

Case 31: Sgt. Seabron Jerry Austin was born March 1880 in Columbus, Georgia. He died March 1938 in Hampton, Virginia

Before the data from the register of the National Home at Hampton, Virginia can be examined, the history of the family of Seabron J. Austin should be explained. Going back before the Civil War to antebellum times, the parents of Seabron were both slaves. They may have belonged to some of the planters of Muscogee or Chattahoochee Counties of Georgia. Those planters may be the source of the surname Austin in his family.

Some of the descendants of William Austin of Craven County, South Carolina had plantations and many slaves in both of those counties. There was more than one white man named Seaborn J. Austin in that family. There was also more than one African-American man living in West Georgia who was named Seabron, (not Seaborn).

In 1860, a slave trader by the name of William Austin lived in Columbus. He was born in 1807 in Georgia. It is not known whether he was a brother to Laban, Allen Jefferson, Augustus Baldwin, or Seaborn J. Austin, of Columbus. This writer does not suggest that there is any blood connection between the parents of the subject of this article. However, it is very possible that there was some kind of connection.

Louise C. George, a mulatto, born in September of 1855 in Georgia, was the mother of Seabron Jerry Austin. She was the only one of the five school age siblings in her family who could read and write in 1870. Her parents, Gilbert, a carpenter, and Mildred George must have taught Louise to value an education. After she married and had children to support, she opened a school in her home at 741 Front Street in Columbus. She and her daughters Mildred and Louise Austin taught the neighborhood children for about thirty years. She also hired other teachers. In 1918 Louise was a professional cook in her own home. Perhaps she opened a café.

The father of Seabron was Smith Austin. After the Civil War and the emancipation of the slaves, Smith Austin wanted to vote and establish his rights as a citizen. As soon as the voter registration procedure was established, Smith went to the Muscogee County Courthouse and registered on July 6, 1867. It was listed that he was colored and was born in Georgia.

Smith and Louise Austin are listed in the U. S. Census of 1880. They had been married since about 1873. They lived in downtown Columbus. Smith Austin (Alston) age 36, born about 1844 in Georgia, was a hack driver. Louise age 27 was keeping house. Daughter Milby (Mildred) named for the mother of Louise, was age six. Son, Henry, named for the brother of Louise, was age 2. Son, Seabron was three months old and was

born in March. We do not know why he was given a name similar to the planter and physician of Muscogee, County.

Smith Austin must have died before 1891 because Louise was listed on the Columbus City Directory as the widow of Smith. She was also listed as a teacher with a private school in her home at 741 Front Street.

Seabron does not appear on the 1900 census with his mother. At age twenty he had no desire to be a teacher and had looked for work elsewhere. He was a laborer in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1905, when he first enlisted in the U. S. Army. He was a saddler for Co. H, 10th Cavalry. He was discharged January 22, 1907 at Fort D. A. Russell in Wyoming at the expiration of his service.

We don't know what happened for the next few months. Perhaps he went with the Tenth Cavalry as they went from Wyoming to Vermont. He re-enlisted at Fort Ethan Allen Military Post in Vermont in Co. H later in the year, served until 1910 and immediately re-enlisted until February of 1913. Somehow he had found the time to meet a girl.

Seabron Jerry Austin married Victoria Roberts on November 12, 1913. They were married at the Every Day Church of Winoski, Vermont by John M. Paige, B. D. The marriage must not have lasted long.

In 1914 when he was between enlistments in the Army, Seabron came home to his mother and worked as a laborer. His wife was not with him. Seabron's sister, Louise, married another teacher at the school. His name was Irby Kent. Their child was Alfonso Kent. He was born in 1908. The whole family was listed as mulatto on the 1910 census. Louise continued to be listed as a teacher and a cook through the year 1918, when she was age ninety-two.

World War I broke out and Seabron enlisted in Mexico in 1917 and served again until 1920 when he mustered out in New York City. What he did between 1914 and 1917 to become a resident of Mexico, we do not know. Perhaps there was additional military service.

Seabron had many different occupations in his life besides his military career. In 1925 he was a barber in Newport News, Virginia. His address was 210 Twenty-Fourth Street. He was a poolroom keeper of a pool room on the same block, at 218 Twenty-Fourth Street in Newport News, in April 1930. He also was a restaurant proprietor in Virginia. Old war injuries and his age were beginning to get him down and he was ready to take a rest from his labor.

Register #34759 of the Roseburg Branch National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers at Hampton, Virginia, lists a World War I military history for Seabron J. Austin. He enlisted as a Sergeant, February 3, 1917 in Mexico in the Quartermaster Corp. He was discharged

on July 20, 1920 when the unit was demobilized at New York City.

