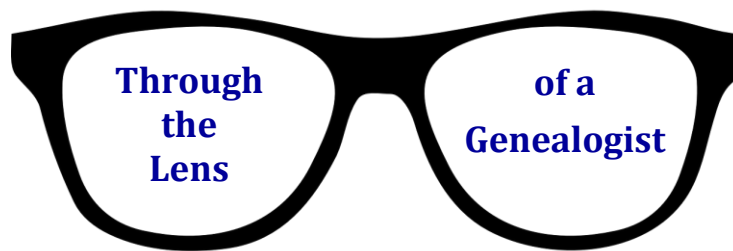


African-American Genealogical Society - Cleveland, Ohio

NEWSLETTER



Let's face it. Family researchers view things a little bit differently:

- We can spend hours at a cemetery and days at a courthouse (and still feel it's not enough time)
- It's quite alright to listen to elders go on and on about their younger years
- We toss around words like surname, census, descendants & repositories
- It's not unusual to spend hour upon hour online, looking to confirm a simple fact about our forebear (that's right, I slipped in the word forebear)
- We consider ourselves lucky to come across a distant ancestor's signature
- Finding an old personal letter or picture brings us extra joy
- We keep things like school report cards, military papers & recipes
- The tiny details in a family document are of great interest to us
- Our eyes readily spot old photos displayed in other people's homes
- We're not afraid of exploring archives

And we're proud of it!

Keep on seeking, learning and discovering.

~Cathy Neal
AAGS Newsletter Editor

AAGS MEETINGS

- Held on **4th Saturday** (exc. December) in hybrid format
(In-person, along with Zoom)
Shaker Heights Library
16500 Van Aken Blvd.
Shaker Hts., OH 44120
- 10:00-10:15 a.m. – socialization
10:15-10:30 a.m. – info/announcements
10:30 a.m. – presentations/discussions



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Per calendar year
Fees due by Jan. 31st

Students (to age 21) \$15 • Individual \$30
Couple \$40 • Family \$45 • Organization \$50

NEWSLETTER

Published quarterly
(March, June, September, December)

Editor reserves the right to edit items submitted for publication.
Permission is required to re-publish articles.

Editor: Cathy Neal
newschair@aagsclev.org

Committee Members:
Keisha Bullard • Veronica Ferguson •
Maxine Hairston • Cecelia McFadden •
Ruth Perry • LaVera Wingfield

AAGS • PO Box 201476 • Cleveland, OH
44120-1476 • www.aagsclev.org



To
Discover
Your
Ancestors

Is to
Discover
a Part
of You!

GENEALOGY NEWS

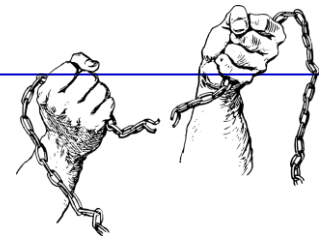
- **Key Steps for Fact-Checking Online Family Trees -**
<https://familytreemagazine.com/strategies/fact-check-family-trees/>
- Article, “Collaborative Project Identifies Nearly **1,000 Slave Transactions in Macon, Georgia** from 1823-65” by Andrea Honaker - **Mercer University** web site – <https://tinyurl.com/ma44k24c>
- **Ouachita Parish Public Library** (Monroe, Louisiana) launches **online obituary index -**
<https://tinyurl.com/58ya7re3>
- Article, “It took decades: **Now there’s a photo for each name on Vietnam wall**” - *Christian Science Monitor* January 4, 2023 - <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2023/0104/It-took-decades-Now-there-s-a-photo-for-each-name-on-Vietnam-wall>
- **Genealogical research tool added at Jamaica’s Registrar General’s Department -**
<https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/rgd-adds-genealogical-research-tool-to-list-of-products-services/>
- **Washington Post** (lengthy) article, “Where’s Kitty Cary? **The answer unlocked history Richmond tried to hide**” - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/10/27/richmond-shockoe-african-burying-ground/>

AAGS Officers

Interim President..... Joseph Houser, Sr.
1st Vice President..... Deborah Abbott
2nd Vice President..... Joseph Houser, Sr.

Treasurer..... Jonathan Stith
Corresponding Sec’y... Maxine Hairston
Financial Secretary..... Gayle Ector

Headed Up North – Not!



Familiar with U.S. history of runaway slaves heading *north* to seek freedom?

AAGS member Douglas Gaines shared a good read about runaways going in the opposite direction. Researchers estimate 5,000 to 10,000 people escaped from bondage into Mexico. The article, “Riding South to Freedom,” was published in a subscription-based publication *The Week* (October 2022) based on an article by Richard Grant in the *Smithsonian Magazine*.

