

DIANE L. RICHARD UPDATES YOU ON A NEW PROQUEST COLLECTION RESOURCE

# Researching Your African-American Roots

BACK IN THE October/November 2007 issue of *Internet Genealogy*, we introduced you to ProQuest's Black Studies Center. We thought it was time to give you an update on what ProQuest has been doing to support those researching African-American roots.

This article will revisit the Black Studies Center and also discuss a newer ProQuest resource (at least to me).

## Black Studies Center

[www.proquest.com/pdpq/bsc](http://www.proquest.com/pdpq/bsc).

The basic subscription of the Black Studies Center includes:

- Schomburg Studies on the Black Experience — essays written by leading scholars on the black experience.
- The International Index to Black Periodicals.
- The Marshall Index — a guide to black periodicals, 1940-46.
- The full-text of the historical *Chicago Defender* newspaper from 1910-75.
- The Black Literature Index has over 70,000 bibliographic citations for fiction, poetry and literary reviews published in 110 black periodicals and newspapers between 1827-1940.
- A collection of multimedia — a timeline and other full-text resources.

Additional modules may be purchased, including the HistoryMakers video interviews with 100 contemporary African-Americans and included Black Abolitionist Papers, eight additional historical black newspapers and a Black Studies Dissertations collection. We'll talk further about HistoryMakers and the Black Abolitionist Papers.

The new HistoryMakers element includes 100 interviews of contemporary African-Americans who have broken barriers or



*HistoryMakers includes a collection of more than 100 filmed interviews with contemporary African-Americans, from Issac Hayes to Barack Obama. Each interview runs approximately two hours each.*

accomplished significant achievements. Each video is two to three hours in length, fully subject-indexed and accompanied by transcripts. You can search these videos by keyword or browse alphabetically by occupation or by subject category lists. The HistoryMakers collection includes interviews with Barack Obama, Reverend Al Sharpton, Gordon Parks, John Lewis, John H. Johnson, Julian Bond, Nikki Giovanni, John Hope Franklin, Terry MacMillian, Isaac Hayes, Alvin Poussaint and many more.

Black abolitionists have long been neglected in studies of the anti-slavery movement that precipitated the American Civil War. This collection contains their important writings, speeches and correspondences, between 1830-65, and encompasses approximately 15,000 articles and documents of nearly 300 black abolitionists in the United States, Canada, England, Scotland, Ireland, France and Germany. It also includes:

- the correspondence of key African-American leaders

- speeches, sermons and lectures
- articles, essays, editorials and other major writings from more than 200 African-American, abolitionist and reform newspapers
- receipts, poems and other miscellaneous documents.

## African-American Heritage

<http://africanamericanheritage.proquest.com/aagweb/aag/do/index>

This collection was created in partnership with leading African-American genealogists and recognized leaders in genealogical information to develop a comprehensive mix of resources, records and tools specifically pertaining to African-Americans. It contains the following areas:

- Search the Collections
- Visit the Afrigeneas™ Community
- Explore Black Genesis, A State-by-State Resource Guide
- Consult Reference and How To's (currently a small collection of digitized resource books pertinent to African-American research).

## Researching Your African-American Roots

Let's talk about three of these:

**1. The Collections:** It includes vital records, Freedman's bank records, the post-1860 federal census, WWI and WWII registrations and those who served in the US Colored troops during the Civil War.

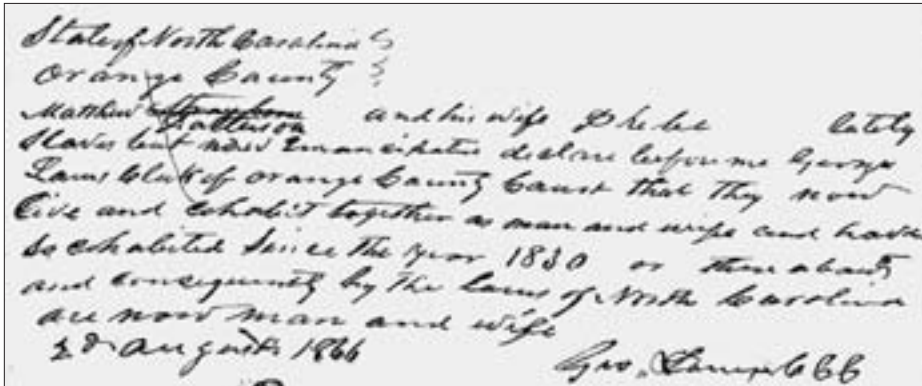
The vital records area (currently only marriage records) includes such records at North Carolina Cohabitation bonds (including digital images of the original records) an excellent resource for searching free-slaves in the post-emancipation era of North Carolina. It also includes marriage records

covering the post-1868 time period for North Carolina and a comparable collection for West Virginia.

What's great about the North Carolina post-1868 records is that the actual marriage registers are chronological, with the groom's name listed first, followed by the bride's. This means that to identify all members with a certain surname, one has to look at every entry!

I speak from experience, since the week before I got access to this collection, I looked at the Orange County, North Carolina records for just this purpose; trawling for the surnames Strayhorn and Patterson, which took hours! With this database, you can use a wild card, such as Stray, to get all the names starting with those letters, which brought out Strayham (remember, we are dealing with handwritten documents!). So, now I'll be checking this list against mine. I hope I didn't miss too many entries! It doesn't appear that all counties or extant records are included, however, what is already there is great!

**2. Afrigeneas Community, a partnership with AfriGeneas,** [www.AfriGeneas.com](http://www.AfriGeneas.com): It's recognized as a leading social networking site devoted to African-American genealogy. It provides direct access to expert advice, moderated forums, chats, mailing lists, surname registry and more. This is a must-visit website for



Example of a NC Cohabitation Bond (1866) for Matthew Strayhorn, aka Patterson, and wife Phebe, Orange County. Digital images of records, like the example above, are available at <http://africanamericanheritage.proquest.com/aagweb/aag/do/index>.

anyone researching African-American ancestry and it's inclusion in the African-American Heritage Collection, saves you from having to consult these, and the other resources, separately.

**3. Black Genesis:** The online version of this state-by-state resource guide was produced in 2009. Part one provides an overview of general research principles and methodology, while part two contains a rundown of specific resources for all 50 states, as well as Canada and the West Indies. Under each location, the information is organized by categories, such as Important Dates, State and County Records and Internet Resources.

Resources described include research guides, published genealogies, community studies on African-American families and, most importantly, original research material that can be found in national, state, county and city archives, and in historical societies and libraries.

I was pleasantly surprised when revisiting the Black Studies Center to learn about the African-

American Heritage collection. It was fortuitous that I was in the midst of doing post-emancipation research in the records of Orange County, North Carolina and such records are well represented in the newer collection. And, the inclusion of the HistoryMakers collection and Black Abolitionist Papers has bolstered the offerings of the Black Studies Center.

Unfortunately, ProQuest does not allow individuals to subscribe, only institutions. So, check out your local community, university or state library or archives to see if they offer access to this rich collection. If you are doing African-

American research, especially in the post-emancipation and 20th century time period, these resources might help you better understand your freed ancestors and their extended family.

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