

Legacy

Resilience

SENEGAMBIA TO SULLIVAN'S ISLAND

Connection

Community

GENERATIONS



WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION

Dear Family,

As we step into a new year—a season often associated with beginnings, intention, and renewal—I am honored to welcome you to the inaugural issue of Generations:

Senegambia to Sullivan's Island. This first edition is offered as an opening door. It is both a reflection and an invitation: to look back with reverence, to acknowledge the journey that carried us here, and to begin documenting our story with care, truth, and respect. From African origins, through unimaginable trials, and into lives shaped by resilience, faith, and perseverance, our shared history deserves space to be remembered fully.

At its heart, this newsletter exists to honor those who came before us—whose lives, sacrifices, and quiet strength laid the foundation for generations they would never meet, yet profoundly shaped. Their legacy lives on through us.

This publication is meant for unhurried reading—to be returned to, shared, and preserved. It sets the tone for how we remember, how we tell our story, and how we remain connected to one another across time and distance.

As we begin this new chapter together, may these pages serve as a place of reflection, remembrance, and renewed connection—rooted in legacy, guided by purpose, and carried forward with intention.

Kind regards,

Charles L. Sampson

Editor-in-Chief

Generations: Senegambia to Sullivan's Island

HONORING ABE SANSON

AND THE SAMPSON LEGACY

In this inaugural issue, we honor the life and achievements of Abe Sanson (later Sampson), born between 1842 and 1847, who stands as the **founding father of the Sampson family**. Abe was born into slavery and gained his freedom as he entered adulthood. From his courage and determination grew a family that now proudly counts eight generations of descendants.

Honoring Abe Sanson and the Sampson Legacy

Celebrating the legacy of Abe Sanson means recognizing the extraordinary journey from bondage to freedom, from hardship to hope. The perseverance of Abe and his descendants reflects not just family history, but a vital chapter in the larger American story.



Abe Sanson - This image is an AI-generated artistic rendering created to reflect what Abe Sanson-born between approximately 1842 and 1847-may have looked like, based on family photographs and historical context.

ABE'S EARLY YEARS &

PATH TO FREEDOM

Census records list Abe's birth in either Mississippi or North Carolina, and by 1850 he was recorded as enslaved to William C. Sanson of Jasper County, Mississippi. Like many African Americans of that era, Abe bore the surname of his enslaver. Around 1875, following emancipation and the turbulent years of Reconstruction

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the name "Sanson" evolved to "Sampson," symbolizing a break from bondage and a step into self-determined identity.

Abe came of age during one of the most divided periods in U.S. history. The Compromise of 1850, the Fugitive Slave Act, and other pre-war laws deepened national divisions while denying freedom and justice to millions. Against this backdrop, Abe's eventual freedom marked the beginning of an enduring family story grounded in resilience, dignity, and faith.

FAMILY & LEGACY

In the years following emancipation, **Abe Sampson married Kalline (possibly recorded in some**



Kalline Sanson: This image is an AI-generated artistic rendering created to reflect what Kalline (possibly-Caroline Sanson-born between approximately 1842 and 1847) may have looked like, based on family photographs and historical context.

documents as Caroline), and together they began building a new life as free people. They raised children who became the roots of a growing and close-knit family.

KALLINE SANSON AND THE SAMPSON LEGACY

From their union came sons and daughters who worked the land, built churches and schools, and laid the foundation for the generations that followed. Their lives were humble but purposeful, guided by hard work, devotion to family, and faith in education and progress.

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THE PROMISE OF RECONSTRUCTION

HAD FADED, GIVING WAY TO HARSH REALITIES

The promise of Reconstruction had faded, giving way to the harsh realities of Jim Crow laws, segregation, and economic hardship. For Black families across the South, including the Sampsons of Mississippi, survival demanded courage, faith, and an unshakable belief that life could and would be better for those who came after.