Check out:

Article: *Smithsonian Magazine*

“South to the Promised Land” by Richard Grant, July/August 2022 - “Before the Civil War, numerous enslaved people made the treacherous journey to Mexico in a bold quest for freedom that historians are now unearthing” - www.smithsonianmag.com/history/southbound-underground-railroad-brought-thousands-enslaved-americans-mexico-180980328/

Video: National Archives & Records Administration

In February 2021, NARA streamed a presentation by Alice Baumgartner, author of *South to Freedom: Runaway Slaves to Mexico and the Road to the Civil War* [intro begins at 4:59 on the video] - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wlo2CeTtCpo>

Book: *South to Freedom: Runaway Slaves to Mexico and the Road to the Civil War*
by Alice L Baumgartner

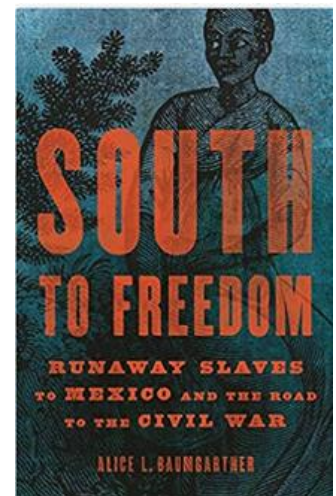
November 10, 2020 (hardcover, Kindle & paperback)

Per amazon.com: A brilliant and surprising account of the coming of the American Civil War, showing the crucial role of slaves who escaped to Mexico.

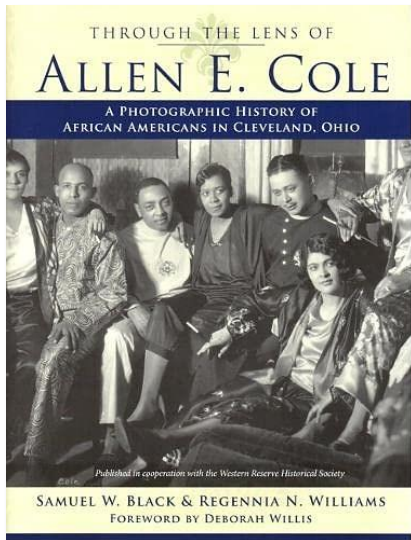
The Underground Railroad to the North promised salvation to many American slaves before the Civil War. But thousands of people in the south-central United States escaped slavery not by heading north but by crossing the southern border into Mexico, where slavery was abolished in 1837.

In *South to Freedom*, historian Alice L. Baumgartner tells the story of why Mexico abolished slavery and how its increasingly radical antislavery policies fueled the sectional crisis in the United States.

<https://www.amazon.com/South-Freedom-Runaway-Slaves-Mexico/dp/1541617789>



Other Publications Worth a Read (or Re-read)



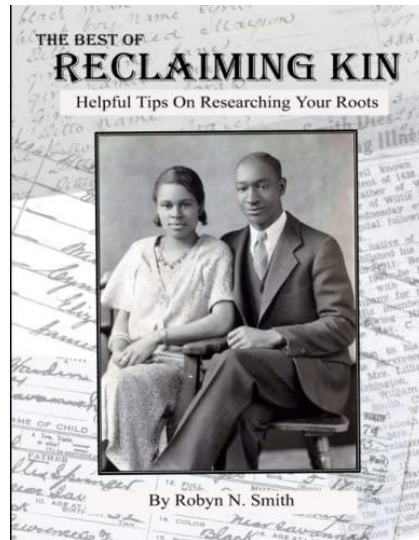
A photographic five-decade history of Cleveland, Ohio's African American community by **Samuel Black** and **Regennia Williams**.

"During the Great Depression, photographer Allen Eugene Cole posted a sign in front of his studio in Cleveland's Central neighborhood:

*Somebody, somewhere,
wants your photograph.*

An entrepreneurial businessman with a keen ability to market his images of Cleveland's black experience, Cole was deeply immersed in civic life. Well into the 1960s his photographs appeared regularly in the Call & Post, Cleveland's African American weekly newspaper."

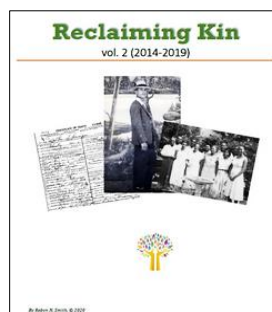
~ Amazon.com



*The Best of Reclaiming Kin:
Helpful Tips On Researching Your Roots*

by **Robyn N. Smith**
January 29, 2015 - paperback

<https://www.amazon.com/Best-Reclaiming-Kin-Helpful-Researching/dp/0578157071>



"This [pdf] volume [2] picks up where the published book left off, and is packed with information about growing your research skills, using various kinds of records and repositories, and addressing the unique challenges of slavery and researching enslaved ancestors."

