

# ROBERTS FAMILY GETS TOGETHER AGAIN



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## Ties to community have descendants of one of county's founding family coming back

Like the giant shade trees flanking the Roberts Chapel Church near Atlanta, the roots of the Roberts family run deep. Descendents of one of Hamilton County's founding families gathered last week as they have for generations to reflect and reconnect.

"We've been having a reunion up here probably for about almost 90 years now," said Stacey White, president of the Roberts Settlement organization. "Every year it seems like we get more and more family that come out and more and more people that realize they are part of the Roberts descendents."

Since 1734, the Roberts family had lived as free landowners in North Carolina with full citizenship and voting rights despite being black. But as the country became more and more polarized over the issue of slavery and the fate of free blacks in the south became more uncertain, Elijah Roberts brought his family to Indiana in 1825, settling first in Rush County and then in Hamilton County in the area now known as Roberts Settlement off 276th Street just west of U.S. 31.

The family has grown into a diverse, multiethnic community. Dozens of family members, some from as far away as Los Angeles, gather at the church each July. Many poured over the family tree prepared by Tonja Goodloe of Carmel. She is the great-granddaughter of Alzadia Roberts Winburn. The printout stretches 9 feet in length.

"I always identified with the strength of the family that was here," Goodloe said. "However, it took me until I was in my 30s and 40s to understand the significance of the history here."

In addition to a hayride, cookout and catching up with family, many pay respects to their relatives buried in the adjacent cemetery. For Robert Hayes of Indianapolis, the reunion is more than just a chance to get together and reminisce, it is a vital link between the past, present and future generations.

"We hope we can leave something for our kids to look at," Hayes said. "It's really become more than a tradition. It's become kind of an expected hope."

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Top photo: William Fouts / [wfouts@noblesvilledailytimes.com](mailto:wfouts@noblesvilledailytimes.com)  
Joseph Roberts, his wife Brenda Roberts, daughter Crystal Jezierski and son-in-law J.T. Jezierski visit the grave of Joseph Roberts' great-grandfather at the Roberts Chapel Church Cemetery Saturday during the Roberts family reunion.

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