



Jim Vincent, "Tour Guide"

**African American Heritage Tour:
Black Saint Louis
By Anita Boyd**

Saturday, October 17th, 2009, I joined the St. Louis African American History & Genealogy Society (St. Louis AAHGS) on their second African American Heritage Tour of black Saint Louis.

Jim Vincent, St. Louis AAHGS's *raconteur extraordinaire*, was our tour guide during our day long escapade through "North County". An accomplished historian, Jim has over 40 years of research experience and is more than well-versed in local lore.

The morning session promised not to disappoint as we visited the African American communities of Kinloch, Berkeley, Robertson, and Missouri Bottoms, where we

learned about the history of its early inhabitants and their contributions made to the area.

After lunch, we headed to the Saint Charles Historical Society Archives where Bill Popp, Archivist, gave us an overview of their holdings and answered questions from members.

As we waited to tour the First Missouri State Capitol Building, also in Saint Charles, Jim regaled us with an entertaining and true story about Jacques Clamorgan, landowner and schemer, and his former slave mistress, Ester, who had learned a few things from Clamorgan and managed to outsmart him in a "Lady's Agreement" that netted her part of his property with the help of Missouri's First Lady of Missouri, Margaret McNair.

As we toured the grounds of the Capitol, I couldn't help but think about my own ancestors and how they might have lived: from the community garden and the aging cedar cistern; to the animal skins and sundry items sold at the general store as well as the dried herbs hanging from its ceiling; to the roped bedstead and patchwork quilt anchored within a wooden frame; to the top floor meeting room where Alexander McNair, Missouri's first governor and Margaret's husband, must have debated the slavery question with his fellow cabinet members.

Our day wouldn't have been complete without a visit to the (Meriwether) Lewis & (William) Clark Boat House and one last anecdote, from Jim, concerning Clark's slave, York. Without York, who is not often mentioned in the history books, the first cross-county expedition to the Pacific Ocean would not have been possible.

Special thanks to Jim, Maldine Wallace, Charles Brown, Quan Pruitt, and my fellow St Louis AAHGS members for another wonderful tour! To learn more about the St. Louis African American History & Genealogy Society, please visit <http://www.stl-aahgs.com/>.