

# AfroPanamanian Newsletter



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**No.1 Vol. IV**

**January 2013**

**Donation**



*Christmas Morning Shepherd's Parade*

**Controversy**

**Anecdotes**

**Poetry**

## LOS AMIGOS :

### Por la superación de la Etnia Negra (Incorporated to SEAPAT EVENTOS, S.A.)

A group of friends, in Panama, decided to join forces to work on the rescue of values, customs and cultural traditions bequeathed to us through our ancestors. These have been displaced by others, thus losing a large part of our Black Heritage. We are evaluating all these forgotten traditions and values and highlighting figures as examples for future generations.

***“For Black history to be done right, we must do it ourselves.” Edward Gaskin***

### CREDITS

Editor : Sandra Patterson (R.I.P)

Assistant: Ines V. Sealy

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The editor is not responsible for the opinions expressed by our collaborators

Cover Page: The stamp which appears on the cover was proposed to the Canal Zone Government by Mr. George W. Westerman (r.i.p.) accepted and issued in 1951 as a 10 cent postage stamp, used for years. Permission for its continuous use was given by his grandnephew, Cecil Reynolds.

### *Editorial*

***ADVICE FOR LIFE***  
*(gleaned from forwards)*

It's not how we care in the beginning,

**but how much we care**

**till the very end.**

--0--

*Some people*

*always throw stones in your path.*

*It depends on what you make with*

*them.*

*A Wall or a Bridge?*

*- Remember you are the architect of*

*your life.*

***-Kindness is the language the blind can see and the deaf can hear.***

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December 2012 feedback

Inez,  
I was on Sandy's List Serve to receive the Afro Panamanian Newsletter. Would you mind including me on your list, when you begin publishing again? Thank you. It was her legacy and I would appreciate the continued connection.  
Peace,  
Nadya

**The December issue was sad and yet so wonderful to read the condolences for Sandy and the dedication in her honor. She was well respected in the community.**  
**Our friend, definitely accomplished a lot during her short time in this earth life.**  
**Sandy had a *Joie de Vivre* in everything she did.**  
**Do hope you are successful in finding a journalism major to continue publishing the Newsletter.**  
**Peace,**  
**Nadya**

Inez,  
I usually open the Newsletter later when time allows me to savor and digest the staff's effort. So sorry I took so long this time, due to rushing back and forth to Colon to assist a suddenly ill family member, that I got the shocking news of Sandra's passing late. Wow! She departed at a tender age. She seemed to have enjoyed her life, which I'm thankful and happy for her that she did. Please accept my sincere condolence for your great loss.  
Will help in the search of the new editor to continue her work. Is a degree in journalism a **must**?

Please continue your appreciated work which I usually forward to my family and friends abroad.  
Marge  
-----  
I would like to take the opportunity to extend condolences of the passing of Ms. Patterson. I knew her through her parents who were members of the methodist church. I saw her in May at the activity at the Hotel El Panama. Never thought it would be last time I would see her and converse with her.  
Blessings,  
Carla

**OPPORTUNITIES** Contributed by Marcia Henry  
Though there are a number of companies and organizations donating monies for scholarships for African Americans, a great deal of the money is being returned because of a lack of interest.

(If clicking on the link doesn't work, copy and paste the URL in your web browser.)

- 1) BELL LABS FELLOWSHIPS FOR UNDER REPRESENTED MINORITIES

<http://www.bell-labs.com/fellowships/CRFP/info.html>

- 2) Student Inventors Scholarships

<http://www.invent.org/collegiate>

<http://www.invent.org/collegiate/>

- 3) Student Video Scholarships

<http://www.christophers.org/vidcon2k.html>

- 4) Coca-Cola Two Year College Scholarships

<http://www.coca-colascholarship.org/programs.html>

- 5) Holocaust Remembrance Scholarships

<http://holocaust.hklaw.com/>

Contributed by John E. Edwards

*(The South Corridor in Panama is going digital. Cards will be the only means of use. The cards are sold at \$5 and are replenished from Five dollars up.)*

Use this URL <http://t.co/UeiuH9rE> or call 314-2800 or text to 2252 space card's number.

