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CHRISTINE FOX

Style · February 18, 2013

'Invisible history' comes alive at AAHA in The Plains



A model of a slave couple's home life.

By **David Lyne, Contributor**

Sherrie Carter fires up her laptop, opens a file and scrolls through hundreds of years of her genealogy.

Over the past 15 or 16 years, she has compiled a rich history of her ancestry, from her great-great grandmother, Charlotte Slaughter Scott, a slave from Nigeria, to her mother, the late Eva Walker, perhaps Warrenton's best-known

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civil rights activist.

The genealogical tapestry, including hundreds of photographs, comes from census figures, registries of free and enslaved blacks, birth, death and marriage records, court documents, wills, family bibles, cemeteries, church records, military documents and many more sources.

"It's amazing what's out there," says Ms. Carter, owner of Sherrie's Stuff at 19 N. Fifth St. in Warrenton.

She credits much of her genealogical success to the guidance of Karen Hughes White, co-founder of the Afro-American Historical Association in The Plains.

"I think she is an extraordinary woman," Ms. Carter says of her mentor.

Walking through history

The association offices, research center, archives, library and museum, which opened June 14, 1997, have grown into a significant repository for the African-American history of Fauquier County.

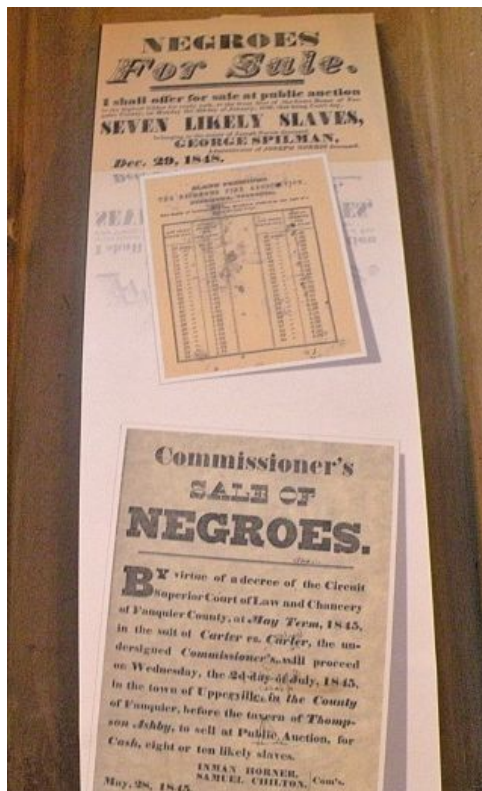
"I did not relate to history until I started to walk through it," says Ms. White, a retired nurse who lives in Midland with her husband, General.

Her journey into the past began roughly 20 years ago when she and acquaintance Karen King Lavore did genealogical research on their respective families.

"Our research kept taking us back to the Morgantown area, near Marshall," Ms. White says of the place where she grew up. "We both had ancestors, slave and free, from the same community."



Photos/David Lyne
The museum displays a set of manacles used to restrain slaves.



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Their thirst for genealogical and historical knowledge grew, as did their friendship.

Their first joint venture was a history of Mount Nebo Baptist Church on Free State Road west of Marshall.

“I soon realized that the history that needed to be preserved was greater than my family (records),” Ms. White says.

The women founded the association in 1992, working from Ms. White’s home, to compile the history and genealogy of the county’s African-Americans and “make it available to the public.”

In 1993, the association published Fauquier County, Virginia, Register of Free Negroes 1817-1865 by Ms. White, Ms. Lavore (then Ibrahim) and Courtney Gaskins. (The copyright on an earlier publication with the same title, by Paul Heinegg, had expired.) In 2009, Ms. White, along with Donna Tyler Hollie and Brett M. Tyler, published African Americans of Fauquier County, a 127-page work that creates a timeline from slavery to modern times through photographs and vignettes.

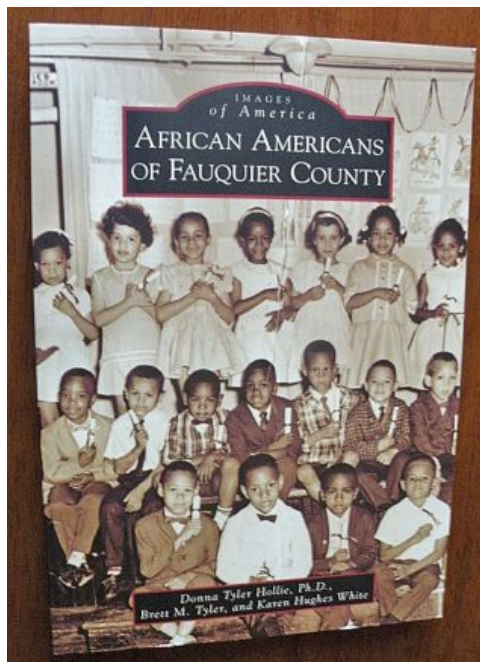
“The reason we started was genealogical,” says Ms. White of the foundation’s creation. “We discovered an invisible history out there and it became alive.”

In addition to its genealogical work, the association helps document the Underground Railroad in the county, creates overlay maps of historical sites such as African-American churches, cemeteries, baptism sites and schools, researches predominantly black communities in the county and more.

Ms. Lavore, who now lives in Virginia



A map of the Underground Railroad route through Fauquier County.



The foundation’s most recent publication.

Afro-American Historical Association

- **What:** A research center and repository for genealogy and history of African-Americans with ties to Fauquier County. Also houses a museum.
- **Where:** 4243 Loudoun Ave., The Plains
- **Founders:** Karen Hughes White, president, and Karen King Lavore, vice president.
- **Hours:** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
- **Phone:** 540-253-7488

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Beach, serves on the association board and remains active in its work, primarily doing online research from her home, says Ms. White. The association has three part-time employees and numerous volunteers.