<https://reclaimingkin.com/shop/>

Recommendations from
AAGS member
LaVera Wingfield:
(fiction & non-fiction)

American Negro Songs
by John W. Work

Courthouse Research for Family Historians
by Christine Rose

Finding a Place Called Home: A Guide to African-American Genealogy and Historical Identity
by Dee Parmer Woodtor

Memphis
by Tara Stringfellow

Miles of Smiles: Stories of Black Pullman Porters
by Jack Santino

Isle of Canes
by Elizabeth Shown Mills

Slaves in the Family
by Edward Ball

Tracing History Through Title Deeds: A Guide for Family and Local Historians
by Nat Alcock

Unpuzzling Your Past: The Best-Selling Basic Guide to Genealogy
by Emily Anne Croom

(All rated 4+ out of 5 on
Goodreads.com)

Meet our Newly Joined Member



**Ruth Reese,
Ph.D.**

My family history has always haunted me because of my mixed genetic heritage and other peoples' perceptions of my identity. I was born in 1949, Albany, GA (Dougherty County) and raised in segregated Black Atlanta, "old" Atlanta (Fulton County) as I refer to it. My birth certificate lists me and both parents as "colored" [Father b. 1923, Nashville, TN (Davidson County) / Mother b. 1925, Pocahontas, VA (Tazwell County)].

My parents always acknowledged African, European, Indigenous and Jewish (my father) ancestry. However, because of the traumas experienced, inherited and inbred in American slavery, finding out who, why, how, etc. always seemed overwhelming. My daughters did some research on my mother's maternal ancestors and I was the first female born outside of the state of Virginia. My mother was born in Pocahontas, VA and as a young child I thought I was related to this Powhatan princess; then my father's mother said she was "full-blooded" Cherokee (this may be questionable).

All other ancestors are mostly unknown, except my paternal grandfather's mixed African and European Jewish parents. I want to give my children, grandchildren and great grands some knowledge of who they are, where they come from genetically and geographically. All of my older relatives have passed. My father reached 100 years old (his goal) on February 27th of this year (and passed away not long afterwards). When previously asked, he was not able to recall his ancestry and was very reluctant to do so when he was younger. Those older generations, at least in my family, did not speak much about earlier times...maybe secrets to hide, or knowledge unknown. I am hoping to learn, through my association with AAGS, how to solve some of these family mysteries. I am a confessed "newbie" in this process.

Last names of family members being researched by state and county:

Names - Paternal	State	County
Reese - father	GA	Fulton
Lessor (sp?) - Jewish grandfather	SC	Anderson
Jackson - mother	GA	Fulton
Names - Maternal	State	County
Unknown - father	-	-
Hicks - mother (last name of stepfather)	VA	Tazwell
Johnson - grandmother	VA	-

AAGS ACTIVITIES

Supporting Genealogy In-House & In the Community

“Mining the Census: Are You Finding Every Clue?”



Robyn Smith, presenter

AAGS Monthly Meeting January 28

Meghan Hays, Shaker Hts. Library
Dr. Deborah Abbott, AAGS Program Chair



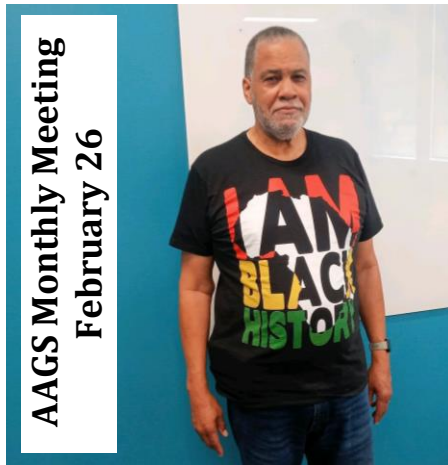
This was AAGS's first in-person session after two years of rendezvous by Zoom. It was also the launch of the hybrid format, combining in-library and online participants.

Researcher, writer and lecturer **Robyn Smith** smoothly took the helm to lead everyone through a much-appreciated guide on what to keep in mind when examining census records. This included a cache of examples to highlight her topics.

She summarized important details about censuses—population and non-population (social, manufacturer, mortality and DDD schedules). After outlining reasons why researchers aren't able to find folks in the census, Robyn offered different search strategies to try. She then covered various ways to conduct census analysis, along with the pitfalls that may occur.