January 2013

## “Son Winsor” is Gone.



## Joseph Dixon, Grenadian

*Excerpted from Katie Wingenbach's Article in the Star and Herald Sunday, November 6, 1983.*

As a young man, Alonso Wilson started to create marches and waltzes for elementary schools, and, as a student of the National Institute high school he was extraordinarily surprised to have a line of clubs contracting him for compositions and arrangements in a rhythm of his own invention which he called “*Son Winsor*”. Generally consisting of a change of tempo and rhythm, influenced by Cuba's son, the USA's Jazz and Panama's *tamborito*, it had a simple arrangement, a melodious *Latin* flavor of West Indian-Panamanian origin; sweet and sentimental for dancing.

After tunes like: *Riomar, Rio riomar and Rivoli, Rivoli*, no wonder the Social clubs formed a line to get their own. *Los Ases del Volante, Manchester, Los Tritones*, and others. Compositions of other genres include: *Mi niña preferida, Sospecha, Me voy a Panama* and his favorite: *Concolon*.

Although he migrated and lived in the United States where he continued his studies up to a Masters in Education at the University of Long Island, his heart was always in Panama, to prove it, for Panama's centennial (2003) he produced a collection of his compositions in a double CD where he sings “IN MY HEART WHATEVER I DO, I WILL ALWAYS BE LOVING YOU, PANAMA, PANAMA, PANAMA”.

Alonso, number Six of Eight children born to the proud Jamaican couple: Simeon Wilfred Wilson, hailing to Panama from St. Thomas and Dorcas Bryan Wilson from Portland went home to rest on Tuesday January 8, 2013.

Lured to the Canal Zone by the prospect of dazzlingly high wages beginning at **ten cents per hour**, Joseph Dixon came to the Isthmus in 1912 from Grenada which at that time was a part of the British West Indies. Ten cents per hour may not sound like much by today's standards, but in comparison to a shilling (24 cents) a day at home, coming to Panama must have looked better than staying at home.

“There was always more work than people then,” he said. Sometimes people were pulled in from the street, given on-the-spot training in whatever was necessary, and put to work. As a carpenter he could build a house from its foundation to its finish, but the North Americans specialized in parts: beams, sidings, floorings, etc. classified as an artisan, he was involved in moving the houses from place to place when they were in the way of the construction or in danger of landslides.

He worked among Greeks, Spaniards, Italians, East and West Indians. Each group had its camp and galley, but they also visited each other's galleys, getting a feel for other foods.

“In 1916, a major depression hit the Canal area. Mr. Dixon was among the many workers laid off when WWI looked like it would drag on forever... affecting canal traffic. Mr. Dixon joined the British Volunteers of Latin America, serving as a provost sergeant with the 11<sup>th</sup> British West Indies regiment. His service took him to France, Belgium and Italy” where he learnt French and Italian that later served him well as an “interpreter and language teacher for local tourist bureaus, hotels and war brides”.

Mr. Dixon began making up poems at parties to make others laugh, but it later became a way of preserving his memoirs. “I like to get words together in a nice way... sometimes it just comes to me and I accept it.”

January 2013

## Remembering my first teacher

*Excerpted and expanded from her obituary prepared by her granddaughter Gloria Scantlebury for Ines V. Sealy*

Mary Louise Gittens, better known to me as “Teacher Gittens” was the person who taught me my first letters when my father took me to her home in *Carrasquilla* with my slate and pencil bought from Stone's bookstore under Muller's Building. Learning to read from Royal Reader books: s-o= so, g-o=go, etc. Foremost in my memory is sitting to table with her at lunch time and being corrected in my way of eating. Her use of the center leaf of the dashing or coco plant to make a pepperpot soup. Her preference for bonnabis peas which she grew in the back yard. There was a wide yard on the side in which we played cat and mouse, tag, drop a letter, etc.

Although she came to Panama as a nurse to meet her husband, and did home visits, when hospitals became more popular, the visionary that she was, decided that a very important part of our culture was on its way to extinction, and determined to do something about it. Right away, she changed direction and began to work with her grandchildren; word got around and other children from the community were added. Parents were pleased with the changes in their children's language abilities and soon, what started out as 4 grew to 6, to 9 and more over the years. Due to her teaching skills, the strategies used in her interaction in her classes, and the levels of language and learning development of the children, many were immediately placed in advanced grades at the time they came into the elementary school.

