



RAMBLERS' RAMBLINGS

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ALEX HALEY'S "ROOTS"

BY HENRY HANSON

Remember when Alex Haley's book "Roots" was made into a TV miniseries in 1977? From its first episode it took television by storm and captured the American TV audience. This story traces Haley's maternal line back to Kunta Kinta, a young man captured into slavery from Gambia.

Alex Haley had oral history about his paternal family living in Alabama, but he could not find any proof to their story. So Haley started a novel about his grandmother "Queen" on his paternal side, but Alex died before he was able to finish his book. Later David Stevens finished the book and it was published in 1993, then the TV series aired on CBS starring actress Halle Berry.

Alex Haley's grandfather Alec Haley was fathered by a plantation overseer, William Harwell Baugh, and his grandmother was a slave girl by the name of Sabrina, on the Green Monroe Haley plantation in Marion County, Alabama.

In 2007, Chris Haley, son of Alex Haley's brother Julius, submitted a cheek swab to see what DNA would uncover.

Chris Haley, 46, accepted an invitation from professional genealogist Megan Smolenyak to submit a DNA sample for genealogical research of the Haley family. About the same time, June Baff-Black, of Wales, became interested in genealogy after watching an episode of "Who Do You Think You Are?" In each episode a celebrity attempts to track his/her ancestry through paper records and DNA.

As a woman, Baff-Black lacked the Y chromosome needed to track her paternal Scottish ancestors so she had her father, Thomas Baff, 73, submit a cheek swab to Ancestry.co.uk. Thomas Baff's profile and the profile Chris Haley submitted matched 45 out of 46 DNA markers. That means there is a 50 percent chance that Chris Haley and June Baff-Black had a common ancestor only six generations ago and a 75 percent chance they share a common ancestor from ten generations ago, apparently the same family that William Harwell Baugh, Alex Haley's grandfather, descended from.



GEORGE WASHINGTON'S "SECRET SIX"

During the American Revolution, George Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, put together a spy ring shortly after he lost control and possession of New York City. His first recruit was Nathan Hale, but he didn't last two weeks before he was caught, convicted and hanged. "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country," were his last words on 22 September 1776.

On the second attempt, George Washington was successful when he asked Major Benjamin Tallmadge to organize a spy ring, which is now known as the Culper Ring. Two of the main members were Abraham Woodhull and Robert Townsend. Their activities were conducted in New York's Manhattan, Long Island and Connecticut.

So secret was their operation that George Washington didn't know who all the spies were, other than Tallmadge and Townsend and Woodhull. Additional spies were Caleb Brewster, James Rivington, Austin Roe and "Agent 355." George Washington was Agent 711.

This unique spy group used code names; they wrote with invisible ink between the printed lines in newspapers and placed semaphore signal flags on clothes lines.

In the 1930's historian Morten Pennypacker started to analyze the handwriting of letters in George Washington's collection of papers and put together the names of those in the spy ring, except for Agent 355.

During more recent research, historians were led to believe that Agent 355 was a woman by the name of Anna Strong, a resident of Long Island, who passed along messages by posting pre-arranged signals to indicate when one of the spies was ready to submit intelligence.

If Anna Strong hung a black petticoat on her clothes line, it meant Caleb Brewster had arrived in town in his whaleboat. Next to that petticoat, she would hang a quantity of white Handkerchiefs. The specific number of handkerchiefs would indicate one of the six hiding places where Brewster might be hiding.

Abraham Woodhull, another local resident and a member of Washington's spy ring, used these signals to alert that he planned a meeting with Brewster.

This group of six spies were never made known in their lifetime or rewarded for their deeds of heroism. But the fact that Anna Strong was the last of the six spies to have her name become known, serves as an analogy that likens to genealogy research, where the women and their maiden names are the hardest to find.....and most often the last.



