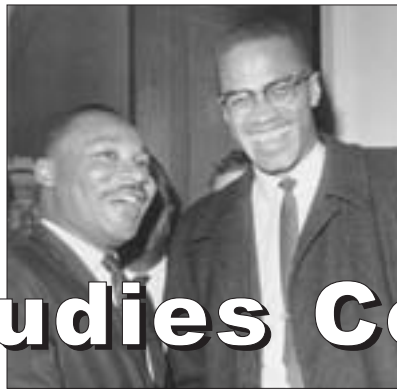
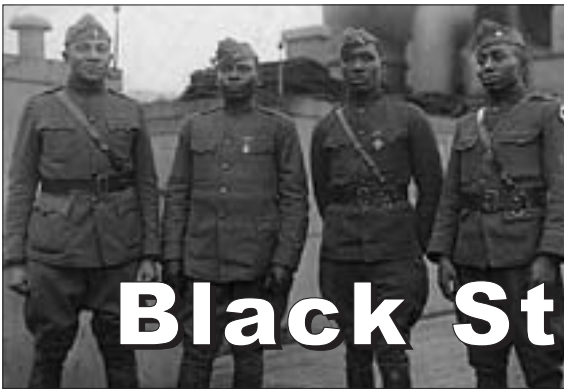




Black Studies Center



**DIANE L. RICHARD INTRODUCES
A NEW GENEALOGY RESOURCE
FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN
AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE**



A WONDERFUL NEW resource for African-American research is now available — contents from extremely important historic African-American newspapers: *Chicago Defender*, *Daily Defender* and *New York Amsterdam News* are now online. These are to be shortly joined by: *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Atlanta Daily World* and *L.A. Sentinel*. These are all part of a larger collection called the Black Studies Center, <http://bsc.chadwyck.com/home/home.do>, available only via institutional ProQuest subscriptions.

I became interested in this collection, particularly the newspapers, when I was researching the ancestry of an African-American, born in Harlem, who was put into the care of Children's Services in New York in the early 1940s (as were most of his siblings). Given the challenges of obtaining documents for his mother (their surnames were not the same and the relationship can't be proven adequately for the New York City authorities), one avenue of research was to see if there were any notices in the Harlem

newspapers around the dates when his grandmother and mother died, and about the time when his paternity case was before the court. I did not find any entries, but it was a fascinating search through the *New York Amsterdam News*, where I learned that only one particular funeral home had death notices posted in a month's worth of issues.

Here's an overview of the newspapers that will ultimately be included on the website:

- *The Atlanta Daily World* (1931-95) was one of the most widely circulated black newspapers in the South during the 1930s. It promoted equal rights and an end to racial segregation. Founded in 1928, the *Atlanta Daily World* had the first black White House correspondent and was the first black daily in the nation in the 20th century.
- *Chicago Defender* (1910-75) was founded by Robert Sengstacke Abbott in May 1905 and, by WWI, had become the most widely read black newspaper in the country, with more than two thirds of its readership

based outside Chicago. When Abbott died in 1940, his nephew John Sengstacke became editor and publisher of the *Defender*, which began publishing on a daily basis in 1956.

- *The Los Angeles Sentinel* (1946-91) was the oldest and largest black newspaper in the western US and the largest African-American-owned newspaper in the US.
- *New York Amsterdam News* (1922-93) was a leading black newspaper of the 20th century, strong advocating for the desegregation of the US military during WWII, and also covering the historic Harlem renaissance.
- *The Pittsburgh Courier* (1911-2002) was one of the most nationally circulated black newspapers, which reached its peak in the 1930s. A conservative voice in the African-American community, the *Courier* challenged the misrepresentation of African-Americans in the national media and advocated social reforms to advance civil rights.

ACCESSING THE RESOURCES

There are two ways to access these newspapers. You can use the Search function or you can Browse. To search, you just enter a term in the Quick Search box and press enter. I have been researching the Finner family who migrated to New York in the mid 1920s. When I entered Finner, and the alternate spelling Fenner, I received a number of newspaper results. Unfortunately, none of the entries in the New York newspaper were relevant, as the only issues online are from after 1962 and were, therefore, after the family events of interest. Yet, while I

you might consult these pages to figure out where to look for obituaries, death notices, marriage notices and other regularly occurring features of interest to genealogists.

Some articles are just listed as "untitled [other]", so you may want to check these out to see if you missed something relevant.

Though the other components of the Black Studies Center are not as directly beneficial to genealogists and family historians, they are invaluable resources to learn more about the African-American experience from a scholarly perspective. These other elements are

nals and newsletters from the US, Africa and the Caribbean, and full-text coverage of core Black Studies periodicals.

- The Black Literature Index is an electronic index to the Black Literature microfiche collection. This index allows users to search more than 70,000 bibliographic citations for fiction, poetry and literary reviews published in 110 black periodicals and newspapers from 1827 to 1940.

These resources give a unique perspective on African-American heritage, ancestry and culture. Though I sometimes found the



From left: Chicago Defender founder, Robert Sengstacke Abbott; the first Black American to be elected by popular vote to the US Senate, Edward Brooke; American civil rights activist, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois; and, the first African-American writer to publish a book in America, Phillis Wheatley.

was searching, I noticed that the *Chicago Defender* had news items from North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Boston, Florida, Kentucky and Mississippi, which could mean that newspapers outside of your search area could still have the information you want.

OTHER RESOURCES

To browse, select a newspaper and the two-year time period of interest to see a list of the editions available online. Once you choose an edition, you will see a list of the articles available for that date. This list also includes advertisements, though they are typically not given a title. Once you choose an article, you have the option to view the article image on the webpage, the article in PDF format or the page image in PDF format. Since most newspapers have an index on the first or second page,

the Schomburg Studies on the Black Experience, International Index to Black Periodicals (IIBP) and the Black Literature Index.

- The Schomburg Studies on the Black Experience is a unique database that examines interdisciplinary topics on the African experience throughout the Americas via in-depth essays, accompanied by detailed timelines along with important research articles, images, film clips and more. The essays are contributed by leading academic experts who have surveyed and analyzed the most important existing research literature in their respective fields.
- The International Index to Black Periodicals (IIBP) includes current and retrospective bibliographic citations and abstracts from scholarly jour-

search engine frustrating (for the newspapers it only seems to currently have the *Chicago Defender* articles included) and the newspaper browsing a bit cumbersome (it's like looking at microfilm), to have access to such important historic African-American newspapers is invaluable.



Diane L. Richard has been doing genealogy research for almost 20 years. She currently does professional research in North Carolina, including African-American research in 18th- to 20th-century NC records. She can be found online at www.mosaicrpm.com/Genealogy