The early 1900s brought both opportunity and peril. Many of Abe's children and grandchildren worked the land as sharecroppers, trapped in an unjust system that kept them in perpetual debt to landowners. Despite the hardships, the family found strength in community and in one another. Sunday worship, family gatherings, and education became the cornerstones of hope. Some of Abe's descendants learned to read by lamplight after long days in the fields, determined to claim what their forebears had been denied the right to learn, to think, and to dream freely.



THE WORLD SEEMED TO OPEN UP IN NEW WAYS

WORLD WAR II (1941)

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, the world seemed to open up in new ways. Young Black men, including members of the Sampson family, were called to serve their country, often in segregated units that faced discrimination even in uniform. Yet, **their participation in the war planted seeds of pride and global awareness that would later fuel the fight for civil rights.** Those who remained at home faced the twin challenges of low wages and rising prices, but the sense of shared sacrifice strengthened family bonds and deepened their resolve.

The years that followed tested every American family, but for Black families in the South, the Great Depression struck especially hard. Cotton prices collapsed, jobs vanished, and federal relief often bypassed communities of color.

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Black U.S. Army soldier during World War II, carrying a standard-issue U.S. infantry rifle. Due to segregation, Black soldiers were assigned to separate units like the 92nd ("Buffalo Soldiers") and 93rd Infantry Divisions.

AI-generated historical rendering.

Yet, through these difficult decades, the Sampsons endured. Gardens were planted, livestock tended, and food shared with neighbors in need. Churches became lifelines, providing both spiritual nourishment and practical support. Even in scarcity, there was abundance in love and unity. In the face of injustice and poverty, the Sampsons and other families like them created their own safety nets—through faith, kinship, and determination. **6**

A NEW CENTURY:

PERSEVERANCE & PROGRESS (1900-1940)

As the 20th century dawned, the children and grandchildren of Abe and Kalline (Caroline) Sanson stood at a crossroads of change. They were the first generations to be born free, yet freedom came with trials of its own. The promise of Reconstruction had faded, giving way to the harsh realities of Jim Crow laws, segregation, and economic hardship.

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1ST GENERATIONS BORN FREE

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Jimmy Sanson (c. 1884–1949)

Actual colorized photograph. Born into freedom in the post-Reconstruction South, he belonged to the first generation of our family to live beyond enslavement, navigating life amid segregation and limited opportunity. This image reflects a life marked by perseverance, dignity, and quiet strength during a pivotal era for Black families across America. Jimmy is laid to rest at Shady Grove First Baptist Church Cemetery, Heidelberg, Jasper County, Mississippi.

NEW BEGINNINGS BEYOND THE SOUTH

WORLD WAR II (1941)



AI-generated image (Vecteezy) representing Blacks in early 20th-century factory work. As stories of better wages spread, many families envisioned lives beyond the South, laying the groundwork for the Great Migration that carried future generations northward into industry, education, and enterprise. Image source: Vecteezy (AI-generated).

Some began to **dream of new beginnings beyond the South**, hearing stories of better wages and opportunity in northern and midwestern cities. Those **dreams** would soon **set the stage for a great migration** that would carry the next generations from the cotton fields to factory floors, schools, and storefronts far from home.

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The legacy of the early 20th century is one of perseverance. Through war, economic hardship, and social upheaval, the Sampson family held fast to the values of faith, education, and mutual care. Their endurance prepared the way for the generations who would soon embark on a new journey: one that would carry them into World War II and beyond.

PRE-AMERICAN/POST-AFRICAN BEGINNINGS

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African Renaissance Monument (2010) Dakar, Senegal – sculpted by Pierre Goudiaby Atepa

Rising above the Atlantic, this monument symbolizes rebirth, resilience, and forward movement after centuries of displacement. Gazing toward the Atlantic, it represents the moment before departure and the promise of return—honoring African origins while looking toward new beginnings beyond Africa and the American South.

Image source: Google Images

There were dozens of slave ports in Africa which were involved in transatlantic and Indian Ocean trading. Historians agree that among the docks on the Atlantic Ocean, Senegambia was estimated to have the largest amount of traffic. Our ancestors may have acquired their "boarding passes" on some of the other ports in west Africa.