The Pavonia, NJ Massacre, Feb.26,1643

BY JANE MAGILL



The Dutch colonies in New Netherlands had very good relations with the Indians in the colonies of New Jersey and New York. However, because of the actions of Governor William Keift, that was to change in 1643. A few weeks previously, a young Indian had robbed and killed a popular shop owner in New Netherlands and many of the Dutch settlers were outraged.

A few demanded that Governor Keift retaliate against the Indian tribes living in Manhattan, on Long Island, and along the Hudson in New Jersey. However, the majority of the settlers were opposed to retaliation. Keift decided take action against some of the Indians and gathered a few men on the night of Feb. 26, 1643. They killed Indians who had sought shelter with the Dutch settlers after being attacked by other Indian tribes to the north. In many cases, the Indians they killed were actually living in the barns and outbuildings with permission of Dutch settlers. Many Indian women and children, even babies were killed as well as men. The massacres happened at Pavonia, N. J., directly across the Hudson from the tip of Manhattan, and at Corlear's Hook at the south east tip of Manhattan. There followed Indian massacres of some Dutch settlements around New Netherlands. **Reprinted from Russell Shorto's "Island at the Center of the World."**

The Dutch kept meticulous records of their commercial venture in New Netherlands during the 1600s. These records were written in Dutch and stored in Albany, NY. Beginning in 1975, the records began to be translated into English and the translations are stored in the New York City public library. The records are not just of the business of the Dutch communities in New

Amsterdam (Manhattan), Beverwyck (Albany) and Hoboken, NJ. Many accounts of the events that impacted the life of these communities were found in the translations. Below is an account of the death of Dirck Straatmaker and his wife, Tryntje Jacobs, my husband's 10th great grandparents. This was in the form of a story attached to Dirck Straatmaker that I found on Ancestry.com. This story also explains how the couple's son, Jan Dircksen Straatmaker, survived and was raised on Long Island.

on

After Governor Keift made the order to attack the unsuspecting tribe in Pavonia, over the objections of David Devries, the soldiers massacred the people there. Dirck Straatmaker, in company with some Englishmen and his wife, who had a baby* in her arms, came at an early hour upon the bloody field for the purpose of plunder. The surviving Indians, who now saw the soldiers filing off toward their boats, while the others tarried, fired upon Straatmaker's party, with what result the following certificate will

"We, the undersigned, sergeant, request of the Attorney-General, 1643, in the morning, after we had Pavonia, behind Egbert Woutersen, with a few Englishmen, arrived on lying, with a view to plunder maize or solemnly we warned said Dirck told them to go home, to which danger. If there were a hundred hurt us.' Upon which the according to their orders, to go to



Governor William Keift

show:

corporal, and soldiers, at the attest that on the - February, beaten a party of savages at the wife of Dirck Straatmaker, the spot where the slain were any other article. We declare Straatmaker and his wife and Dirck replied, 'There is no savages, none of them would undersigned left the spot, the house of Egbert. When

they arrived there they heard a shriek; then the sergeant ordered some of his soldiers toward the spot, where they found Dirck, aforesaid, wounded (he died a while after of his wounds), and his wife dead. The soldiers saved the English, who had only one gun amongst them all." Thomas Willet declared that Dirck aforesaid, being asked, 'Why did you not come with us when we warned?' answered, 'I might have well escaped by running, but I did not wish to leave my poor wife.' "All of which the the undersigned declare to be true. Done 18th May, 1643, in New Netherlands. JURIAEN KODOLF, Sergeant, "PETEE PETEKSEIST, Corporal," THOMAS WILLET."

