

2022 Clay
Family
Gathering
BRENHAM, TX



TRACKING TEXAS CLAYS
FROM KY TO TX AND
BACK AGAIN SOME



FREE IN CHAINS
RACHEL FINDLAY
PERSPECTIVE



MEMBER UPDATES
WELCOMES &
SHOUT-OUTS



PIECES of CLAY

The Mission of the Clay Family Society is to encourage research and foster understanding of the genealogy and history of *all* branches of the Clay family



*The Clays will go to Texas you bet, yes-sir-ee!
We've missed our time together, now let's have a spree!
Hist'ry and learnin'; gen'ology's an art,
We'll share and laugh and trade notes, 'til it's time to part!*

Clay Family Gathering 2022

Meetings and Field Trips held on Fri-23, Sat-24 & Sun-25

As voted by Members, CFS will have our next Gathering in Texas. Specifically in the charming, historic town of Brenham. Branches of the Clay Family have deep roots in Brenham and Washington County. Find out all about this fun, informative get-together for Clay descendants!

**OUR NEXT
GATHERING**

**Where:
Brenham, Texas**

**When:
September 22-26, 2022**

President's Message

I can't wait to show you Texas. Clay roots go deep in my home State. I've particularly always loved [the town of Brenham](#) and Washington County. That's where—at long last!—the Clay Family Society will hold our 2022 Gathering.

Founded in 1844, Brenham is a quiet, charming town full of shops and restaurants, and steeped in history. It's also home to Blue Belle, the best ice cream in the world, dating back to 1909. It was in Washington-on-Brazos, Washington County, just 18 miles up the road from Brenham, that 59 delegates gathered in 1836 to declare Texas an independent republic.

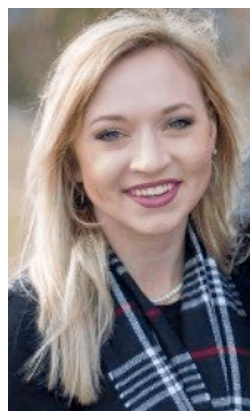
Washington County is where Nestor Clay settled after he left Kentucky. In fact, he liked it so much, he settled here twice. First in 1822 before going back to Kentucky to marry Nancy Wilson Johnson. But he brought his wife to Texas as quick as he could in 1824, and never looked back. Nestor died in 1835 but a year later, his brother, Tacitus M. Clay built his home, Clay Castle, a mile west of Independence in Washington County.

Finney Clay is working hard on putting together a Gathering where we'll explore Clay heritage and our proud Texas heritage, too. Watch your email for more updates. (Thanks, Dad!)

In addition to Gathering in person, other exciting things are happening at CFS. **Kennerly Clay**, a new member, has taken on producing *Pieces of Clay*. She's doing an awesome job and we're so thrilled. We're also glad **Mary Akers**, **Leontyne Peck**, and **Charline Rambaud** are bringing their wisdom to the Board. And we extend the warmest appreciation to retiring Board members **Pat Dunford** and **Mary Richardson**.

Webmaster **John Clay** keeps adding new features and content, including [recordings of some of our Zoom mini-meetups](#). (Log in to access.) Also, CFS Members and other Clay researchers are sharing stories and tips every day at the [Clay Family Society Facebook page](#). Amazing things are ahead, online and in the Lone Star State. I can't wait to see you!

Casie



Casie Branson

2021-2022 CFS Board of Directors

Casie (Clay) Branson, President

casie.branson@gmail.com

Ned Boyajian, Vice-President

nboyajian83@gmail.com

John S Clay, Secretary

ashipmate@mac.com

Nancy (Clay) Cook, Co-Treasurer

nancyc2396@earthlink.net

Charline Rambaud, Treasurer

charline@reagan.com

Finney Clay, Gathering Director

fclay@swbell.net

Leontyne (Clay) Peck, Director at Large

Leontynepeck@gmail.com

Mary B Akers, Director at Large

vmakers@att.net

Additionally, we're glad to announce these roles have been filled:

Pieces of Clay Editor:

Kennerly Clay

Communications Support:

Galiena Boyajian

We extend deep appreciation to retiring Board members **Pat Dunford**, **Nancy Cook**, and **Mary Richardson** who selflessly extended their duties to help shepherd the Society through these challenging times.