A museum in the basement walks visitors through the African-American experience from slavery to emancipation to the election of President Barack Obama. In 1860, Fauquier County had a slave population of 10,455, more than any other county in the state.

Murals by Ms. Carter depict aspects of bondage, replicas of newspaper ads and posters announce slave sales and rewards for runaways, copies of wills list slaves to be inherited or freed, displays include artifacts from slavery, memorabilia from the Jim Crow era, photographs of black servicemen from the county, and more.

“The community basically said they wanted a museum by bringing us things,” says Ms. White.

Outside the museum is a large metal slave cage, believed to have come from the ship Veronica that berthed in Alexandria. The cage was donated and delivered by an antiques dealer from upstate New York.

“He didn’t want any money for it,” says Ms. White. “He said too much money already had been made from the slave trade.”

Putting faces on history

Jane Butler, a subcontractor who does genealogical research for the foundation, believes photographs are a tremendous aid in bringing family history to life.

“You have to go to everyone in the family,” she says as she goes through her photographic family tree on display in the museum. “Most people will say, ‘Oh, I don’t have much,’ but when you put it all together you have something.”

Ms. Butler has compiled an estimated 1,200 genealogical files since she joined the foundation in 2002. On a recent day, she was researching for a Colorado woman who found an obituary for an ancestor buried in Fauquier County.

“The work we do focuses mainly on African-Americans, but it’s really part of all our history. It’s U.S. history,” she says. “We try to humanize what had been dehumanized.”

Tidbits from the past

Ms. White, the second of five children born to Lloyd and Catherine Hughes of

- **Website:** aahafauquier.org

Upcoming Fundraiser

- **What:** *Talent Search*, a play written and directed by Lemuel A. Montgomery of Warrenton.

- **When:** 12:30 and 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 23; 7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 1, and 12:30 and 4 p.m. Sunday, March 2.

- **Admission:** \$15 per person. Advance ticket sales only; no tickets sold at door.

- **Contact:** Lillian Walker, 540-347-1883.

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Morgantown, has traced her lineage to Wormley Hughes (1781-1858), an expert gardener and horseman held in bondage by Thomas Jefferson at Monticello near Charlottesville. Her ancestry also has ties to the Granger and Hemmings families at Monticello.

Ms. White's paternal great-grandfather was the Rev. Wormley Hughes (1851-1901), a grandson of the Monticello slave, who preached in Loudoun County, at Mount Nebo Baptist Church in Morgantown and Providence Baptist Church in Orlean. His wife, Georgette, taught school.

In 1854, ancestor Hezekiah Gaskins, whose forebears were emancipated in the 1700s by Robert Carter, bought his enslaved wife, Fannie, and children from Edward Carrington Marshall. When Mr. Gaskins died in 1870, Marshall deeded 25 acres on Naked Mountain to the widow.

One of Ms. White's maternal ancestors, Brister Grigsby, bought about 80 acres in Morgantown in 1870. She and her siblings still farm the land.

"We can't undo the past," Ms. White says of the enslavement of her ancestors and the years of discrimination during the Jim Crow era and beyond. "But we can create a timeline of events and people's struggles. It's all part of who we are."

Ms. Butler traces her lineage to slaves owned by the Skinker family on Pignut Mountain in the late 1700s. One of her ancestors, Anthony Dangerfield, was a skilled blacksmith and horseman forced by his owner, James Skinker, to serve the Confederacy during the Civil War. He was assigned to the Black Horse Cavalry. After the war ended and brought him freedom, Mr. Dangerfield bought land at Hume. He later sold a parcel of his land to the Marshall School District for a school serving African-American children of the Hume area.

His photograph in the museum shows a distinguished gentleman with grey hair and well-groomed goatee, dressed in a dark jacket, crisp white shirt and tie.

"Who would ever look at that and think he had been a slave?" asks Ms. Butler.

Ms. Carter gets excited when talking about information she obtained about here great-grandfather, Eli Tackett, thanks to a helpful hint from Ms. White.

"She told me to search the deposition records at the courthouse in Warrenton," says Ms. Carter. She hit pay dirt.

Mr. Tackett was among dozens of slaves freed by John Fox, a wealthy landowner with extensive holdings southwest of Opal. Mr. Fox, who died just before the Civil War, stipulated in his will that his slaves be freed and inherit his property. For some reason, the estate was not settled until after the war.

Mrs. Carter's eyes light up as she reads from the deposition given by her ancestor nearly 150 years ago. After confirming that he had been one of Mr. Fox's slaves emancipated by the will, Mr. Tackett is asked if they also were to inherit property.

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"He gave us all he had in the world," was Mr. Tackett's reply.

Noting that her lineage includes blacks, whites, native American and mixed-race persons, Mrs. Carter says, "History is multiracial. We're all part of it."

Looking ahead

Mrs. White still has a lot of projects on her "to do" list: obtaining more funds for research, restoring and preserving an African-American school at Morgantown, editing and publishing volumes of historical records at the foundation's disposal.

"She has so many things she wants to do, but she doesn't have enough hands," says Mrs. Carter. "It's time consuming, but it's good information."

An ardent fan of Ms. White and her foundation in The Plains, Mrs. Carter says, "Go up there and learning something. It's history."


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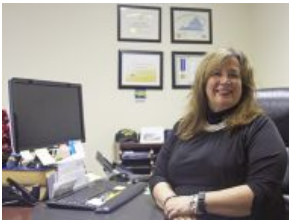
Kettle Run rallies to win Conference 27 golf title



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Sophomore Patrick Tenure turns it on for 12-stroke swing at No. 6 seed

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