*This child was saved. He was named Jan Dircksen Straatmaker. Shortly afterward he was bound by the authorities in New Amsterdam to Claes Teunissen, with whom he had, on Feb. 28, 1659, been living for 16 years. He was then in his seventeenth year. [Source: Minutes of the Orphan's Court, New Amsterdam] He must, therefore, have been very young at the time of the massacre. It is probable that from him came the family of that name, which for a long time lived in Hoboken. He married

Geesje Gerrits, Jan. 14, 1665. [Winfield's Land Titles]

(Taken from "History of the County of Hudson, New Jersey," by Charles Hardenburg Winfield)



UPCOMING RAMBLER PROGRAMS

BY SHELBY ROWAN

April 30, 2014 - "What's New at Clayton?" presented by Sue Kaufman

May 28, 2014 - "Why Join a Heritage Organization?" presented by Claire Lillie

June 25, 2014 - "Preserving Historic Documents" presented by Lou Von Johnson

July 30, 2014 - Election, Summer Brunch, Fellowship and Displays of Artifacts



GENEALOGY COMPUTER USERS GROUP

BY JERRY MARKOWICH

April 16, 2014 - "How to Make Group Pages"

May 21, 2014 - "How to Research Religion Roots on the Computer"

June 18, 2014 - To Be Announced



Did You Know.....

RENE-ROBERT LASALLE IS BURIED IN TEXAS?

BY MARY JANE MILLENDER

In 1682 French Explorer Rene-Robert LaSalle and his men left Ft. Crevecoeur (near present-day Peoria, IL) in canoes, paddling south exploring the Mississippi River all the way to its mouth, where it empties into the Gulf of Mexico. LaSalle claimed the entire Mississippi Basin for France, naming it "La Louisiane" in honor of his king, Louis XIV. He then returned to Ft. Crevecoeur before sailing back to France to report his success and to ask for the king's support to return to the Mississippi to secure that area from Spanish incursion.



LaSalle Statue, Navasota, TX

However, Louis XIV showed little interest in LaSalle's returning to the New World, but once LaSalle showed the king his new, personally redrawn maps of the Mississippi, which placed the river 745 miles to the west of the Rio Grande and close to the Spanish Empire located in that area, the king granted LaSalle a commission to take command of all land between Ft. St. Louis in Illinois and the Gulf of Mexico.

The summer of 1684 LaSalle and his four ships carrying 320 colonists, which included soldiers, merchants, officers, valets,

servants, women and children, embarked on a long, dangerous journey to once again find the Mississippi River Delta, only this time sailing a new route: via the Atlantic Ocean, then the Caribbean and then around to the Gulf of Mexico. This presented his first problem...and it was a huge problem: LaSalle had never sailed these waters before!

After five months at sea, a short stop in Haiti and the loss of a ship to pirates, LaSalle's group finally reached the Gulf of Mexico. But where were the river and its delta? The ships were lost and the pompous LaSalle, refusing advice from his officers, continued to sail in fog, rain and in the dark, consequently sailing past his planned destination and on toward the mid-coastline of today's Texas. One of his three ships was sent back to look for the Mississippi, but ran aground and couldn't be salvaged. LaSalle now commanded only two ships.

LaSalle and his remaining ships set sail, gain searching for his "lost river." Eventually the ships sailed into Matagorda Bay, losing one of the two on a sand bar; the second (and last) one ran aground.

By February of 1687, the colonists numbered only 36. Few of those remained loyal to LaSalle; the majority of the survivors were ready to mutiny. For two years, LaSalle's group had wandered aimlessly and unsuccessfully in their mission to find the Mississippi; they faced hostile Indians, poor living conditions AND everyone but LaSalle was ready to return to France.

In March of that year, while LaSalle was frantically searching east of Matagorda Bay for the Mississippi, one of his men, hiding along the path, stood up, ambushed and shot LaSalle in the head. Rene-Robert LaSalle was buried there.....but where is *there*?