Teacher Gittens taught her students to read, to write, dictation, grammar, arithmetic, and verses from the Holy Bible. Many were the insights shared with her students and children, that are remembered today, for example - “that as people of color we should be proud of our heritage” or that “in the face of failure, never give up”; but above all, to “set goals and reach for the stars”.

She was the teacher of teachers who showed a great heart, patience, expertise, knowledge, and excellent competence for teaching students and preparing them for life.

A native of Bridgetown, **Barbados**, the Lord called her home on July 20th, 1953

### Perseverance

*(poem I heard at Teacher Gitten's School researched on Google where they mention it being in Royal Reader and recited by Barbadians)*

Drive the nail aright, boys,  
Hit it on the head;  
Strike with all your might, boys,  
While the iron's red.

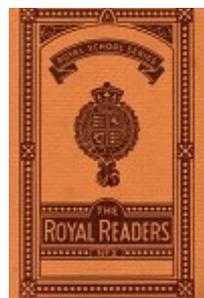
When you've work to do, boys,  
Do it with a will;  
They who reach the top, boys,  
First must climb the hill.

Standing at the foot, boys,  
Gazing at the sky,  
How can you get up, boys,  
If you never try?

Though you stumble oft, boys,  
Never be down-cast;  
Try, and try again, boys,--  
You'll succeed at last.

<http://www.poetrylibrary.org.uk/queries/lostquotes/?id=31>

*Royal Readers, a series of school books were published in England.. The series consists of Primer, and six grades*



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## Cricket on the Canal Zone



*Excerpted from the Panama Canal Review August 1, 1952*

The La Boca Cricket Club, Three-time Canal Zone champions, is shown here with Umpire John Tudor (back left). The team members who played in a match against the team from the HMS Sheffield:

Van McLeod, Kenneth Brathwaite, E Belgrave, Alfred Bowen, Christopher Greaves, Leonard Roberts, A. (Baggie) Williams  
M. Forde, Captain, Marcus Grannum, James Lord, Edgar Roberts and E. Wiltshire.

In the British and traditional game of Cricket, there is tea between the long-drawn-out innings (after 10 men on a team have been out). But on the Canal Zone, at the end of the 3-day matches, the type played in international competitions, there was a gathering at which there were speeches and toasts honoring both winners and losers. Cricket hospitality, Canal Zone style, omitted the traditional tea. It was more of a banquet plus a family reunion when local cricketers got together.

In one respect cricket is the same wherever it is played. It isn't cricket to question an umpire's decision or show undue feeling about the game or its outcome. The ethics of cricket are a most revered tradition with followers of the English national game.

When a bowler bowls a very good ball or a batsman smothers a "yorker", he is politely applauded by his opponents, in and out of the stands. On the other hand, if he's hit "for a six" the crowd and players keep still. When the captain of a team comes up to bat – be he a "William Tell" or just awful-- the crowd and the players note his position with a good rousing ovation. When a slugger of a batsman come up to the crease in a hot match, the crowd and the players react. If he "snicks" a four across the boundary, everyone can relax while four points are scored automatically without the running to bases like baseball.

On the Pacific side 98 players on six teams and 171 players on 8 teams on the Atlantic side fight it out on Sunday afternoons from January to May and January to July respectively. Two avid players of note in their youth, were the brothers-in-law: Van McLeod and Marcus (German) Grannum Moll who played on both sides of the Isthmus. Marcus was considered a star, he even won a batting championship one year.

The white cricket uniform of flannel trousers and silk shirts, that came down from its blue-blood originators, gave way in the Canal Zone to clothing more fitting for strenuous exercise in the tropics. The umpire even added a white "elephant hunter" hat to his traditional white duck "duster".

January 2013

## The Business of Slavery on the American Continent.

By Dilsia Alleyne

This topic has to do with beginning, how and when our ancestors came to the American continent. I browsed through many books before I made up my mind to do this research. It is based on those founding fathers from Haiti and South America that had to do with the beginning and abolition of slavery in our continent.