Tracking Captain Thomas Clay and kin

by Finney Clay

In the 2019 Q3 issue, we ran an article about Capt. Thomas Clay, an early settler in the Washington County area of Texas and the author's g-g-grandfather. [Read previous article.](#)

Our founding ancestor [Captain John Clay](#) arrived in Virginia in 1613 aboard the ship *The Treasurer*, which landed on the coast of Virginia, east of what is now Richmond. His wife Ann came three years later with three of their sons, Charles, Thomas and John.

Charles Clay, son of Captain John Clay, and his descendants

Charles married Martha Green and their fifth child was Thomas Clay born in 1750. Thomas served in the Virginia line during the American Revolution. He received a military land warrant #2278 for his service as a captain in the military. He took his 4000-acre land grant in Kentucky where he served in the Kentucky House of Representatives and Senate from 1792-1798.

Captain Thomas Clay then married Polly Callahan and they had three kids:

- Cynthia Green (1795)
- Nestor (1799)
- Tacitus Matthew (1804)

[Read more about the background and marriage of Thomas and Polly on the CFS website.](#)

The Clay road from Kentucky to Texas, starting with Tacitus Matthew

My father always said that three Clay boys came from Kentucky to Texas with Stephen F. Austin—known as “the Father of Texas”—to find land. According to Betty Cantrell Plummer, author of *Historic Homes of Washington County*, Tacitus Matthew was the first Clay to arrive in Texas. He went back to Kentucky to tell his brother Nestor about the place. At that time, Nestor was serving in the Kentucky Senate while helping his father, Thomas, run the plantation.

Nestor and Tacitus loaded up and went to Texas to meet with Austin, who's known historically for bringing 300 families (Old Three Hundred) to colonize what was then considered Mexican Texas, at San Felipe. The story goes that the Clay boys provided land surveying services for the Old Three Hundred and were paid for their services in land. Dad always said they got a league of land for surveying a league of land.

This would make Tacitus' first trip about 1820 to 1821 because everybody agrees Nestor was in Texas in 1822. The two young men started building log cabins to claim their new land. Nestor's cabin was in the meadow in front of my younger brother Tommy's house. Tacitus moved further west and built his cabin in the area where the water system tanks are today, on FM 390 behind Mr. Janner's house.

Nestor and Nancy and new frontiers

In 1823 Nestor returned to Kentucky and married Nancy Wilson Johnson. They had a son Tacitus Thomas Clay (1824) and came back to Texas to set up a farming operation. [Continued page 5](#)

2022 Clay Family Gathering in Brenham, TX

Getting to Texas

The most convenient airports are Austin and Houston.

Where

Our meetings will be held at:

Ant Street Inn

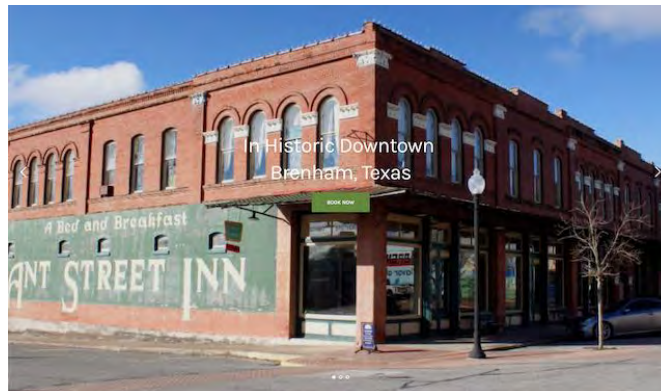
107 W Commerce St

Brenham, Tx 77833

(979) 836-7393

www.antstreetinn.com

It's a boutique hotel (no elevators).



