

African American Genealogy[®]

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Public Library**

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**African American
Genealogy**

Your Speaker

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African-American Research



**African-American
Research**



- Preparing to do Research
 - Read Academic Studies about Race Relations & Slavery
 - Select books from the Historical Background list

**African-American
Research**



- Preparing to do Research
 - Study Useful Resources
 - Read A General Genealogy Research Text
 - Read African-American Genealogical Research Text
 - Select Books from the African-American Genealogy Resources list
 - Examine Pertinent Web Sites

**African-American
Research**



- Preparing to do Research -- Background Information
 - Allen County Public Library - The Genealogy Center - African American Gateway
<http://www.genealogycenter.info/africanamerican/>
 - Afrigenas
<http://www.afrigenas.com>
 - Cyndislist - African-American
<http://www.cyndislist.com/african.htm>

African-American Research



- Preparing to do Research -- Background Information
 - African American Genealogical Society of Northern California
<http://www.aagsnc.org/resource.htm>
 - National Archives - African American Research
<http://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/>
 - National Archives - The Freedmen's Bureau, 1865-1872
<http://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau/>

African-American Research



- Preparing to do Research
 - LDS (FamilySearch.org) Guides for Study
 - FamilySearch - Wiki "African American Research"
https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/African_American_Research
 - FamilySearch - Wiki (Click on Search Strategies) "Quick Guide to African American Records"
https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Quick_Guide_to_African_American_Records

African-American Research



- Preparing to do Research
 - Study Indispensable Guides
 - FamilySearch -- [African American Records](#)
 - FamilySearch -- [Finding Records of Your Ancestors, Part A - African American 1870 to Present](#)

Research Techniques



- Search as many kinds of records as you can find to document the lives of your family back to 1870
- Study the lives of all family members
 - Including aunts, uncles, and cousins (Cluster Genealogy)
 - Not just your direct ancestors

Research Techniques



- Look for changing surnames
 - Some African Americans changed surnames several times
 - Surnames in a state of flux in the two decades following emancipation

Research Techniques



- Look for changing surnames
 - Family's Surname not found in census when location is know in next census
 - Search Technique
 - Check Suspected Location
 - » Browse census page by page looking for first names and approximate ages of family members
 - » Take care to closely check lines near bottom as they are often difficult to read

Research Techniques

- Look for changing surnames
 - Family's Surname not found in census when location is known in next census
 - Search Technique
 - Search Entire Suspected State for Surname
 - Search Surrounding States for Surname
 - Search by Given Name, Gender & State of Birth
 - Search by Given Name & Gender
 - Restrict Searches by Age ± 5 years and Age ± 10 years

Research Techniques

- When your ancestor is not listed in the index to Courthouse or Other Documents
 - Some indexes DO NOT include African Americans
 - Examine the rear pages of the ledger for additional indexes
 - Frequently indexes stop & start again in another section of the ledger
 - Examine the ledger thoroughly
 - When using LDS Film – carefully look for subsequent indexing --- **EASY TO MISS**
 - Check the original records anyway

Research Techniques

- Understand that some old records may have described your ancestor in terms used at the time that are **NO LONGER** acceptable or appropriate
 - African Americans may be listed in “colored” registers
 - You may also see the abbreviation “Col” next to your ancestor’s name
 - If your ancestor is not in a “colored” register, try the “white” register
 - Your ancestor’s race may not have been accurately recorded

African-American Research

- Use Standard Sources Back to 1870

• Cemetery Records	• Probate Records
• Census	• School Records
• Church Records	• Social Security Death Index
• Land Records	• Vital Records
• Newspapers	• Voting Records
• Obituaries	

Use Standard Sources Back to 1870

- Some Standard Sources may have useful variants or additional information
 - Do Not assume you know what the record contains
 - Look At Everything

Use Standard Sources Back to 1870

- Examine Ancestry.com’s databases
 - Search the “Card Catalog”
 - Search: **african american***
 - Many Hits in the Category: “Stories, Memories & Histories”

