Introduction to African-American Genealogy

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Terminology in a document is determined by the time period

- African
- African-American
- Afro-American
- Black
- Colored
- Freedman
- Free Person of Color
- Maroon

- Mulatto
- Negro
- Negress
- Octorron
- Quadroon
- Slave
- Wench

Make a plan

- Set a main goal
  - What do you want to find out?
    - Example: When was the family freed?
- Break it down to "mile marker" goals to get you to the main goal
  - Where were they in 1940? 1900? 1870?
  - Were the family members a free person of color or an enslaved person in 1865?
  - Where were they? Ohio? Georgia? Virginia?
- Write it down
  - You will get distracted and off topic, it's good to have something to "pull you back"
- What will you need to find and what will be your proof?
  - Parent/Child connection
  - Legal documents, word of mouth, church records?

Where to Start?

- Start with what you know and work backwards
  - Start with your information
    - Family Group sheets help
  - Interview anyone who might know anything
  - Find confirmation for what you know and have easy access to
    - Your papers, Mom's papers, Grandma's papers, Uncle Frank's papers, etc.
- Use the information you have to find the next level back
  - Birth Certificates have parents names; obituaries have siblings, etc.
- Start using Resources to find what you are "missing"
  - Greene County Room
  - Use the FAN club method (family, associates, and neighbors)

Researching

- African-American research is divided into two time frames
    - Pre- 1870
    - Post 1870
  - Pre-1870
    - Establish if they were a free person of color or enslaved person.
      - If a free person of color prior to 1870 will be listed by name in the census
    - Identify the last slave owner
      - Not all former enslaved people took the names of the previous owners.
      - Where were they located?
  - Post 1870
    - Most of the research is straightforward from major web pages
      - Census, voter registration, military records, vital records, etc.
    - Additional resources
      - African-American Newspapers, Fraternities, City Directories, Voters lists

- Terms to identify a person as African-American is time/location specific
  - You may have to use a different term to look for the person you are looking for
    - Ex. If the slave owner's will has been digitized and is searchable you have to search for the word written. If you search "black" and the word "slave" is used you won't find the reference or entry you are looking for.
- When you interview family members ask if they have heard of names of former slave owners or sharecroppers.
- Enslaved people were considered "PROPERTY" so search inventory records, wills, deeds, or any other record that might mention "property" of slave owners.
- Only 15% of enslaved people lived on large plantations, so look for individual, family, and small farms.

- Become familiar with different historical periods- which impacted the type of records that were kept.
    - Slavery (1619-1865)
    - Civil War (1861-1865)
    - Reconstruction (1865-1877)
    - Jim Crow/Segregation (1877-1970)
    - Civil Rights Movement (1854-1968)
- When you look at a slave owner, be sure to look at all the records and documents for members of his/her ENTIRE family and people he/she did business with.
- Not every person of color was an enslaved person before the Emancipation Proclamation. Check voter registrations, deeds, wills, etc.
- As with any research, use ALL the resources you can get your hands on. Here's a short list to help get you started
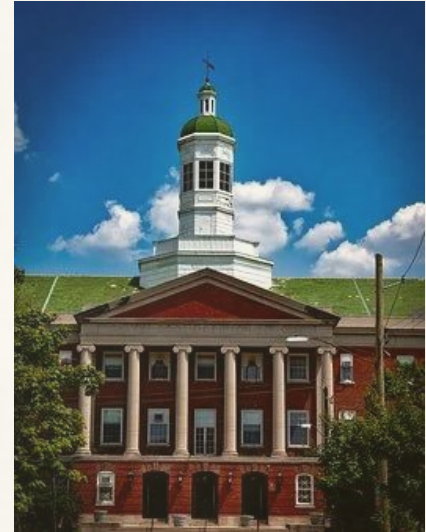
Resources

- www.greenelibrary.info a small sample of what we provide
  - Accessible Archives (African-American Specific-sample)
    - African American Newspapers
    - Christian Recorder
    - The Colored American
    - Douglass Monthly
    - Frederick Douglass Paper
    - The Freedmen's Record (The Freedmen's Journal)
    - Freedom's Journal
    - The National Era
    - The Negro Business League Herald
    - The North Star
    - Provincial Freeman
    - Weekly Advocate
  - African American Heritage
  - Ancestry Library Edition
  - America's GenealogyBank

