and committed himself to learn to read as this young black man from Ohio could. Every day on the way home from the salt works, he would pause to hear the Ohioan read the news aloud.

In September 1865, about a month after the arrival of Booker and his family, William Davis, an eighteen-year-old, light-skinned Ohio youth had appeared in Malden. Davis boarded with

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A History Of The LETT Family

Provided by Henry Burke

This Lett line comes from Maryland and comes from the union of Samuel Delaney Lett and Jemima Banneker. Their children migrated through Pennsylvania to southeastern Ohio Meigs Township and thereafter Guernsey, Muskingum, Morgan and Belmont Counties. The Lett Settlement consisted of the Brown, Caliman, Clifford, Earley, Green, Guy, Harper, Lett, Lucas, Pointer, Simpson, Stevens, and Tate families to name a few. It became known as the "Lett Settlement" due to the fact that Lett family members outnumbered other families in the settlement.

This Lett family history can be traced back to 1683 to the arrival of their ancestor, Molly Welsh, an English dairy-maid, who had been falsely accused of a crime of theft. Due to her ability to read she was spared a death sentence and was sent to the English province of Maryland as an indentured servant. After seven years Molly was freed and eventually purchased her own small farm in Maryland. While she prospered she knew that she would need more help with her farm and began to save money. Although Molly was opposed to slavery, her survival left her with few options. Molly purchased two slaves and after a period time freed both. She eventually married one of them, who was named Bannaka, an African prince from the Wolof Kingdom of Walo, located in Senegal.

Molly took her husband's name as her surname, which eventually became Banneker. The couple had four daughters, the oldest of whom was also named Mary. Mary married a former slave, who had converted to Christianity and changed his name to Robert and his wife's last name. They had five children; 1 son and 4 daughters: Benjamin, Jemima, Julian, Minta and Molly. Benjamin Banneker is noted in United States history as the first African-American "man of Science", which among other accomplishments wrote an almanac, assisted in the survey of Washington, D.C. and made the first clock in

America. Benjamin's sister, Jemima married Samuel Lett who was English and Native American, and of their 8 children, 7 migrated with their families and settled in Meigs Township, Muskingum County, Ohio, which borders on Guernsey County. The Lett Settlement was a self-sustaining community of mixed race families; with the Letts, Calimans and Guy families, forming ties with each other through marriages and common family background while living in Maryland and Virginia. Additionally, it has been documented that the Tate and Norman families also resided in Maryland and had a long history of interactions with these families.

These families were pioneers in Ohio, in the areas of civil rights, education and voting. The gathering of the Lett Settlement descendants reflect those connections of uncommon bonds of heritage and history.

In the past Lett reunions a "Tribute to our Elders" brought together many older family members who in many cases reside in Muskingum, Belmont or Guernsey Counties.

The list of elders who attended the 2004 reunion were: Ruth Caliman Brown (100 yrs old), Fred Betts (92), Charles Henry Lett (83)-historian, Mary Hunter Weiker (83) Delaware Co., Ohio, Justine Simpson Lett (82) Wilbur Norman (80)-historian, Ralph Caliman Sr. (80), Wanda Quarles Holbert (71)



**Triracial Groups at Cutler,
Chesterhill & Zanesville, Ohio**
(Gale) Richard Walker, Ph. D.
(excerpts)

Local Triracial Enclaves

The tiny hamlet of Cutler in the Little Hocking watershed in western Washington County was laid out in 1857. It was named after William Parker Cutler, grandson of Manasseh Cutler. William Cutler was a U.S. congressman and a promoter of the railroad that ran through town. Chesterhill population (337 in 1990) in southwestern Morgan County was begun by Quakers from Belmont County, Ohio, in 1834. It was part of Athens County until 1845. Zanesville (population 27,000 in 1990) was begun in 1799. In 1990, 12% of the population of Zanesville was Black and/or Indian; 31% of Chesterhill was Black and/or Indian. Although spread across three contiguous counties, culturally and socially these three groups are quite similar. Many families at Cutler are related to those at Chesterhill. As well, many families at Chesterhill have relatives in Zanesville. In many instances families at all three places can trace their ancestry to common surnames with roots in West Virginia, especially among the Guineas.

To be continued in the next issue

MGC Membership Programs 2005

June 14 Ann Grasso
Wayne National Forest

July 12 Becky Parkratz
Book: UGRR for Children

August 9 Susan Sarnoff
OU Social Work Department

September 13 Lee Gregg
New Zealand

October 11 Henry Burke

November 8 TBA

December 13 Holiday Potluck
Dinner

Booker T. Washington

(continued from Page 1)

Elder Rice, and when it was discovered that he could read and write he was hired to conduct a school financed by what little money the poor black people of Malden could pay him. Booker enrolled in school classes and thus began the educational career of Booker T. Washington.