African-American Newspapers

- Frequently Overlooked Potential Source
- Newspapers Published Exclusively for African American readers
 - *Chicago Defender*
 - *Michigan Chronicle*

African-American Newspapers

- *African-American Newspapers and Periodicals: A National Bibliography*, Danky, James P., ed. (1998)

www.smallbusinesses.com/BlackNewspapers.htm

African-American Newspapers

- Mainstream papers often have society columns which cover activities of churches, voluntary associations and clubs as well as philanthropic groups
- Many local libraries have indexed vital events such as births, marriages, and deaths
- Check to ensure that the news items and columns covering African American activities are included in the index

How To Find Newspapers

- Identifying Newspaper Titles
 - United States Newspaper Program
 - Update Gregory's *American Newspapers*
 - Began in 1973
 - Most Newspapers Found at WorldCat.org Today

How To Find Newspapers

- Identifying Newspaper Titles
 - *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*
 - View newspaper pages (Digital Images)
 - Find information about newspapers from 1690 to today

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>



Williamson Co., Tennessee
Review Appeal, 10 April 1930

**Transition Records:
From Slavery to Freedom -
1861-1870**



- Freedmen's Bureau Records
- Southern Claims Commission
- Freedmen's Savings and Trust Records
- Co-Habitation Records
- Apprenticeship and Orphans' Records

**Transition Records:
1861-1870**



- Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau)

<http://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau/>

**Transition Records:
1861-1870**



- Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau)
 - Headquarter Records (M742*, M752, M803)
 - Primarily official and statistical
 - Contain some information on the work and experiences of particular persons at the local level

*National Archives Microfilm Series Numbers

**Transition Records:
1861-1870**



- Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau)
 - State Records of Assistant Commissioners and Superintendents of Education
 - Frequently Summaries & Statists
 - Narrative Reports from Subordinates

**Transition Records:
1861-1870**



- Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau)
 - State Records of Assistant Commissioners and Superintendents of Education - Narrative Reports
 - Condition of the Destitute, Misuse of Public Stores, Status of Bureau Property, Abandoned and Confiscated Lands, Murders and Outrages
 - Reports on Schools
 - Reports on Labor and Personnel Records
 - Returns of Medical Officers

**Transition Records:
1861-1870**



- Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau)
 - Field Office Records
 - Filled with names and personal information
 - Contain
 - Marriage certificates
 - Labor contracts
 - Hospital records
 - Complaints
 - Relief rolls
 - Trial summaries

Transition Records: 1861-1870



- Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau)
 - Field Office Records
 - Pleas for food, clothing, and medical care from rural communities
 - Freedpeoples' testimonies about delinquent employers, continued use of forced labor and apprenticeship, violence, and restrictions due to the new state-legislated and repressive "black codes"
 - Petitions for new schools, legal aid in courts, and protection from violence
 - Applications for land
 - Marriage certificates

Transition Records: 1861-1870



- Freedman's Bureau Marriage Records (M1875)
 - Hundreds of Marriage Records of newly liberated African Americans in the post-Civil War Era
 - Collected from 1861 through 1869
 - First by the Union Army
 - Then by the Freedmen's Bureau in its field offices in the Southern States and the District of Columbia
 - FamilySearch.org has Images

Report of Marriages during month ending September 30th 1865 in District of Columbia

