

## Newspapers

The library owns local African American newspapers such as *The Union* (1918-1923), the *Cincinnati Herald* (1966-present), and the Cincinnati and Cleveland editions of the *Call and Post*. Citations to death notices and news stories from current issues of the *Herald* and the *Call and Post* are indexed in NEWSDEX, our online newspaper index. Retrospective indexing is underway.

For nationwide coverage refer to James de T. Abajian's *Blacks in Selected Newspapers, Censuses, and Other Sources: An Index to Names and Subjects* (R016.929373 fA116). In addition, the *Pittsburgh Courier* is available from 1924 to the present, along with selected out-of-town newspapers on microfilm.

## Periodicals

The Genealogy and Local History Department subscribes to several journals that are dedicated to African American genealogy, including the *Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society*, and the *Fred Hart Williams Genealogical Society Newsletter* from the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library. The library also subscribes to over 1300 general family history periodicals, which often include information about ancestors of African American descent. Ask at the Genealogy Desk for indexes to assist with your periodical research.

## Local Histories, Family Histories, City Directories

Local histories and family histories are best searched by using a subject search or family surname search in our Library catalog. Search these fields by using county name or family name. If the emphasis of the work is African American, it will often be noted in the catalog record. Besides housing Cincinnati city directories from 1819 to the present, the Genealogy and Local History Department has city directories for other major U.S. cities.

## Internet Resources

The growth of the Internet as a genealogical tool has been felt in all fields of the subject, including African-American. While there are a myriad of websites dedicated to the subject, the Genealogy and Local History department has selected a few that will be of help in your search for family history. To view these sites visit our homepage at <http://www.cincinnati.library.org/> and click on "Sites by Subject" then click on "genealogy." This link will allow the user to view a wide range of genealogy websites, including those dedicated to African American genealogy.

Some sites of special interest to the African American Genealogist include:

*African American Census Schedules Online*

Both federal slave schedules and state colored population schedules can be found here.

<http://www.afrigenaes.com/aacensus/>

*AfriGeneas*

Links, database of 10,000 plus African-American surnames, slave data

<http://www.afrigenaes.com/>

*Rootsweb: Slave Archival Collection Database*

Part of Rootsweb, this database collects slave ancestry information such as dates and places of birth and death.

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~ilissdsa/>

## Other Research Materials

In addition to the materials mentioned above, the Genealogy and Local History Department has dedicated itself to emphasizing African American history. To that end the department has created an extensive research collection of African American culture and history. Some of the items included in this section are: *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (305.89609 A512) a 19 volume set that includes printed copies of the WPA slave narratives. *Papers of the American Slave Trade* (MF380.144097 P2143 2005) a microfilm collection that contains log books, business papers, and correspondents of those who were engaged in the African Slave trade in the United States. *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790* (975.00496 W765) this multivolume set contains advertisements for runaway slaves from Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland, Georgia, and South Carolina which provide insight into the men and women who sought their freedom in dangerous times. In addition to these items there are many more primary sources in the collection including pamphlets, personal papers, and statistical information geared to the researcher in African American history.

# African American Family History Resources at the Public Library



The Public Library  
of Cincinnati and Hamilton County  
800 Vine Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202-2071  
History Department  
513-369-6905  
[www.CincinnatiLibrary.org](http://www.CincinnatiLibrary.org)

The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County has an extensive collection of materials valuable in the search for African American ancestry. Black genealogy presents unique challenges and rewards.

## Get Started

For the beginner, how-to-do-it books and guides specializing in African American genealogy provide a general introduction. The following books are recommended:

*African American Genealogical Sourcebook* by Paula K. Byers  
(929.108996 qA258 1995)

*Black Genealogy* by Charles L. Blockson  
(929.1028 B651)

*Black Genesis* by James Rose and Alice Eichholz  
(929.10973 R796)

*Black Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing the African American Family* by Tony Burroughs  
(929.108996073 B972 2001)

*Ethnic Genealogy: A Research Guide* by Jessie Carney Smith  
(R929.107207 E84)

*Family Pride: The Complete Guide to Tracing African-American Genealogy* by Donna Beasley  
(929.108996073 B368 1997)

*Finding a Place Called Home. A Guide to African-American Genealogy and Historical Identity* by Dee Parmer Woodtor  
(929.108996073 qW898 1999)

*Finding your People. An African-American Guide to Discovering your Roots* by Sandra Lee Jamison  
(929.108996073 J32 1999)

*Generations Past: A Selected List of Sources for Afro-American Genealogical Research* by Sandra M. Lawson  
(R016.929108996073 L425)

*How to Trace your African-American Roots: Discovering Your Unique History* by Barbara Thompson Howell  
(929.108996073 H859 1999)

