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Seven Sections

Md. Family Researches In Essex

G.C. ROSE

Three Maryland residents were in Essex County last weekend on an important mission.

Cousins Patrick Ranson, the Rev. Dr. Darnell Ranson, and Juanita Burrell made the first of what they anticipate will be several visits here to gather information regarding their ancestors whose origins can be traced to Essex County.

Their journey here is part of a twofold project, the cousins explain. Their late uncle and aunt — Harold and Bernice Ranson — endeavored to compile a family history before their deaths, but did not get far.

"Patrick, myself and Juanita talked about doing it for a few years," Darnell stated. "We feel that God has orchestrated things to where it will get done now. We

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L-R: Cousins Juanita Burrell, the Rev. Dr. Darnell Ranson and Patrick Ranson were in Essex County last weekend researching their family roots.

Cousins Research Ancestry In Essex

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have met over the past seven weeks and this visit is the first piece to the puzzle that we are putting together."

The three are intense about their work because plans are in the making for a massive Ranson family reunion that is scheduled to take place July 14, 2007 in Baltimore.

"This visit is the first leg of our journey," says Patrick. "It all started in this county in DeSha."

"We hope to not only find information about our ancestors, but as many living relatives we have in this county," added Juanita who is a human resource manager for the Department of Defense. "We have not made a lot of visits to this area and we really don't know our family here."

The cousins' research thus far has revealed that their grandfather, the Rev. Shirley Ranson Sr., was born and raised in Essex County before migrating to Baltimore during the Reconstruction Period. Ranson was an integral part of the church family at St. John Baptist Church.

Shirley Ranson Sr.'s parents were Turner and Emma Ranson. Emma's maiden name was Payne, although Patrick pointed out that it may have been spelled differently.

The three also noted that while their last name is spelled Ranson, they are related to those who spell their last name Ransome, Ransom, and Ransone.

During their visit, the three gathered important information from the Middle Peninsula African-American Genealogical and Historical Society of Virginia and were special guests at St. John Baptist Church on Sunday.

The cousins say the information they gather here will be cataloged and eventually published in a "Who's Who" document.

"We're doing this with due diligence because we want this to continue for years to come," noted

Darnell.

Moreover, Darnell, who is the pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Baltimore, says he feels the project's results will help with future generations of the Ranson family.

"It will encourage the offspring to do well if they have a foundation they can draw from," he stated.

Patrick, a correctional officer with the Baltimore County Detention Center, says future visits will include a trip to the Essex County Circuit Court to research information regarding Turner and Emma Ranson and visits to African-American cemeteries.

Anyone wishing to assist with the project or if you feel you are related to the Ransons, you may contact them as follows: Patrick (443) 394-0752; Juanita (410) 515-2234; or Darnell (410) 435-7564.