Date	Name of Bride	Residence	Name of Groom	Residence	Males				Females				No. of Children	Name of Officiating Minister
					Age	Color	Profession	Religion	Age	Color	Profession	Religion		
1865	Washington Gille	Clark Co.	Harriet Downard	Clark Co.	25	W	Farmer	Methodist	21	W	Domestic	Methodist	9	Wm. C. Brown
1865	John Davison	Clark Co.	Mary Melley	Clark Co.	25	W	Farmer	Methodist	21	W	Domestic	Methodist	7	J. B. Robinson
1865	Burwell Melby	Clark Co.	Jenny Buck	Clark Co.	25	W	Farmer	Methodist	21	W	Domestic	Methodist	5	Wm. C. Brown
1865	John Barber	Clark Co.	Nichol Beer	Clark Co.	25	W	Farmer	Methodist	21	W	Domestic	Methodist	5	Wm. C. Brown
1865	John Conway	Clark Co.	Anna Evans	Clark Co.	25	W	Farmer	Methodist	21	W	Domestic	Methodist	5	Wm. C. Brown
1865	Jerry Jackson	Clark Co.	Viola Davis	Clark Co.	25	W	Farmer	Methodist	21	W	Domestic	Methodist	5	Wm. C. Brown
1865	Abner Brown	Clark Co.	Mary Brewer	Clark Co.	25	W	Farmer	Methodist	21	W	Domestic	Methodist	5	Wm. C. Brown
1865	Alton Newton	Clark Co.	Jenny Glen	Clark Co.	25	W	Farmer	Methodist	21	W	Domestic	Methodist	5	Wm. C. Brown
1865	Ernest Thompson	Clark Co.	Maria Austin	Clark Co.	25	W	Farmer	Methodist	21	W	Domestic	Methodist	5	Wm. C. Brown

I certify that the above Report is correct & faithful as sent by the Marriage Agents of this office.
 William A. Strick
 Sept 30th 1865

Date	Name of Bride	Residence	Name of Groom	Residence	Males				Females				No. of Children	Name of Officiating Minister
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<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-267-12157-13677-14?cc=1414908&wc=5548053>

Transition Records: 1861-1870



- Freedman's Branch, Office of the Adjutant General (M2029)
 - Contain valuable genealogical information on black soldiers and sailors found in documents and letters they submitted for bounty, pension, arrears of pay, commutation of rations, and prize money

Transition Records: 1861-1870



- Southern Claims Commission Records
 - Records of the Commissioners of Claims 1871-1880 (M0087)
 - Nearly 22,300 cases are filed by individuals, family groups, churches, and businesses
 - Case files include items such as family letters and Bibles, wills, probate records, personal accounts, property inventories, and other genealogical data
 - These records can help you determine if an ancestor had been a slave

Transition Records:
1861-1870



- Southern Claims Commission Records
 - Records of the Commissioners of Claims 1871-1880 (M0087)
 - Nearly 22,300 cases are filed by individuals, Records include testimony of neighbors, relatives, and former slaves to support a claimant's assertion that he or she is due repayment for property taken during the Civil War because of loyalty to the Union
 - Use Master Index to Case Files

Transition Records:
1861-1870



- Southern Claims Commission Records
 - Records of the Commissioners of Claims 1871-1880 (M0087)
 - Mills, Gary B. *Southern Loyalists in the Civil War: The Southern Claims Commission* Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing, 1994.
 - Provides the name of the claimant, his or her county and state, the commission number, office and report numbers, and the year and status of the claim

Transition Records:
1861-1870



- Freedmen's Savings and Trust Records
 - Registers of Signatures of Depositors in Branches of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, 1865-1874 (M0816)
 - Information includes birthplace, place brought up, residence, age, complexion, name of employer or occupation, spouse, children, father, mother, brothers and sisters, remarks, and signature
 - Early books give the name of the former master or mistress and the name of the plantation
 - The Freedman's Bank records are part of National Archives Record Group 101, Records of the Comptroller of the Currency

Transition Records:
1861-1870



- Freedmen's Bank Records at FamilySearch.org

SEARCH EXAMPLES

 - MARY WOODS, WASHINGTON CO, VA.
 - PHILLIS GREEN, ATLANTA GA

Transition Records:
1861-1870



- Co-Habitation Records
 - Allowed Former Slaves to Legitimize their Informal Slave Era Marriages
 - Good Records for Kentucky, Virginia, & North Carolina
 - NC Required Registration in 1866

Transition Records:
1861-1870



- Co-Habitation Records (con't)
 - Check Local Courthouses
 - Registers often contain
 - Registration Dates
 - Groom's Name
 - Bride's Name
 - Bride's former Surname
 - Time they Lived Together
 - Former Owner's Names & Plantation Names are Sometimes Provided

Cohabitation Records



- North Carolina Cohabitation Records
 - Provide Proof of Slave Era "Marriages" for which no other Records Exist
 - May also Provide other Valuable Clues to their Lives before Emancipation