Did you know that the first Africans that arrived on the American continent were brought as a part of the Slavery business in 1503; once on the island called by the Spanish Hispaniola (today's Haiti & Dominican Republic) they were sold as laborers. Later in 1508 Ferdinand II of *Aragon* officially established in the Americas the Spanish African slave trade.

January 1<sup>st</sup> 1804 Jean Jacques Dessaline declared Haiti an independent nation, becoming the first Black Republic established in the world.

Simon Bolivar, who admired President Alexander Petion was visiting Haiti in February of 1816. During his visit he and President Petion made a deal. Petion would provide Bolivar with arms, provisions, medicines and more; in exchange Bolivar would help free all black slaves in Venezuela and other South American countries. Petion was President of Haiti from 1806 to 1818, considered one of Haiti's founding fathers along with Jean Jacques Dessaline and others.

Bolivar, keeping his promise, in June of 1816 signed his first proclamation of emancipation. Followed by the second proclamation one month later, the third proclamation was done in 1818.

Bolivar was moved to free Black slaves, not only because of the deal he'd made with President Petion, but also to attract interest for strong and persistent young men to join his cause to get the independence of the New Granada. He also had changed his conviction. His belief, by now, had become: "slavery is a social disease that must be totally eradicated".

Aside from Bolivar; in 1797 a radical group from Venezuela requested the abolition of slavery. In 1809 *Antonio Villavicencio* from the New Granada defended, in Seville, the eradication of slavery by providing liberty to all children of slaves born after a certain date.

Years later, the government from the *Cauca* village, a great slavery center part of the New Granada, receives claims from slaves requesting their liberty.

Movement to liberate slaves continued, in 1813 *Juan de Corral* in a letter to the executive of the confederation of New Granada, stated that slavery of Blacks was a crime, so, its abolition thru an act of congress was vital for the success of the independent movement.

Congress answered that each province should examine the proposal considering its effects on the mining and agricultural industries. In 1814 *Corral*, being a dictator in the province of *Antioquia*, requested that his legislative body abolish slavery. As a result of his request, that year on the 20th of April the first law was signed to free Black slaves in New Granada.

The decree written by Doctor *Felix Restrepo* declared that children of all slaves born after a certain date must be freed on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### Bibliography

Fortune, Armando. "Bolivar y la abolición de la esclavitud." *Revista Nacional de Cultura*. INAC. Panama, October, November and December 1976. Pages 9-21.

Wikipedia: *Timeline of Haitian History*

*The Islamic Republic of Mauritania was the last country to abolish slavery by law in 1981, so that, nowhere in the world is slavery legal anymore.*

*Really?????*

## Dissapearing Things?

*By Ines V. Sealy*

At the end of the article “*Preparation for Christmas*” written in the December 2010 AfroPanamanian Newsletter mention is made of Daddy (Lloyd Leslie Sealy) coming home to breakfast after having marched in the Shepherd's 6:00 a.m. Parade. He was a member of Excelsior Lodge No. 2444, Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds in Panama City.



We are happy to see that that is not one of the “**dissapearing things**”.

The custom is still alive and healthy in the City of Colon.

I was happy to find pictures on one of these “**new fangled**” social networks, of the Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds Friendly Society, which was founded in England in 1826 being preserved here in the Republic, although most of the original West Indians who came to Panama for the Construction of the Canal have passed.

We are also happy to see the young people participating.

Notice the time of the photos. The parade followed another West Indian custom: Going to church first.



### Wikipedia tells us:

“Friendly societies were established to help families against hardship brought about by illness or death. Such societies began as locally based groups, whose members contributed a small amount each month so that payouts could be made to those in need, the rest of the money received was either saved or invested.

Shepherds Friendly started life as a sickness and benefits society, Ashton Unity, which was formed in Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire on Christmas Day in 1826. It was later renamed as the **Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds**, "loyal" referring to the Crown and "shepherds" to the Nativity of Jesus. Its objects were "to relieve the sick, bury the dead, and assist each other in all cases of unavoidable distress.”