



Tudor Place

FALL 2022

CONNECTING WITH DESCENDANTS OF JOHN LUCKETT: A CONVERSATION WITH KARL HAYNES

A major initiative at Tudor Place is engaging with the descendants of the enslaved and free laborers who historically worked at the site. One of these goals is to use interactions to create more inclusive and equitable historic narratives to share with our visitors. Thus, it was an honor to host Karl Haynes and Jerolyn Cole, two descendants of John Lockett, a gardener who worked at Tudor Place from 1862 to 1906.

John Lockett was a fascinating man. Enslaved near Lewinsville, Virginia, he self-emancipated during the Civil War before eventually making his way to Georgetown where he met Britannia W. Kennon. Britannia hired John, and this relationship lasted for over 40 years. The Peters tried to get John to move to Georgetown, but he preferred to walk to work from his home in southwest DC. There, he raised a family in a Black community that included his mother and possibly other family.

The Peter family photographed John Lockett and recorded his stories about enslavement and the Civil War. Staff believed there were descendants of John Lockett who would love to have access to these materials, so after searching genealogical websites and tracing the descendants of John Lockett, Karl Haynes' name was found. Recently, I sat down with Karl to talk about his journey searching for his roots that resulted in finding his connection with Tudor Place.

Are you the first person in your family to do genealogy?

I will definitely say that I was the first. About 7 years ago, I had my DNA tested and did a very small family tree. In 2021, I got an inquiry from one of my DNA matches about one of my grandparents, but I couldn't tell her anything because he passed away years before I was born. So, while I was trying to help this young lady figure out how she's related to me, it just morphed into an entire research project for me in my off-time.

How did you discover you were related to John Lockett?

My maternal grandmother is Edythe Lockett. My mother said she never heard Miss Edythe talk about any siblings. As far as we knew, she was an only child. Then, I discovered a census record from 1920 with Edythe, and it identified her as a niece to a woman named Harriet Page.

Times

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Top: Armistead Peter 3rd and John Lockett Photograph by Armistead Peter Jr., c. 1900 AI.306
Bottom: Jerolyn Cole and Karl Haynes, 2022

CONNECTING WITH DESCENDANTS OF JOHN LUCKETT

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It also named a third woman named Ruth Lockett. Looking into Harriet Page, I found out that she was actually Ruth Lockett's aunt, and Edythe was Ruth's daughter because my mother remembered that from her mother's obituary. From there, I found that Ruth's parents were Charles Edward Lockett and Edythe Elizabeth Branch, who my grandmother was named after. Charles Lockett was the son of John Lockett, who worked at Tudor Place.

Can you think of an example of something that you discovered through your research that was a surprise?

There were lots of small things. One is that we didn't know that most of our lineage originated from [the] central Virginia, Lynchburg area.

One of my uncles knew because he remembered our grandmother, Miss Edythe (Lockett). He would talk about that. He knew that her family was from Lynchburg. It was an amazing thing for us.

So, it sounds like your sources were oral accounts, census research and newspapers. Those were the things that you used to piece together this story.

That's what I ended up having to do because there are no census records for Edythe Lockett between 1920 and 1950. Having to go back, I did a lot of digging, eventually finding the various stories about John Lockett. First, I only found one little obituary, but something told me to go back and expand one of the newspaper searches to see what else I could find. That's when I found his obituary which, was written by a grandchild [Agnes Peter] of Britannia W. Kennon. And when I discovered that it had a picture of him, I [thought], "Oh my!"

Did Edythe live in DC or Virginia?

From what I've been told, my family pretty much grew up in southwest DC until the late 60s and early 70s. Edythe lived in southwest DC off of M Street. I do remember that from the stories my mother and aunt used to tell because we would ride around DC and they would point out parts where they used to live and where they used to hang out.

John Lockett lived in that same area of DC, correct?

John Lockett lived at 222 F Street SW and Charles Lockett, his son and my great-great grandfather, actually lived two doors down at 226 F Street SW when he passed. So that whole neighborhood, F Street, G Street, all that area, that's where a lot of my family grew up.



Edythe Lockett, Karl Haynes' grandmother and great grand daughter of John Lockett. Courtesy of Karl Haynes

LUCKETT. Departed this life November 20, 1906, at Garfield Hospital, JOHN LUCKETT, a faithful gardener for forty-five years in the family of Mrs. Britannia W. Kennon, at Tudor place, Georgetown, D. C. He was the beloved father of Jennie L. Sayles, Harriet Page, Alfred and Edward Lockett and the father-in-law of Rev. Aquila Sayles. Funeral services at Ebenezer M. E. Church, 4th and D streets southeast, Thursday, November 22, at 1 p.m. Relatives and friends invited. 2

Obituary for John Lockett
"Evening Star," November 21, 1906



John Lockett
Garden of Tudor Place May 1895
Cyanotype
A1.41

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You got your DNA tested. That's how your journey started. Were there any surprises with the DNA results?

Actually, yes. Surprise number one was that it was assumed my paternal great-grandmother was Caucasian. She had blue eyes. I thought I would have a lot of Caucasian DNA, but it turned I am only between 10 and 12 percent Caucasian. I found out the majority of my DNA comes from West Africa. There's a little bit from France, England, Wales and the Baltics. Also, I have one percent Native American DNA. Another surprise.

It's interesting how John Lockett was able to reconnect with his mother, Amanda, after Emancipation.

From some of my research, I think the Freedman's Bureau may have had a hand in helping Amanda find John. One of the things I'm planning on doing later is going through the Freedman's Bureau records to see what I can find.

So how does your family feel about this?

Most of them are pretty enthusiastic because they like having this history. It was something that was lost to us for decades. I mean my grandmother Edythe has been gone now for almost 50 years, and a lot of what she knew about our family went with her. So, getting the information and putting it together, there are levels of excitement from "this is deep" to "you did all this?" My cousin Jerolyn Cole had the same mindset that I had. When I presented the information about John Lockett to her, she approached me about actually going to Tudor Place and seeing everything for ourselves. My family wants to find it all because they want to have a legacy, something to pass down from generation to generation. To say, "this is where we started, this is where we are now."

I love your perspective and your recognition of the importance of place as you work through the process of connecting with your ancestors.

I'm going to quote a cartoon that I used to watch as a kid. It was called "Spartacus and the Sun beneath the Sea." In that cartoon, one of the characters made the statement, "happiness without a past is happiness without a future." So what that always meant to me was if you don't understand where you came from, you are never going to be satisfied with where you are going. You have to embrace the process, embrace your origins, be happy with your origins and that helps you take the next steps forward to doing bigger and better things. My paternal grandfather always instilled this sense of knowledge and history in me. I spent a lot of time in the Smithsonian with him and a lot of time in libraries, just learning about the past, taking that knowledge and seeking more of it. Having the sense of where my family came from and where we are today is even more meaningful now because I know so much more.

- Robert DeHart, Curator