At the beginning of the session, she remarked that there is a difference between “searching” and “researching.” By the end of the session, it was clear how impactful understanding the census records (vs. just finding them) can be.

Members received a great handout with census resources from Robyn, who additionally provided useful tips about RootsMagic.



“February is Black History Month: Who will Write *Your* History?”

Joseph Houser, Sr., presenter

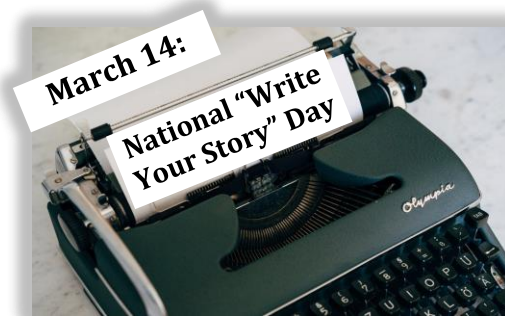
With his career of teaching history (along with his status as a grandfather), Joe was the ideal person to communicate the importance of passing along *your own story* to next generations.

How to do it? What to include? Where will the info come from? He touched on all of that.

Joe weaved plentiful context within his content as he explained key points. Here are a few:

- Be systematic
- Have your foundation first (oral history is fine, just need to back it up with facts)
- When relating facts (person, time, place, event, culture) show connections, relationships, traditions—remembering to give credit where due
- Integrate facts with stories to get people to understand where you’re coming from

A copy of his full presentation will be available to members.



Ways to accomplish:

- “Five Ways to Write Your Family Story” by Shamele Jordon (BlackGeneX Genealogy Experience)
<https://mailchi.mp/a6b8637942fb/black-genealogy-five-ways-to-write-your-family-story>
- *Story of My Life: A Workbook for Preserving Your Legacy* – workbook by Sunny Morton
<https://www.amazon.com/Story-My-Life-Workbook-Preserving/dp/144034714X>
- “Write a Personal History” from the Family Search Wiki:
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Write_a_Personal_History

Writing communities exist online and offline. There are numerous online “how-tos.” For a personal touch, check with your local libraries about their story writing workshops.

Tech and You:



Speech to Text Software

By Cecelia McFadden

Our newsletter article on tag clouds highlighted another method to further your understanding of text documents that you've collected or authored in your genealogy quest. Here in 2023, you may need added support in navigating the context of written artifacts that are core components of your family history portfolio. Technology advances over the last few years have made transcription affordable and easy. This article gives you an overview of [speech to text technology](#) and how it can be leveraged in your 2023 research plan. It is more available than you may think.

Definition

Speech to Text Software (STT)

is a computer application that uses computational linguistics to *translate and recognize words that are spoken*

It is also called "[speech recognition](#)" or "computer speech recognition" and is **different** than

Text to Speech Software (TTS), which is an assistive technology that **reads digital text aloud or displays it visually**. TTS assists people with visual impairments or reading disabilities to listen to written content. It can also display words to expand comprehension.

Alternatively, STT enables specific tools, applications and devices to [transcribe audio](#) in real time for user benefit.



How Does It Work? STT software can listen to audio and translate it to a verbatim transcript on a given device. Audio sounds make a series of vibrations. The vibrations are translated through an analog to digital converter. The vibrations and their waves are measured by mathematical algorithms that convert the sounds to sound units that distinguish words in languages.

Next, they are run through another model to compare to known sentences and phrases. This text is then presented to the user as the most likely version of the audio sounds processed.

Benefits

STT benefits genealogists in a variety of ways.

- Transcription allows family historians to **read a document before referring to it**, particularly if the original is handwritten.
- Transcription provides a copy that is **more easily read**, while preserving an original artifact from excessive handling or damage.
- Transcription also provides **evidence of document analysis** and review.

STT software **creates efficiencies** in the transcription process. Previously, genealogists needed to spend extended time and effort transcribing documents word for word via pen and paper. If you personally didn't have that time, you might have hired a third party to perform the transcription. Now with STT, you still may leverage the former methods, but you have another **cost effective, time saving** way to further your research efforts prior to taking additional steps in the document analysis component of your research plan.

STT Software Suggestions

- If you are a Microsoft365™ user on Windows™ or Mac, STT functionality is built into your Microsoft Word product via the Dictate feature on your Home banner.
- If you are a Google applications user, you can enable STT by opening a Google Docs document and going to Tools>Voice Typing. A pop-up box with a microphone icon will appear in your document where you can select a language and get started.
- There are also Chrome browser extensions for STT. Speech to Text and Voice in Voice are the most popular. STT when enabled in Google is not free, but the cost is nominal. It is .006 cents for every 15 seconds of audio.
- Other free STT software that is available via browser or software download includes SpeechLogger, Braina™ and Speechnotes, all of which work on Windows™ or Mac. The most popular paid STT software is Dragon® or Otter, where the average spend can be \$100/year.