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SENEGAMBIA

SENEGAL & GAMBIA RIVERS & THE LAND BETWEEN THEM



The rivers of Senegal and The Gambia wind through the heart of Senegambia, shaping the lands, trade routes, and ancestral communities that long predate Atlantic world-waters that carried life, memory, and generations forward. It signals fertile lands and communities whose histories stretch far before enslavement and beyond national borders.

Image source: Canva photo library.

However, of those Africans who arrived in the United States, nearly half came from Senegambia, (the area comprising the Senegal and Gambia Rivers and the land between them: Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Mali and west Africa, including what is now Angola, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon.) In the end, however, it does not matter if our ancestors were boarded in Ghana, Mauritius, or Nigeria; the consequence of the journey was the same.

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The four-to-six-week voyage across the Atlantic also had many arrival destinations. There were docks in what is now Chesapeake, VA, Annapolis, MD, New York City, Newport, RI, and New Orleans, LA. The southern ports which carried their cargo to the deep South were Richmond, VA and Sullivan's Island near Charleston, SC.

**Sullivan's Island, South Carolina**

This contemporary photograph captures the shoreline of Sullivan's Island, one of the primary ports through which enslaved Africans from Senegambia and surrounding regions were forcibly brought to the Americas by slave ship. For many Black families, including ours, this place marks a first point of arrival: where African beginnings were severed and American lives began under bondage.

Image source: Google Images

Sullivan's Island has a history as the primary entry and quarantine point for enslaved Africans brought to North America, a role sometimes compared to Ellis Island. Between 1707 and 1808, an estimated 40% of the enslaved Africans imported to the American colonies passed through the island, which housed "pest houses" for quarantine. This painful history is memorialized by a "Bench by the Road" at Fort Moultrie, placed there by Toni Morrison's project to honor those who arrived on the island. In a future issue of *Generations*, we will devote more discussion to the probable route between Senegambia and Sullivan's Island.

RESILIENCE

TRAUMA BECOMES TRAINING FOR TRIUMPH

The scriptures tell us that trauma often becomes training for triumph; that our history forms the foundation of our destiny; that troubles deepen our character; that our ripest fruit grows against the most unyielding wall; and that no trial comes without carrying some small nugget of gold in its hands. They also remind us that we must release old grain if we hope for a new harvest, and that **as Christians we are intended to emerge from life's fiery trials liberated** rather than consumed, proving that these tests are meant to shape us, not destroy us.

It takes little imagination to appreciate how challenging these teachings can feel. Even so, we learn that life offers both upper and lower springs—sources of blessing that are never stagnant.



In the years following emancipation, the church stood as a sanctuary of faith, unity, and endurance. For Black families navigating new freedoms amid persistent hardship, gatherings like this were more than worship—they were training grounds for hope, leadership, and collective strength that carried generations forward.
Image source: Canva photo library.

We are most blessed when we recognize that these springs are gifts from heaven: they flow through low places, hard places, desert places, lonely places, ordinary places, and through the most barren landscapes of sorrow and trial.

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Abraham found such springs in the hills of Canaan. Moses discovered them among the rocks of Midian. David found them in the ashes of Ziklag. Isaiah found them as King Sennacherib threatened Judah. And in the twentieth century, **our own ancestors found** these springs as they left the cotton fields of Magnolia, enlisted in the armed forces, crossed oceans to fight in World War II, and struggled to defend the freedom of nations that still denied them full equality at home.



Shady Grove First Baptist Church - Heidelberg, Jasper County MS

This church served as a spiritual cornerstone for several generations of Sampsons who gathered in faith. Within these walls, prayer, steadfastness, and hope were nurtured—shaping a legacy of endurance and victory that carried our family through hardship and into purpose.