Other nearby properties, convenient by car:

Hotels

Hampton Inn & Suites

2605 Schulte Blvd

Brenham, Tx 77833

(979) 337-9898

Holiday Inn Express & Suites

2685 Schulte Blvd

Brenham, Tx 77833

(979) 830-5331

Baymont by Wyndham

2950 Wood Ridge Blvd

Brenham, Tx 77833

(979) 836-5551

Bed and Breakfasts

Main Street House

409 E Main St

Brenham, Tx 77833

(979) 221-2051

Ross Carroll Bennett House Bed
& Breakfast

515 E Main St

Brenham, Tx 77833

(979) 353-2557

Brenham House Bed and
Breakfast

705 Clinton St

Brenham, Tx 77833

(979) 251-9947

Far View Bed & Breakfast Inn

1804 S Park St

Brenham, Tx 77833

(979) 836-1672

HOW TO GET IN ON THE FUN!

Call the hotel of your choice to make your reservation directly. Or check them out online. All are within 2 miles of Ant Hill Inn. Prices range from \$75 to \$185 per room per night.

Want to join The Gathering Committee?

The Gathering Committee, led by Finney Clay and Casie Clay, is hard at work filling an exciting and interesting program. Are you a Texan or just love the state? Let us know if you'd like to join the Gathering Committee and help make this our best Gathering yet.

Questions: Finney M. Clay (979) 836-0986

Tracking Captain Thomas Clay and kin

Continued from page 3

Some years later at the end of April 1832, Nestor wrote to his father-in-law about a trip they had just taken. It was a campaign against the Indians and they had planned to be gone for 30 days. They went up the Colorado River 300 miles, then crossed over to the Brazos River and came back home for a total trip of 680 miles. On the trip they ate 19 animals, listed as buffalo, mustang (horse), wild cow, polecat, and leopard cat. Together with a variety of fish, fowl and turtles. Nestor says that horse tasted better than cow or buffalo, but polecat was the worst meat he'd ever tasted!

Facts about Nestor

- * Nestor's Mexican land grant was dated March 18, 1831.
- * Nestor was a representative at the conventions of 1832 and 1833.
- * By 1834 he held title to 25,000 acres in Washington County (which at that time, took in Burleson, Brazos, Grimes and Lee Counties).

He also said the family was in good health and that Nancy was planning to travel back to Kentucky in the fall of 1832. She was the sole manager of the Texas farm and had a crop of corn, some rye, wheat and oats. She had 40 calves in her pen and

was very proud of them. Nestor puts a p.s. on the letter that the ore sample from the silver mine had tested very hi-grade silver.

Nancy died in 1834. By then, she and Nestor had three children:

- Tacitus Thomas
- Mary Jane
- Lucy

The children were sent back to Kentucky where they were raised by Cleopatra Johnson, Nancy's sister.

Nestor had started work on the new home for his family in 1831. It was just west of Cole's Settlement on the Labahia Trail. In 1835 Nestor was killed by Indians on Clay Creek in Milam County.

Tacitus Matthew carries on the Clay legacy and takes a Kentucky wife

After Nestor was killed, Tacitus completed the house and set up the plantation operation. In 1836 Tacitus M. had purchased ½ of Nestor's land. He left Judge Cole in charge of the farm while he went back to Kentucky and married a woman named Vibella McCreery.

They had two children:

- Leia (1837)
- Thomas C (1838)

The family then moved back to Texas about 1840 to run the farming operation again.

In 1842 Tacitus T and Tacitus M came back to Texas with \$10,000.00 worth of dry goods and set up a store in Independence. Tacitus M. had two more children:

- Vitula (1843)
- Atreus McCreery (1844)

And Tacitus named the new home Ingleside, which would soon become known as the Clay Castle.

Clay Castle—grand by any standards

It was a very large home by any standards, especially if you were riding down the Labahia Trail about 1840.

Mrs. Plummer describes it this way:

"a plantation style having rooms that were 32' x 48' with a 90-foot hall down the middle. The second floor was the same with four large bedrooms."

The third floor was a large ballroom. The fourth floor was glassed in and known as the Captain's Walk. It measured about 25,600-sf above ground and had an area under the

Continued page 11

Membership Update

We currently have 120 CFS members in good standing. Know a Clay descendant who would love to connect? [Give the gift of membership.](#)

Welcome new members!

Are you a new member? Be sure to [complete your profile](#) so we can get to know you better. [Reach out to John Clay](#) with questions.

Bradley Clay of Gallipolis, OH, descends from Edward Franklin Clay b. 11 Feb 1886 and Nancy M Wilson (1869-1922) of KY.

