

African-American Research

Special Collections Division
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African-American genealogy research presents special challenges for the family historian. To name a few of these challenges: records identifying enslaved ancestors were rarely kept; slaves were considered property – not individuals; 1870 was the first census year to include former slaves; family surnames may not be that of the last slave owner; and racial identities may be inaccurately reported in records. It is also important to remember that there were free African-Americans before and during slavery, so their records during those periods may be accessible. Even with these challenges, freedom generated unique records of African-Americans. Your perseverance and research savvy will help as you uncover the hidden layers of your family history.

The resources below identify records unique to African-American genealogy and suggest strategies to help in your research. Most of our books on African-American genealogy will be found in aisles **5B** and **6A** in the Special Collections Division on the 3rd Floor of Main Library. **Check with a Special Collections Librarian for African-American resources that are shelved geographically.** Books available to check-out can be identified by their yellow strips and are shelved by call number in aisle **6A**.

Getting Started

- *Black Genealogy* (1991) 929.1028 B561b – aisle **6A**
- *Black Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing the African-American Family Tree* (2001) 929.1089 B972b – aisles **5B & 6A**
- *Discovering Your African-American Ancestors* (2003) 929.108996 Sm47g – aisles **5B & 6A**
- *Family Pride: The Complete Guide to Tracing African-American Genealogy* (1997) 929.1089 B368f – aisle **6A**
- *Finding a Place Called Home: A Guide to African-American Genealogy and Historical Identity* (1999) 929.1089 W898f – aisle **6A**
- *Finding Your African American Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide* (2000) 929.1089 T363fi – aisles **5B & 6A**
- *A Student's Guide to African American Genealogy* (1996) 929.1089 J66s – aisle **6A**
- *Unpuzzling Your Past: The Best-Selling Basic Guide to Genealogy* (2001) 929.1072 C948u 4th ed. – aisle **6A**

Additional Resources

- *African American Genealogical Sourcebook* (1995) – aisle **5B**
- *African American Genealogy: A Bibliography and Guide to Sources* (2000) 973 W819af – aisles **5B & 6A**
- *American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* [WPA Slave Narratives] (1972-) 326.973 R198 **History & Humanities Division, 3rd Floor of Main Library.** History & Humanities only has volumes that include Alabama, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Tennessee, and Virginia. The name index is in Special Collections. See also Ancestry Library Edition Database.
- *Ancestors: Episode 7: African American Research* [Video] (1997) 929.1 An538 v.7 - **Audio Visual Division, 2nd Floor, Main Library.**
- *Black Courage, 1775-1783: Documentation of Black Participation in the American Revolution* (1984) – aisle **10B**
- *Black Genesis: A Resource Book for African-American Genealogy* (2003) 929.108996 R796b 2nd ed. – aisle **5B & 6A**
- *Black History: A Guide to Civilian Records in the National Archives* (1984) – aisle **5B**
- *Black Indian Genealogy Research: African American Ancestors among the Five Civilized Tribes* (1993) 929.308996 W241b – aisles **5B & 6A**
- *The Black Loyalist Directory: African American in Exile after the American Revolution* (1996) – aisle **10B**
- *Black Names in America: Origins and Usage* (1975) – aisle **5B**
- *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915* (1997) – aisle **5B**
- *Comprehensive Name Index for The American Slave* (1997) – aisle **5B**. An index to the Federal Writers' Project's slave narrative volumes.
- *An Index of African Americans Identified in Selected Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands* (1995) – aisle **5B**
- *Indexes to 1850 and 1860 Slave Schedules for Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee* – aisle 7B
- *Lay Down Body: Living History in African American Cemeteries* (1996) – aisle **5B**. Circulating copy available in the History & Humanities Division 393.0899 H894L
- *Listening for Our Past: A Lay Guide to African American Oral History Interviewing* (2000) 929.1072 N426L – aisles **5B & 6A**
- *Records of Military Agencies Relating to African Americans from the Post-World War I Period to the Korean War* (2006) – Govt Doc AE 1.124:105/2006 **Business & Government Division, 1st Floor, Main Library.** Does not circulate.
- *Slave Ancestral Research: It's Something Else* [Case Study] (1995) 929.208996 F288s – aisles **5B & 6A**
- *Slave Genealogy: A Research Guide with Case Studies* (1986) 929.1 St83s – aisles **5B & 6A**

Electronic Resources

- *African American Genealogical Society of Cleveland*
<http://www.aagsclev.org/>
- *AfriGeneas*
<http://www.afrigeneas.com/>
- *Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc.*
<http://www.aahgs.org/>
- *Cyndi's List - African-American Genealogy*
<http://www.cyndislist.com/african.htm>
- *Freedmen's Bureau Online*
<http://www.freedmensbureau.com/>
- *Freedmen's Saving & Trust Company Records, 1865-1874.* CD-Rom Computer, **Special Collections Division, 3rd Floor, Main Library.**
- *Slave Narratives.* Ancestry Library Edition Database. **Main and Branch Libraries.**
- *Slave Schedules 1850, 1860.* Ancestry Library Edition Database. **Main and Branch Libraries.**

See the Ancestry Library Edition database for African-American genealogy resources available by location.