Cohabitation Records



- Act of March 10, 1866 "An Act Concerning Negroes and Persons of Color or of Mixed Blood"
 - Required Former Slaves to have their Marriages Recorded by the County Clerk or a Justice of the Peace Before September 1, 1866
 - The Proofs of Marriage for twenty counties in North Carolina are available on Microfilm Under Various Names
 - "Record of Marriages by Freedman"
 - "Negro Cohabitation Certificates"
 - "Record of Cohabitation"
 - "Cohabitation Record"

Cohabitation Records: North Carolina Examples



- Bertie County Records
 - Includes only Brief Notes about Couples who Appeared before the Justice of the Peace
 - For instance -- On August 27, 1866, Dick Rascoe and Delia Jones stated they had been man and wife for 23 years

Cohabitation Records: North Carolina Examples



- Columbus County Ledgers Document
 - Names
 - Date of Commencement
 - Date of Acknowledgment of Cohabitation
 - On August 9, 1866, James Smith and Amey Nance Declared they began Cohabiting in 1855 and wished their Relationship to be Legally Recognized

Cohabitation Records: North Carolina Examples



- Rowan County Records
 - Mention Former Slave Owners' Names
 - Acknowledge the Couple's Marital Status
 - In April 1866, Mack Davis, a Former Slave of George O Tarrh (or Tarr), and Lucy Thomason, a Former Slave of Jane Thomason, Reported they had Cohabitated Together since July of 1864

Transition Records: 1861-1870



- Apprenticeship and Orphans' Records
 - See both Freedmen's Bureau and county court records for information on guardianship and apprentices
 - Former slave owners often became the legal guardians of infants and small children
 - Orphans old enough to work were also apprenticed to the former slave owner

Making the Slave Connection



- First step is to identify the slave owner and then study the owner's records for clues to your family
 - Correctly identifying your ancestor in slave records is extremely difficult
 - Even professional researchers are successful only about 50 percent of the time

Making the Slave Connection



- SURNAMES
 - Keep in mind that only about 15 percent of former slaves took their last slave owner's surname
 - Some took the surname of people they admired, such as Lincoln or Washington
 - Some took a surname they had been using for many years without the knowledge of the slave owner
 - Often this name derived from the owner of an ancestor

Making the Slave Connection



- Civil War Colored Troops Service and Pension Records
 - National Archives Microfilm (M1801, M1817-M1824, M1898, and M1992) & at Ancestry.com
 - These records list the date and place of birth of the soldier and may name the last slave owner

Making the Slave Connection



- Registers of Signatures of Depositors in Branches of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, 1865-1874* National Archives Microfilm M0816
 - Early books give the name of the former master or mistress and the name of the plantation

Making the Slave Connection



- Freedmen's Bureau Records Field Office Records
 - Filled with Detail sometimes providing Connections to former Masters & Plantations
 - Some Records Online at:
www.aagsnc.org/genlinks/Genealogical_Resources/Freedmens_Bureau_Records/

Making the Slave Connection



- American Slave Narratives*
 - Typescript pages of interviews with more than 3,500 former slaves at Library of Congress
- Potts, Howard E. *A Comprehensive Name Index for the American Slave [Narratives]*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997
- Online at ancestry.com

Making the Slave Connection



- Apprenticeship and Orphans' Records
 - Freedmen's Bureau Records
 - County Court Records
 - Provide information on guardianship and apprentices
 - Former slave owners often became the legal guardians of infants and small children
 - Orphans old enough to work were also apprenticed to the former slave owner

Making the Slave Connection



- Another Technique for Identifying the Slave Owner
 1. Find your family on the 1870 census
 2. Make a list of every family with property on the 10 pages before and 10 pages after your ancestor. Add your ancestor's surname to this list if it is not already there

Making the Slave Connection



- Another Technique for Identifying the Slave Owner (Continued)
 3. Act as if each family name on the list was the name of the former slave owner
 4. Use the records listed under Search Records of Slaves
 5. As you use the records you will start eliminating some names, and others will look more promising