Chasity L Clay of Brentwood, TN, descends from James Carrington Clay b. 1920 and Margaret Alexander (1892-1988) of TN.

Chip Clay

James Clay of Allen, TX, descends from James Ashton Clay Jr b. 23 Oct 1917 and Virginia Lee Faires (1920-2004) of Fort Worth.

Jarrold Clay

John A Clay of Cape Coral, FL, descends from Thomas Alexander Clay b. 1871 and Flora Luette Alexander (1869-1930) of IN.

Kennerly Clay of Wayne, PA, descends from Captain John clay or Claye (1588-1654).

Peter Clay of Crozet, VA, descends from William Mitchell Clay (1777-1842).

Carrie Clay-Segeberg of San Antonio, TX, descends from Richard Clay b. 1713 and Rachel Riggs (1721-1797) of Maine.

Kathleen (Crane) Coombs of Ridgefield, CT, descends from Pleasant G Clay b. 1805 and Jane M Walker (1816-1855) of GA.

Louise (Cheeks) Copenhaver of Warren, OH.

Carla Crider of Newnan, GA, descends from John Wesley Clay b. about 1845 and Nancy C Wadell (1847-Unk) of GA.

Angela Daniel-Upchurch

Donna Donald of Lynchburg, VA. (not a descendant but interested in the Rev. Charles Clay (d. 1820) of Bedford County, VA for research)

Lynette Hartmann

Dr. Gayle Howard

Debra Johnson of Malvern, AR, descends from Charles Clay b. 1638 and Hannah Wilson (1642-1686).

James J Kegley of Florence, KY, descends from Mitchell Clay b. 1735 and Phoebe Belcher (1740-1810) of VA.

Mary Kline

Sallie (Clay) Lanham of Frankfort, KY, descends from Charles Clay b. 1686 and Hannah Wilson (before 1650-1706) of VA.

Tara Lenihan

Celia Said of Ada, MI, descends from Jonas Clay b. about 1620 and Mary Batson (1632-1673) of England

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

Pieces of Clay welcomes articles, updates and blurbs about genealogy, family lore and legend as it relates to your Clay ancestors. Whether you're a current contributor or have never contributed, **please read the [Submission Guidelines](#) before submitting.**

BOOK CORNER

CFS member authors and books related to Clay ancestors

[Cautious Rebel: A biography of Susan Clay Sawitzky](#)
by Dr. Lindsey Apple

[Voices from the Century Before: The Odyssey of a 19th-century Kentucky Family](#)
by Mary Clay Berry

[The Legacy of John Clay](#)
by Baker G "Bob" Clay

[Calling of Ancestors: Finding Forgotten Secrets in My DNA](#)
by F. Kennerly Clay

[Old Alleghany: The Life and Wars of General Ed Johnson](#) and
[VALOR IN GRAY: The Recipients of the Confederate Medal of Honor](#)
by Greg Clemmer

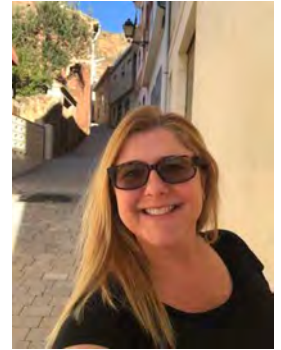
[My Grandfather's Letters](#)
by Marcia Hovenden

[Clay, Bruce and Kavanaugh Families](#)
by Charles Von Dietrich Knighton

[Silver Children: The African-American Family of Henry Clay](#)
by Leontyne Clay Peck

Editor's Note

I'm delighted to put together my inaugural issue of *Pieces of Clay*, with much thanks to former editor **Mary Richardson** who did a lot of the heavy lifting for me. I've also appreciated the ongoing support of **Ned Boyajian** and **webmaster John Clay**.



My Clay family inquiry began with a DNA test four years ago. The results were surprising, exciting, baffling. I was presumed to have a 100% Nigerian ancestor born between 1750 and 1830. The news disrupted the "Cherokee Blood" myth in my family and sent me on a fascinating quest to discover who my (I presumed) enslaved ancestor might have been. She was lost to history and I was determined to find her.