Greene County
P u b l i c   L i b r a r y

- National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)
  - www.archives.gov
  - Slave Schedules
    - 1850 and 1860
  - Census Records
    - Starting in 1870 all African Americans were listed with surnames
    - Some of the 1890 census records for Civil War vets survived
    - 1910 census has question: Survivor of Union or Confederate Army or Navy
  - Slave manifests
  - Commissioners for Emancipation of Slaves in DC
  - Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands "Freedmen's Bureau"
  - Freedman's Savings and Trust Company (1865-1874)
    - Had to provide information about former owner, parents and siblings when opening an account
  - Commissioner of Claims
    - African Americans sometimes provided statements about former owners' claims to get reimbursed for services provided during the Civil War
  - Pension Records

- Sample of HBCU Libraries and Archives that may be helpful
  - Atlanta University Center Schools
    - www.auctr.edu
  - Central State University
    - www.centralstate.edu/academics/support/library/
  - Fisk University
    - www.fisk.edu/academics/library/special-collections-and-archives
  - Hampton University
    - www.hamptonu.edu/universityservices/library/
  - Howard University
    - www.howard.edu/msrc
  - Miles College
    - www.miles.edu/library
  - North Carolina Central University
    - www.web.nccu.edu/shepardlibrary
  - Oakwood University
    - www.libguides.oakwood.edu/content.php?pid=2881

- Texas Southern University
  - www.tsu.edu/academics/RobertJTerryLibrary
- Tuskegee University
  - www.tuskegee.edu/libraries/archives.aspx
- Wilberforce University
  - www.wilberforce.edu/academics/the-rembert-e-stokes-library-and-information-commons/
- HBCU Library Alliance Digital Collection
  - www.hbculibraries.org
- ArchiveGrid
  - www.beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/
- Digital Public Library of America
  - www.dp.la
- Civil Rights History Project: Survey of Collections and Repositories
  - www.loc.gov/folklife/civilrights/survey/index.php

- African American Genealogy Group of the Miami Valley of Ohio
  - www.aaggmv.org
- AfriGeneas
  - www.afrigeneas.com
  - List of links to additional resources (Cyndi's list for African-American Research)
- Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery
  - www.informationwanted.org
  - Search "Information Wanted Ads" taken out by former slaves to locate missing family members.
- The Freedmen's Bureau Online
  - www.freedmensbureau.com
  - Bureau supervised all relief and educational activities relating to refugees and freedmen
- The Beyond Kin Project
  - www.beyondkin.org
  - Family Tree software for documenting enslaved and slaveholding families

- BlackPast.org Remembered and Reclaimed
  - www.blackpast.org
- Other records to check
  - Church Records
    - Contact the church in the area your family lived
    - Research records of white churches in ancestral communities, find out if they had African-American mission churches
  - Local militia enrollments
  - Wills and probate records-often at the Clerk of Courts in the county
  - Local History Departments and Special Collections in the county your family lived.

Ancestral Chart

ancestry.com

Chart No. _____

No. 1 on this chart is
the same person as No. _____

On Chart No. _____

BORN
PLACE
MARRIED
PLACE
DIED
PLACE

NAME OF SPOUSE

BORN
PLACE
MARRIED
PLACE
DIED
PLACE

BORN
PLACE
DIED
PLACE

BORN
PLACE
MARRIED
PLACE
DIED
PLACE

CONT. ON CHART _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

BORN
PLACE
DIED
PLACE

CONT. ON CHART _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

BORN
PLACE
MARRIED
PLACE
DIED
PLACE

CONT. ON CHART _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

BORN
PLACE
DIED
PLACE

CONT. ON CHART _____

CONT. ON CHART _____

Family Group Record

ancestry.com

Prepared By _____ Relationship to Preparer _____

Address _____ Date _____ Ancestral Chart # _____ Family Unit # _____

Husband

Occupation(s) _____ Religion _____

	Date—Day, Month, Year	City	County	State or Country	
Born					
Christened					Name of Church
Married					Name of Church
Died					Cause of Death
Buried		Cem/Place			Date Will Written/Proved
Father		Other Wives			
Mother					

Wife maiden name

Occupation(s) _____ Religion _____

		City	County	State or Country	
Born					
Christened					Name of Church
Died					Cause of Death
Buried		Cem/Place			Date Will Written/Proved
Father		Other Husbands			
Mother					

•	Sex MF	Children Given Names	Birth Day Month Year	Birthplace City	County	St./Ctry.	Date of first marriage/Place Name of Spouse	Date of Death/Cause City County State/Country	Computer I.D. #
		1							
		2							
		3							
		4							
		5							
		6							
		7							
		8							
		9							
		10							
		11							
		12							

NOTE=Direct Ancestor   Form # F106   http://www.ancestry.com/save/charts/familysheet.htm   © 2007 The Generations Network, Inc.