*Slave Genealogy: A Research Guide with Case Studies*  
by David H. Streets  
(929.108996073 qS915)

*Somerset Homecoming: Recovering a Lost Heritage*  
by Dorothy Spruill Redford  
(929.3089960730756 R315)

*Tracing African-American Roots* by Deloris Kitchell Clem  
(929.108996073 qC625 1999)

*Student's Guide to African American Genealogy*  
by Anne E. Johnson  
(929.108996 J66 1996)

After 1870, many of the same techniques used to research any American ancestor apply to African American genealogy. These methods are described in *Family History 101: a Beginner's Guide to Finding Your Ancestors* by Marcia Yannizze Melnyk (929.1072073 qM527f 2005) and Ralph J. Crandall's *Shaking Your Family Tree: A Basic Guide to Tracing Your Family's Genealogy* (929.1072073 qC891 2001).

## Biographical Materials

Biographical information can help locate the time and place that a person lived as well as other essential genealogical information. The most extensive resource, *Black Biography, 1790-1950, A Cumulative Index*, (R920.009296073 qB627 1987, 3 vols.) and its accompanying microfiche collection of 297 black biographical dictionaries, provide the best comprehensive sketch of 30,000 African Americans. This set lists date and place of birth, occupation, religion and date of death. Of particular interest to Cincinnatians is its index to Wendell Dabney's *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens* (917.717806 D114 1988). Mary Mace Spradling's *In Black and White: A Guide to Magazine Articles, Newspaper Articles, and Books Concerning More Than 15,000 Black Individuals and Groups* (R920.009296 qS866) offers citations to sources with more in-depth biographical information.

## Census Records

The United States census records are among the most valuable tools available to the family historian. The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County holds census records for the entire United States 1790-1930 and all available Soundex indexes. Of special interest to researchers of African American history are the records for 1850, 1860 and 1870. The 1850 and 1860 schedules contain slave schedules that list the names of slaveholders and the age, color and sex, but usually not the names, of slaves owned. The 1870 census records list most African Americans by name. For many former slaves, the 1870 census marks the first occurrence of a surname in an official record. Ask for brochures at the Genealogy Desk on using the census.

Free African Americans prior to the Civil War can be found in the census by surname and in books such as Debra L. Newman's *List of Free Black Heads of Families in the First Census of the United States, 1790* (920.373 qCE1) and Carter G. Woodson's *Free Negro Heads of Families in the United States in 1830* (R929.373 qW898). Paul E. Nitchman's seven volume *Blacks in Ohio in 1880* (929.3089960730771 q728) lists African Americans by county and also includes an overall index to each volume.

## Major Microfilm Collections

Four noted collections, *Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution Through the Civil War* (MF975 R311), *Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands* (MF973.8 U58), *Registers of Signatures of Depositors in Branches of the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company, 1864-1874* (MF929.373 R337 1865), and *Slavery in Antebellum Southern Industries* (MF975 qS631) offer invaluable historical and genealogical information for the eras immediately preceding and following the Civil War. The plantation records include: business records, account books, slave lists, reports, slave owners' letters and diaries, and occasional letters written by slaves. Freedmen's Bureau records can provide: names, residences, occupations, and physical descriptions of former slaves, as well as orphan and marriage records, correspondence, labor contracts, records and reports, lists of abandoned and confiscated land, school reports, and former plantation owners and relatives' names. The Southern industries records include: correspondence, account books, deeds, lists of slaves hired, and names of runaway slaves. None of the sets has an overall index. The best way to gain access to them is by identifying your ancestor's county of origin and using the printed guides that accompany the sets. *The Registers of Signatures of Depositors* include: account number, name, age, complexion, birthplace, place raised, name of former master or mistress, residence, occupation, name of parents, spouse, children, brothers and sisters, remarks, and signature. Unlike the other sets, this group of records is indexed by surname within each state.

## Military Records

The Public Library's military history collection contains rosters and regimental histories of major U.S. military involvements, with special emphasis on the Civil War. Famous among these are Luis F. Emilio's 1894 work, *A Brave Black Regiment: History of the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1863-1865* (975.7444 J54 1992), and Peter H. Clark's *The Black Brigade of Cincinnati* (301.4596 A512 v.116), published in 1864. Another useful resource is *Guide to Tracing Your African American Civil War Ancestor* by Jeanette Braxton Secret (929.108996073 B826 1997).

Two microfiche sets, *Regimental Histories of the American Civil War* and *Civil War Unit Histories*, provide firsthand accounts and records of Civil War units. The latter also has a section (Part 5) devoted to the U.S. Colored Troops. Both sets are arranged by state and then by regiment number, which can be obtained by using the *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. This index is available at the Genealogy Desk.