Interestingly, Davis was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1846. He secured a fundamental education in Chillicothe from 1861 to 1863. The home where Davis stayed in Chillicothe was an Underground Railroad Station. After receiving his education, Davis

worked on a river boat operating between Gallipolis, Ohio and Malden, West Virginia.

At graduation ceremonies at Hampton Normal A & I in Virginia, Booker T. Washington met his future wife Olivia Davidson. On the 11th of August 1886 they were married at 193 W. Washington Street, in Athens, Ohio. Olivia was from Athens and educated at the Enterprise Academy in Albany (9 miles to the west of Athens). Booker considered his wife Olivia to be co-founder of Tuskegee Institute!

Henry Robert Burke
MGC Historian

Publication News

By Nancy Aiken

Thanks to Dr. Richard Wetzel, MGC board member, mayor of Chesterhill, and Ohio University professor of music, the publications committee is please to offer Dr. Wetzel's book, *Frontier Musicians on the Connoquenessing, Wabash and Ohio: A History of the Music and Musicians of George Rappae's Harmony Society 1805-1906*, FREE to those who order \$40.00 worth of MGC publications. The book, published by Ohio University Press, recounts the musical activities of the Harmonists who built communities on the Connoquenessing River in Pennsylvania, the Wabash River in Indiana, and the Ohio River near Pittsburgh in the early 1800's. It follows the Harmonists legacy through a number of colorful characters to John S. Duss who traveled the country with the orchestra for the New York Metropolitan Opera in the early 1900's.

To get your free book, order \$40.00 worth of any of these books:

The Multicultural Genealogical Center
Heritage Cookbook, Volume 1
\$12.00

The Multicultural Genealogical Center
Heritage Cookbook, Volume 2
\$12.00

As Long As Hearts Remember: Tributes to Our Late Loved Ones, edited by Alvin C. Adams, original poetry, stories, obits, photographs, 175 pages
\$30.00

Hold Tight to the Hames by Alvin C. Adams; very entertaining stories about growing up Black in rural southeastern Ohio
\$15.00

Include \$5.00 shipping for each book ordered and send your order to MGC, P. O. Box 125, Chesterhill, Ohio 43728



Acquisitions

Margaret S. Wright of Cincinnati, Ohio and a member of the Multicultural Genealogical Center has donated her family tree, some of her copyright publications and some significant family histories to MGC.

Publications:

Voices From A Jalagi's Past (Poetic Drama)

Genealogical Faces (of seen and unknown persons (collection of genealogical poems, etc.)

Voices Of A Tsa-La-Gi's Past (chapbook of autobiographical poetry)

Mrs. Wright is a descendant of George S. Sampson and Mahala Adams



Robert L. Lawson, ED.D., President of Dynamic Professionals Lives in Portsmouth, Ohio
Dr. Lawson is co-author of the book "Oh Yes We Can" Black Achievement in America. "Oh Yes We Can" quotes and gives some significant achievements of Black Americans followed by questions to test your knowledge of Black American history. One sample of the book is quoted by Martin Delaney, "Every people should be the originators of their own destiny, the projectors of their own schemes, and the creators of the events that lead to their destiny."



There are many people adding to our many databases for your research at our library in the future.

MGC Member Kandy Smith McGill has received a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois. Kandy is the daughter of Randy and Sandra Smith of Little Hocking, Ohio.

The Multicultural Genealogical Center

P. O. Box 125
Chesterhill, Ohio 43728-0125
740-662-0217

Email:
D6Butcher@dragonbbs.com

Newsletter Articles:

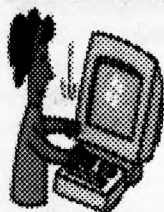
Karen Stevens Walker

4555 Veto Road

Vincent, Ohio 45784

740-678-8511

Email: walkerplus@yahoo.com



**Visit The
MGC
Website
at**

www.mgcenter.org

Lett Settlement July 15-17

July 15	Zanesville Holiday Inn	7:00 p.m.
July 16	Zanesville Community Center	1:30 p.m.
July 17	St. Paul A.M.E. Church	11:00 a.m.

Questions? Connie Quarles (740-454-8067)

Tabler Reunion August 28

Federal Hocking Middle School

1/2 miles from Stewart, Ohio on Rt. 144

Potluck dinner at 12:00 noon with entertainment in p.m.

MGC Board Members

David Butcher, President

Ada Woodson Adams, Vice President

Mildred Vore, Secretary

Vickie Lee Thurston, Treasurer

Nancy Aiken

Richard Wetzell

Virginia Norris

Junior Walker

Debbie Rowe

Henry Burke

Bob Rothwell

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 **Vickie Lee Thurston, Treasurer**, at the monthly meeting.