Making the Slave Connection



- Another Technique for Identifying the Slave Owner (Continued)
 6. If you don't find a match, try to find out if the family moved from a different location
 7. If so, repeat this process as you check the census records for the other location

Searching Records for Slaves



- When you know the slave owner's name
 1. Study the life and records of the slave owner and his family. Your ancestor's life was inseparably connected with the slave owner. Your ancestor will be listed in records of the slave owner's property

Searching Records for Slaves



- When you know the slave owner's name
 2. Look for the slave owner's name in:
 - a. Federal census schedules, 1850 and 1860. Slave schedules give the age and sex of each slave.
 - b. For information on using slave schedules, see:
 - c. www.webarchaeology.com/html/slavsched.htm
 - d. 1850 and 1860 federal census mortality schedules. These give the names of slaves who died and the names of the slave owners

Searching Records for Slaves



- When you know the Slave Owner's Name
 2. Look for the slave owner's name in:
 - d. Tax records
 - i. These list slaves and their monetary value
 - e. Land and property records
 - i. Search for information about deeds, sales, mortgages, or rental transactions of slaves
 - f. Probate, estate, and chancery court records
 - i. These show the distribution of slaves at the death of a slave owner

Searching Records for Slaves



- When you know the Slave Owner's Name
 2. Look for the slave owner's name in:
 - g. Plantation Records:
 - i. Account log books give the names of slaves, family relationships, and their assigned tasks
 - ii. Some records give the slaves' birth and death dates
 - iii. They also record when a slave was bought, from whom, and for how much

Searching Records for Slaves



• EXAMPLE

Fort Family Slaves, Robertson County, Tennessee to E. Felecciana Parish, Louisiana: Abstracts from the Slave Record Book of Robertson County, Tennessee Planter, Josiah W. Fort

<http://files.usgwarchives.net/la/state/history/afriamer/slaves/fort.txt>

[Click Here](#)

Searching Records for Slaves



- When you know the Slave Owner's Name
 - MICROFILM: Look at Kenneth M. Stampp, et. al., *Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War*. 1,457 reels microfilm. 1985-. [@ Lib of Mich & Oakland Univ]
 - GUIDE: Kenneth M. Stampp ; associate editors, Randolph Boehm and Martin Schipper. *Guide to the microfilm edition of Records of ante-bellum southern plantations from the Revolution through the Civil War*.
 - GUIDE: Cooper, Jean L. *Index to Records of Ante-bellum Southern Plantations: Locations, Plantations, Surnames and Collections*. 2nd ed. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009.

Searching Records for Slaves



- When you know the Slave Owner's Name
 - MICROFILM: Look at Schipper, Martin Paul and Charles B. Dew. *Slavery in Ante-bellum Southern Industries*. 171 microfilm reels. [@ Lib of Mich]
 - GUIDE: Schipper, Martin Paul and Charles B. Dew. *A Guide to the Microfilm Edition of ... Slavery in Antebellum Southern Industries*. 1991.

Searching Records for Slaves



- When you know the Slave Owner's Name
 - Check NUCMC - *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections*
 - Use the *Index to Personal Names in the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections, 1959-1984*
 - Indexes more than Plantation Records

**Searching Records
for Slaves**



- When you know the Slave Owner's Name
 - Check NUCMC - *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections*
 - NUCMC printed volumes 1-29 (1959-1993)
 - Contains Descriptions of approximately 72,300 collections located in 1406 different repositories
 - Contains Approximately 1,085,000 Index References
 - Blacks, Afro-Americans, Freedmen, Slaves & Freedmen's Bureau, etc.
 - Other Subjects Include Personal, Family, Corporate, and Geographic Names

**Searching Records
for Slaves**



- When you know the Slave Owner's Name
 - Check NUCMC online for post 1983 Additions
 - Online Version DOES NOT Contain Entries from Published Bound Editions prior to 1983
 - Search @ WorldCat.org & Select Advanced Search, Format: Archival material
 - Select a Collection
 - Go to Holding Institution
 - Look for an Online Finding Aid for the Collection

THE END



QUESTIONS?

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