

Records of the Field Offices for the State of Louisiana Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1863-1872 [M1905], NARA.

Records of the Field Offices for the States of Maryland and Delaware Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1865-1872 [M1906], NARA.

Records of the Field Offices for the State of Missouri Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1865-1872 [M1908], NARA.

Records of the Mississippi Freedmen's Department (pre-Bureau Records) Office of the Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, 1863-1865 [M1914], NARA.

More information about Freedmen's Bureau records is available at:

www.freedmensbureau.com

SOUTHERN CLAIMS COMMISSION

This resource is invaluable for African American researchers due to the quality of the information to be found. The commission was established to review claims of southerners who had furnished supplies or had property taken by the U.S. Army and Navy. People did not have to own property to be included in these records. Those making claims were required to prove loss, as well as their loyalty to the Union. Because of appeals, information was collected until 1915. Special agents worked at the local level to investigate, depose and gather witness testimony for or against claims. Relatives, friends and neighbors are described in the affidavits and witness testimony.

An excellent resource for exploring Southern Claims Commission records can be found at the Saint Louis County Library website:

<http://www.slcl.org/branches/hq/sc/scc/scc-main.htm>

The library's collection includes all the Southern Claims Commission material that has been filmed by the National Archives, and all related indexing.

MILITARY RECORDS

The most important military records for African American genealogy are those created as a result of the Civil War. Service and pension records of service to the Union often hold important information about an individual or family in the final days of slavery. Sources available in the History & Genealogy Department include:

Index to Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served With U.S. Colored Troops [M589], NARA.

973.7 D99C Dyer, Frederick. *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, Yoseloff, 1959.

FINDING MORE INFORMATION

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) site provides a wealth of explanatory information about various records held in the NARA.

<http://www.archives.gov>

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GETTING STARTED

The basic principle of genealogical research is to work backwards through the generations, from the known to the unknown. You should begin your research with yourself. The standard tools of American genealogical research can be successfully applied when tracing African American lineages back to the time of the Civil War.

Compile all of the information you have about your family. Lineage charts and family group sheets, available at the library, are an easy way to organize this information. Consult other family members: the most valuable source of information about your family's history is the oral tradition and lore of the family itself.

BASIC SOURCES

The sources listed below are invaluable to beginning African American genealogical research. They will describe the process of genealogical research, the types of records that are available and where to find them, and provide research hints and strategies. The library's collection includes a wealth of material for African American genealogical research beyond the basics listed here.

(* Denotes multiple copies available for checkout.)

***929.1072
B651ba** Blockson, Charles R. *Black Genealogy*, Black Classic Press, 1991.

**929.1089
Burrough** Burroughs, Tony. *Black Roots: A Beginners Guide to Tracing the African American Family Tree*, Fireside, 2001.

**R016.973
Connor** Connor, Paul. *African American Family Histories and Related Works in the Library of Congress*, Library of Congress, 1998.

***929.1089
Jamison** Jamison, Sandra Lee. *Finding Your People: An African American Guide to Discovering Your Roots*, Pedigree Books, 1999.

***929.1089
Rose
2003** Rose, James R. *Black Genesis: A Resource Book for African American Genealogy*, Genealogical Pub., 2003.

***929.1089
Smith** Smith, Franklin Carter. *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your African American Ancestors*, Betterway, 2003.

**929.1089
Thackery** Thackery, David. *Finding Your African American Ancestors: A Beginners Guide*, Ancestry, 2000.

**929.1072
Wash** Washington, Reginald. *Black Family Research: Records of Post Civil War Federal Agencies at the National Archives*, NARA, 2001.

**R929.1
Witcher** Witcher, Curt. *African American Genealogy: A Bibliography and Guide to Sources*, Round Tower Books, 2000.

***929.1089
Woodtor** Woodtor, Dee. *Finding a Place Called Home: A Guide to African American Genealogy and Historical Identity*, Random House, 1999.

FEDERAL CENSUS RECORDS

1870 is the first federal census year following the Civil War and emancipation, and African Americans were enumerated along with all other U.S. residents from this point. Prior to the 1870 census, only free persons of color were enumerated by name in the population schedules.

In census years 1850 and 1860, slave schedules were produced. Consult recommended sources for full descriptions of working with federal census records, especially slave schedules.

The library's collection contains a significant amount of federal census records, including all available slave schedules. These holdings are described in the Library's *Chart of Holding – Census Records and Indexes*. Digital images of federal censuses are also available through the databases *Ancestry Plus* and *HeritageQuest Online*, available at all Hillsborough County public libraries. Additionally, remote access to *HeritageQuest Online* is available to Hillsborough County library card holders.

RESEARCH PRIOR TO 1870

The years 1865 to 1870 are pivotal to African American historical and genealogical research. The records created by post-Civil War federal agencies are some of the most important available for the study of Black family life and genealogy. Two invaluable resources for this time period are the records of the Freedmen's Bureau, and the Southern Claims Commission. These records are an extremely rich source of documentation for the African American family historian seeking to "bridge the gap" for the transitional period from slavery to freedom. The Library's collection includes:

FREEDMEN'S BUREAU RECORDS

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, also known as the Freedmen's Bureau was established by Congress in 1865. The bureau was responsible for the supervision and management of all matters relating to refugees, freedmen, and land abandoned or seized during the Civil War. Field offices were inconsistent in the kinds of records they created, so there are variations among records from state to state. Most people came into contact with the bureau at the local level, thus a wealth of genealogical data is contained in these files.

Marriage Records of the Office of the Commissioner, Washington Headquarters of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, 1861-1869 [M1875], NARA.

Records of the Field Offices for the State of Alabama Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1865-1872 [M1900], NARA.

Records of the Field Offices for the State of Arkansas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1865-1872 [M1901], NARA.

Records of the Field Offices for the District of Columbia Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1865-1872 [M1902], NARA.

Records of the Field Offices for the State of Florida Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1865-1872 [M1869], NARA.

Records of the Field Offices for the State of Georgia Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1865-1872 [M1903], NARA.

Records of the Field Offices for the State of Kentucky Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1865-1872 [M1904], NARA.

Records of the Field Offices for the State of South Carolina Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands 1865-1872 [M1910], NARA.