In the process of conducting genealogical and genetic research, I not only traced my lineage all the way back to Captain John Clay who arrived in Jamestown in 1613, I also discovered Clay cousins of color, descended from my great-grandfather, Robert Lee Clay.

It took three years of pulling Ancestry.com all-nighters and going down census rabbit holes to finally find what I was looking for. My great-grandmother's grandmother was an enslaved woman named Celia Averilla. I found the bill of sale and I found *her*. And then I felt compelled to tell the story. You can read about it in my short ebook [Calling of Ancestors: Finding Forgotten Secrets in My DNA](#).

I remain fascinated by my mixed race ancestry and the continued mysteries that unfurl thanks to DNA matches. I am so thrilled to follow Leontyne Clay Peck's [Clay 1613](#) documentary project, which captures the essence of my own explorations.

I look forward to learning and discovering even more through the very well-informed members of this community who show such a commitment to accuracy when it comes to genealogical research. It's like we're all bringing pieces of a gigantic puzzle together (and the final "picture" continues to morph!).

To your hearty Clay roots,
Kennerly Clay

Ways to engage with CFS

VIRTUAL CLAY MEETINGS

Enjoy virtual Clay camaraderie and fascinating family findings. Join one or all of the upcoming Zoom mini meet-ups.* They are a treat. The upcoming schedule is as follows:

Mar 26, 2022 1:00-1:45 pm EST

Join Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 872 8078 8298 Passcode: 875406

* These are open to everyone, including the public, not just CFS members

Twelve Women Suffragists of Kentucky

Presented by CFS member Sallie Clay Lanham

These fascinating women include two Clays: Laura Clay and Mary Barr Clay, Sallie's great grandmother. The 12 were identified by the University of Kentucky's Kentucky Women Suffrage Project as leaders, statewide and nationally, as part of a commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment through which women won the right to vote.

Sallie, an award-winning artist and teacher, is a resident of Frankfort, Kentucky. Since graduation from the Art Academy of Cincinnati, she has been an art educator at elementary and college level classes, a graphic designer, fine artist and author.

Other recent speakers included **Dr. Lindsey Apple** who presented on some of the Clay women of Kentucky; and **Eric Brooks**, Ashland's curator, who gave a sneak peek into the historic estate's programs; and **Carla Herkner**, who spoke about historic preservation at The Mill at Anselma in Anselma, PA.

FACEBOOK GROUP

facebook.com/groups/clayfamilyociety

The **Clay Family Society community on Facebook** includes members and non-members seeking to connect with Clay kin or find answers to questions about their lineage. If you haven't already, take a moment to [request to join or visit the group](#) and introduce yourself. There's always a warm welcome!



As seen in the FB group: Henry Clay, Jr. "talking portrait" and voice-over narration of his life. Super cool! Thanks Keith Winstead.

CFS website

www.clayfamilyociety.net

Visit our informative website. Be sure to complete your profile, including uploading a photo so people can get to know you better.

As a member, you can **access the Member Directory**, **browse past issues** of the newsletter, and **register for the exclusive Clay genealogy website**.

Webmaster John Clay keeps things up-to-date and is always on-hand to answer questions and provide support.

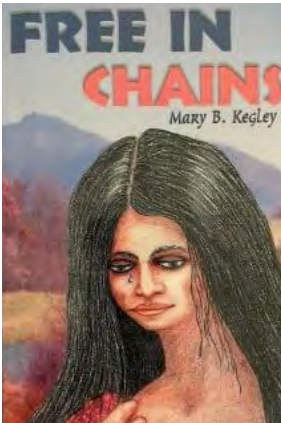
There are a few new postings under [Notable Clays](#) and the [Forum](#).

John suggests you [Log In](#) at least once a month to see what's happening, update your profile, and ensure your username and password are still working.

If you have a problem with anything on the website just send an email to webmaster@clayfamilyociety.net or call John at (703) 307-1553 and leave a voice message. He'll get back to you ASAP.