Image source: Google Images

Whether they realized it or not, **their courage echoed David's reminder: "Fret not yourselves because of evildoers, neither be envious of the workers of iniquity."**

COUNCIL OF ELDERS

FAMILY GENERATIONAL LEADERS & SHAPERS

Although Generations has no “authority” to declare who our “generational family leaders” are aside from our individual silo parents, our editors believe that when we revisit history, we recognize that over time, we have had generational family leaders.

We all have “childhood tapes” that recall conversations with our silo parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends. **Our memories become the basis for acknowledging generational leaders.**

Among African American family-based groups, generational families have traditionally relied on time-based seniority to recognize generational leaders. Time and circumstance caused us to recognize Grandpa Jimmy and Grandmother Corine as past generation leaders, coming into the 20th Century.

Likewise, near the end of WWII, Abraham Samson and Hubert Marsh tracked their way to Dayton, OH, and fostered the largest grouping of non-Mississippi family members, where they built businesses, became entrepreneurs, and founded institutions.

Generational family leadership roles involve guiding, supporting, and influencing members, typically led by values that developed over time based on common experiences (although such experiences were rarely reduced to written words), yet our language, dialect, etc., reflect our shared experiences in the manner in which we communicate, how we see events, and how we manage conflict, and otherwise model our values.

Leadership roles within a group of families often shift based on skills, age, and group needs aimed at ensuring a positive environment for growth. Individual family leaders set goals, manage resources, hold members accountable, and foster a culture of responsibility and connection.

In 2025, the editorial board recognizes **Edward Lucius Sampson, the oldest living ancestor of Jimmy and Corine Sampson, as leader of the Council of Elders.** Edward (4th Generation) was the firstborn of Lucius and Ella Mae (3rd Generation). Edward and Lucius were both born on December 15. Edward will have seen ninety revolutions of the sun shortly before this edition goes to press. Edward (EL) pioneered study at Tennessee State University, led the migration to California, and Abraham and Hubert made the way for other family members to become Ohioans.

The Board also recognizes **Mackey Roy Sampson**, who at 86 is **the second-oldest living ancestor of Jimmy and Corine Sampson.** Mackey was an outstanding athlete at Oak Park High School in Laurel and was a star running back for the US Army football team. Mackey was the featured running back for the USAREAR football Tankers, who, in the style of Walter Payton, often galloped for one hundred yards or more per game and averaged twelve yards per carry. Mackey, a Tougaloo graduate, was a high school teacher in the Los Angeles public schools when he retired after decades of service.

A third member of the Council of Elders is **Clarence Sampson**. Clarence is **the sixth son of Plummer Sampson, Sr., the first member of the 3rd Generation Sampsons and first offspring of Jimmy and Corine to reach adulthood**. Clarence became one of the first Black police officers to join the City of Dayton Police Department. At 85 years, Clarence enjoys two decades of retirement from DPD. After his retirement, he founded Montgomery Security Service, which has now served the Dayton metropolitan area for more than twenty-five years.

Rounding out the Council of Elders is **Anne Nazell Arrington**. **Anne is the youngest and only surviving offspring of 3rd Generation member Lurelia Sampson-Arrington and Nathan Arrington. Lurelia was the first daughter of Jimmy and Corine**. Each of the Council of Elders members have had experiences and memories of life with Grandpa Jimmy. Anne remembers life as a granddaughter to Grandpa Jimmy, based on living next door to Grandpa Jimmy after Corine had passed away during his last years in the Mt. Olive community which is located next to Laurel. Anne, now a retired octogenarian, is a Grambling State University alum where she garnered her skill as a teacher.

LOOKING AHEAD

REFLECTIONS OF PERSEVERANCE, COMMUNITY AND FAITH

Through every generation, the Sampson family has adapted, endured, and excelled. Our story reflects perseverance, community, and faith in a better tomorrow.

Generations will be published quarterly, beginning December 2025. Each issue will explore family history, from the post-slavery years to modern times: celebrating the Sampsons migration, resilience, and ongoing contributions as builders, educators, entrepreneurs, and citizens of a changing nation.

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