

African-American Quick Start

Much of the research for African American roots is the same as any other research in the United States of America, but there are some additional challenges associated with finding names of people during the period of slavery. Prior to the 1870 Federal Census, slaves were listed as property and not by name. After slavery ended, there is the challenge of last names. In most cases former slaves did not take the surname of their master. Instead, they chose their own surnames. While some children took the same surname as their parents, others chose the name of someone they admired. Still others picked a surname they liked. It was not uncommon for brothers, sisters, and parents to all have a different surname. Many African Americans also tried several different surnames before deciding on which one to keep.

Below are some tips that will be helpful:

FAMILY MEMBERS

Ask your family members for any records they might have regarding ancestors. Ask older members for their memories as to people, dates, and places.

SEARCH LAND DEEDS AND PROBATE RECORDS

Check the electronic card catalog at the Mesa FamilySearch Library for land deeds and probate records in the state in which your ancestor lived.

MILITARY RECORDS

The National Park Service has records of Civil War Soldiers and Sailors at civilwar.nps.gov/cwss.

BOOKS AT THE MESA FAMILYSEARCH LIBRARY

1. The Source Book - Chapter 14
Federal Census Indexes by State Ref # 973 D27ts C.1
2. Free African Americans of North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina from the Colonial Period to 1820 975 F2he v. 1 and v. 2
3. Free African Americans of Maryland and Delaware from the Colonial Period to 1810 975 F2hp

FREEDMAN'S BANK RECORDS

The Freedman's Savings and Trust Company was started in 1865 and had 37 offices in 17 states. It failed in 1874, but its records remain today as a rich source of information about the depositors. You can access the Freedman's Bank records on [Heritage Quest](#) (free at Mesa FamilySearch Library intranet site or at home with library card--username is library barcode no. and password is last 4 digits of your phone number) and also on [Ancestry](#) (free at Mesa FamilySearch Library intranet site).

IMPORTANT WEBSITES

FamilySearch.org - Sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This website has a link on the Home Page entitled African American Research that will take you to online pamphlets to guide your research.

BlackLDS.org - Has research tips and biographies of African Americans who joined the Mormon Church.

[Heritage Quest](http://HeritageQuest) - Has access to census records online and Freedman's Bank records (free at Mesa FamilySearch Library from intranet site or at home with library card--username is library barcode no. and password is last 4 digits of your phone number.)

SEARCH THE INTERNET

www.afrigeneas.com - (Sponsored by Ancestry.com and requires a membership or free at Mesa FamilySearch Library)

freedmensbureau.com - Marriage records, bank records, etc.

www.ccharity.com - Christine's Genealogy Website for African American Genealogy

www.dollsgen.com - Doll's Genealogy Website (Some from Ancestry.com)

www.cyberpursuits.com/gen/ethnic-afam.asp - Cyberpursuits

www.tngenweb.org/tncolor - People of color in the old South

www.prairiebluff.com/aacemetery - African American Cemeteries online

<http://aabd.chadwyck.com> - Black Biographies (needs membership)

www.heritagequestonline.com - (at Mesa FamilySearch Library from intranet site or with library card from home--username is library barcode no. and password is last 4 digits of your phone number)

www.ancestry.com - (free at Mesa FamilySearch Library from intranet site)

Google - A powerful search engine