Free in Chains

continued from page 7



In 2002, Wythe Co. historian Mary Kegley wrote a fictionalized story about Rachel: *Free In Chains*. Mary trawled through the court records and other resources to write her book. [There's a synopsis of it on her webpage](#). Since Rachel's story has been recounted in many places, I'm not detailing it here. If you'd like to know more, check out:

["Rachel Findlay," a Virginia Changemaker](#)

["50 Years a Slave, the Hidden History of Rachel Findlay"](#)

Robert Fitzgerald's story about how he found his ancestor Rachel plus how he met Mary Kegley
Kegley Mary B.

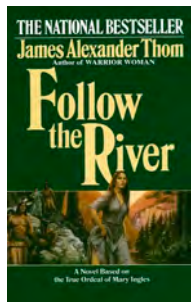
["Indian Slavery and Freedom Suits: The Cases of Rachel Viney and Rachel Findlay,"](#) The Smithfield Review, Vol. XII, 2008. The Philip Peters mentioned on p. 89 was the second husband of widow Rebecca (Clay) Pearis – my 5g-grandmother.

When I read *Free In Chains*, I was struck by the words that Mary Kegley gave to Rachel when Mitchell was about to take her west in 1773: "What if I never return to Swift Creek?" I live in Chesterfield Co. near Swift Creek and assumed that this referred to the Clay properties a few miles south of me – the places that I have known about for many years. But Rachel's lawsuit was finally resolved in Powhatan County, which puzzled me. I live near Powhatan and now I know that Clays lived there. Yesterday (15 Mar 2022), I found where Swift Creek rises in Powhatan County (less than 10 miles northwest of my house). It runs for about 44 miles, passing by the Clay properties in Chesterfield, before it empties into the Appomattox River.



Powhatan County Courthouse

I plan to continue my research to narrow down which Clays were involved when and where. This will surely include a visit to the Powhatan County Historical Society, whose office is just behind the courthouse where Rachel and her descendants finally got their freedom.



In addition to his role in Rachel Findlay's enslavement, John Draper showed up elsewhere. His wife Bettie, his sister Mary (Draper) Ingles, and others were captured by Shawnees in 1755 at their home in Draper's Meadow near what is now Blacksburg, Virginia. Their story is told in *Follow the River*, a vivid fictionalized story of their ordeal. My ancestor Martha (Draper) Davidson lived near them and may be related. Her grandson John Davidson Brown married Rebecca Clay Pearis, granddaughter of Mitchell and Phoebe (Belcher) Clay. John and Rebecca were my 4g-grandparents.

Tracking Captain Thomas Clay and kin

Continued from page 5

first floor that carriages could be driven through to let the ladies out if the weather was bad. The west side of the basement was for storage of fruits and vegetables. There was also a 50-acre orchard. When things were ripe, the whole community was invited to share in the fruits. It became the headquarters of the Clay plantation.

A strange thing about the castle was, it was not built on the Nestor Clay league of land. It was actually built on the Luke Lessassier league.

The way my father explained it, when the Clay boys came to Texas in 1822, there was a large 25-acre Indian cornfield next to where Nestor wanted to build his new house. In those days the Indians planted Bois d'arc trees in rows for a buffalo fence. It must have taken them years to plant all those trees just to keep the buffalos out of their corn. If you drive down the Labahia Road, now known as FM 390, you can still see a row of Bois d'arc trees that stand in a straight line running north and south. The other three sides are long gone.

List of enslaved people at Henry Clay Ashland estate

The [Henry Clay Ashland estate website](#) states that at least 122 people were enslaved at Ashland. [Here are their names](#) and some known biographical information.

In Memoriam

We were so sorry to hear that our honorary member Linda Gunnoe passed away last August. She was a descendant of immigrant John Claye via her paternal grandmother Mary Jane (Clay) Gunnoe, who was a 4g-granddaughter of Mitchell Clay and Phoebe Belcher. We have benefited immensely from Linda's years-long research into understanding her Clay roots. She founded [The Captivating Clay Family History](#) on Facebook, which has been a great resource for all Clay researchers. Thank you, Linda, for always helping us.

PIECES OF CLAY
is published and copyrighted
by the Clay Family Society, Inc.
All rights reserved.

ENGAGE WITH US!

Email

publisher@clayfamilysociety.net

Website

www.clayfamilysociety.net

Facebook

[www.facebook.com/groups/
clayfamilysociety](https://www.facebook.com/groups/clayfamilysociety)