His disabilities when admitted to the home August 18, 1931 were mental corruption, a 3137 old injury to his right foot, and a 0224 cardiac hypertrophy.

The domestic history for Seabron J. Austin describes him as five feet, six ½ inches tall, and of a colored complexion. He had brown eyes and dark gray hair. He was a Protestant by religion and was a restaurant proprietor by occupation. He was separated from his wife. He was age 51 in 1931. No pension was mentioned. No furloughs were listed, either.

No nearest relative was listed in the Register. Instead, Seabron named a friend, Emma W. Scott, whose address was 2413 Huntington Avenue, Newport News, Virginia. She was on the same page as Seabron on the 1930 census. He still lived at 218 Twenty-Fourth Street. Emma was age 32 and divorced. Her divorced husband, William Scott, lived in the same house with his new wife, Rosa, age 23. A widowed aunt, Mary Smith, age 40, also lived in the house. In 1940, Emma was still living in the same place, by herself.

It appears that Seabron remained in the Hampton Home until his death. He died March 21, 1938 when he was age 58. He was buried at the Hampton National Cemetery adjacent to the Hampton Home. It is not known whether Seabron and Victoria had any children during their short marriage.

Source: *Historical Register of National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1866-1938*; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1749, 282 rolls); Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Returns of Qualified Voters under the Reconstruction Act 1867. Office of the Governor of Georgia. Georgia State Archives, Morrow, Georgia. Ancestry.com online images. Smith Austin, 6 Jul 1867, Muscogee, Co. Colored (Black) Record Type: Return of Qualified Voters, Election District: 24.

U. S. Census 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910 of Columbus, Muscogee County, Georgia. Families of Gilbert George, Mildred George, Smith Alston, Louise C. George Austin (Alston).

Columbus, Georgia City Directory 1894 to 1918. Zorn's City Directory Publishing. Listings for Louise C. Austin (widow of Smith Austin) of 741 Front St., teacher of private school.

U. S. Army Register of Enlistments 1798-1914. Records of the Adjutant General's Office 1780-1917. Record Group 94. NARA. Microfilm M-233. Page 20, Line 7, 1905. Seabron J. Austin, age 25, born in Columbus, GA, Enlisted at Chattanooga, TN by Capt. Fuller. Co. H. 10th Cavalry. He was a laborer, black, hair black, brown complexion, 5'6" tall. Discharged Jan. 22, 1907 at Fort D. A. Russell in Wyoming. Expiration of service, Pvt. Good. Re-enlisted 1907-1910 at Fort Ethan Allen Military Post, Vermont. Co. H. 10th Cavalry. Re-enlisted Jan. 1910-Feb. 1913 Fort Ethan Allen Military Post, VT.

U. S. Census 1910, Colchester Town, Chittenden County, Vermont, Page 3D- SD 7351, ED 78, 20 Apr 1910, Fort Ethan Allen, Military Post. Dwelling 27, Family 28. Austin, Seabron J., Pvt. Male, black, single, GA, GA, GA. Soldier U. S. Army, can read and write.

Essex, Vermont Marriage Record, November 12, 1913. Digital folder #114703511. Ancestry.com. Seabron Jerry Austin married Victoria Roberts. Colored, age 33, first marriage, soldier, born in Columbus, Georgia. Father's name: Smith Austin b. Tennessee. Mother's name: Louise George, born in TN. Officiating: John M. Paige, B.D. Every Day Church, Winooski, Vermont.

World War II, Enlistment in U. S. Army. Feb. 3, 1917 in Mexico, Sgt. Quartermaster Corp. Discharged Jul. 20, 1920 at N.Y. City, demobilization.

Newport News City Directory 1925. Vol. XXVI Hill Directory Co., Inc. Publisher, c. 1925. Seabron J. Austin, barber, address: 210 Twenty-Fourth Street, Newport News, Virginia.

U. S. Census 1930, Newport News, Warwick Co., Virginia, Apr. 10, 1930, Page 38, 218 24th St. at Washington Ave., Dwelling 56, Family 61. Seabron J. Austin, age 50, head, rents, Negro, single, b. GA, GA, GA. Poolroom keeper of pool room, veteran of WWI.

Military Burials at National Cemeteries. Hampton National Cemetery, located at Cemetery Rd. at Marshall Ave., Hampton, VA. Seabron J. Austin, Sgt. U. S. Army died 21 March 1938, buried at Section G (colored), Site 68. Interred on March 22, 1938. Record is online at Ancestry.com.

Austin Families Association of America, Database: William Austin of Craven Co., SC. See children of William Asbury Austin for residents of Chattahoochee & Muscogee Counties, GA. Available at <http://www.afaoa.org>

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