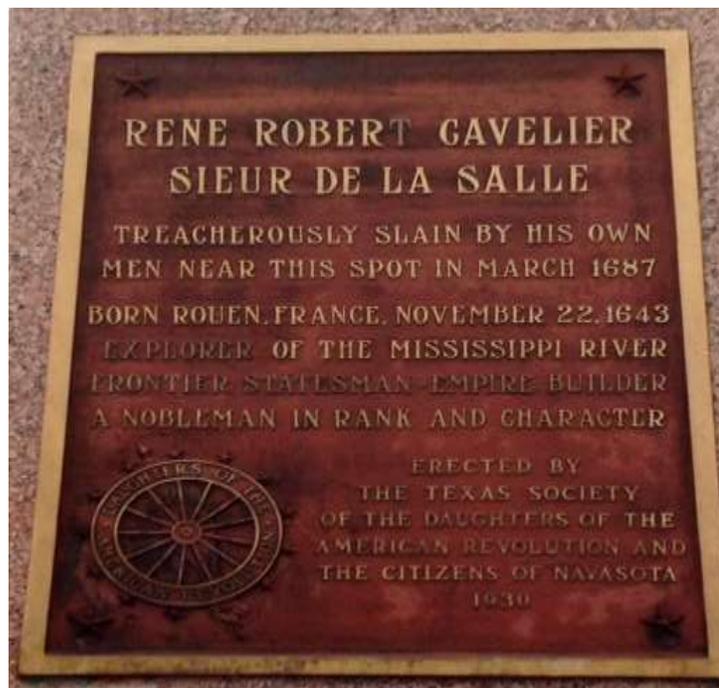
Historians for years have studied French records, read diaries of LaSalle's brother, who was also on the expedition. Some have declared eastern Oklahoma as the burial site. Others say Spanish records show LaSalle was assassinated in Rusk County in East Texas. Another source believes Beaumont was the likely spot. Other historians claim LaSalle was walking along the Sabine River when he was ambushed.

Texas? The Trinity close second most popular long lost grave. But winner on our list. At LaSalle's statue on the Navasota states "This is

As we look back into Rene life, Texans can thank that big river's mouth future state of Texas' errors and failed to find his original succeed in claiming all

France and for his king. And "all that land" meant that Texas would be included in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. As a sixth generation Texan, I say "Thank you."

the land" meant that Texas would be included in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. As a sixth generation Texan, I say "Thank you."



Or was it near Alto, to Huntsville, is the location of LaSalle's Navasota is the least the plaque on main entry into the place."

Robert LaSalle's this explorer for missing and landing on the shoreline. Through miscalculations, LaSalle prize, but he did the land he explored for

Note: "The La Salle Expedition to Texas: The Journal of Henry Joutel, 1684-1687" includes a map showing that La Salle was assassinated in western Grimes County, about 12 miles west of Navasota. The journal states that LaSalle's group crossed the Brazos River on March 14, 1687 and he was

murdered five days later north of the Brazos crossing. (Henry Joutel was one of the survivors of LaSalle's final search.)

MARY COLLIE COOPER LECTURE 2014



REGISTRATION TABLE



SPEAKER ROBERT SCOTT DAVIS



TIME FOR ANOTHER DOOR PRIZE

Identification of Members in Mary Collie Cooper Lecture Photos:

1. Speaker Robert Scott Davis and Rambler Clint Williams, seated on right
2. Speaker Davis
3. Carmel Hill, Novella Hornek and Sheila May

A pack rat may be hard to live with, but he makes a great ancestor!

HEALTH HINTS FROM THE 1880'S

"That the flavor of cod-liver oil may be changed to the delightful one of fresh oysters, if the patient will drink a large glass of water poured from a vessel in which nails have been allowed to rust."

"That well ventilated bedrooms will prevent morning headaches and lassitude."

"The best time to bathe is just before going to bed, as any danger of taking cold is thus avoided and the complexion is improved by keeping warm for several hours after leaving the bath."

A Lawyer's Tombstone in England

SIR HENRY STRANGE

Here Lies an Honest Man

And That is Strange

Newsletter Staff

Mary Jane Millender..... Editor & Brick Walls
Henry Hanson..... Photographer, Production
Jane Magill..... Contributing Writer
Clint Williams..... Website

Speaker Robert Scott Davis

TIME FOR ANOTHER DOOR PRIZE

CARMEL HILL, NOVELLA HORNEK AND SHELIA MAY