Conclusion. Given its prevalence in the technology available to you (mobile phones and laptops), please consider experimenting with STT. [You can read a history artifact \(will, deed, etc.\) into your device or turn on a recorded interview of a relative and see how your software performs.](#)



This technology will only continue to evolve and it is important for you to understand and leverage it in your research. As always, let us know how you're doing. Our email is newschair@aagsclev.org.

Make tech tools key in 2023!

How to Find Newspapers in Google Books for Free

By Lisa Louise Cooke

(Excerpt from "Lisa Louise Cooke's Genealogy Gems at www.GenealogyGems.com, home of the free Genealogy Gems Podcast")

Old newspapers are a tremendous resource for family history information. One of the most surprising places that you can find old newspapers is Google Books. However, newspapers don't typically show up in the general searches we run at Google Books. It's important to use specific strategies designed to effectively find what you're looking for.

We typically think of Google Books as a place where you look for books. However, we really need to change our thinking on that. Think of Google Books as a place to find printed material. At Google Books you could find not only books, but printed newspapers, catalogs, almanacs, magazines, anything that would have been published on paper. Google Books catalogs all the printed material it finds, and digitizes that which isn't under copyright restrictions. That means that it's more common to find older newspapers, books and so on that are digitized and searchable.

Dealing with Too Many Results

We start searching at the Google Books homepage. You can just google "Google Books," or you can go directly to the URL <https://books.google.com/>.

At Google Books, you can start by typing in an ancestor's name or topic of interest. What you will typically see is a list of books, many fairly recent, but no newspapers. In fact, there will typically be an abundance of results, many of which are not a good match.

Better Newspaper Results with Quotes

One of the easiest ways to fix this situation is to go back up to the search box and put quotes around the full name. This tells Google Books that I want this exact phrase (name), spelled the way I spelled it. This prevents us from getting results that contain the words but not within the context as a whole name.

You'll notice that most of the results you receive are books, some of which may be digitized and some that are not. What you don't see typically are newspapers. So, our next strategy will fix this and give us only newspaper results.

Filtering to Only Newspaper Results

It might seem logical just to add the word newspaper to your search query. However, this doesn't work. Google looks for the words in the text of the material. It doesn't look at the word newspapers and understand that it's a type of material.

However, Google Books does give us ways to filter results down to only newspapers. On the search results page you will see a filter menu below the main menu of tabs. If you don't see it, click the Tools button.

Notice that Any Document is one of the filters. That means that right now our results are showing all types of documents that meet our search criteria including books, catalogs, magazines, newspapers, etc. Click that drop-down menu and select Newspapers. This will display only newspaper in the search results. All the exact matches will display first.

Another Way to Filter to Only Newspapers

Google Books' Advanced Search is another way to filter down specifically to newspapers. It's not as easy to find or use as the Tools menu, but it can prove very helpful.

There isn't a link to Advanced Search on the Google Books home page. The easiest way to find the Advanced Search page for the Google Books is simply to google it.

The Advanced Search page provides you with a special form. You can use this to run your search as well. You can type the names or phrases that you want to be exact in the Exact Phrase field. **Best of all, in the Content section you can click the button for Newspapers to filter your results only to newspapers.**

So already, we're quickly finding newspapers within this massive catalog of over 25 million items in Google Books. I have a few more suggestions of ways to find what you're looking for in newspapers specifically.

Adding Location to Search

If you want to look for ancestors in Google Books, it really helps to add a location.

Adding Timeframe to Search

While the snippets on the results page show the date of the item, we might have a lot of items to look through. It would be nice to narrow it down to items published during your ancestor's lifetime.

On the initial results page, make sure the Tools filter menu is turned on. You'll find Anytime in the filter menu next to Any Document. Click the Anytime drop-down menu. Here you can select a century. Click Custom Range and enter the years. It's another great way to filter out results for other people with the same name who didn't live at the same time. Filtering for both timeframe and the location can really help you zero in on the right person.

The Source of the Newspapers at Google Books

Google Books has not always had newspapers as part of their collection. The digitized newspapers found there today come from the old Google News Archive. This was a newspaper digitization project that was discontinued several years ago. In the last few years, they've been adding the collection to Google Books. And now with the new Google Books user interface, they are easier to search and use than ever before.

The old Google News Archive can be found at <https://news.google.com/newspapers>. This old website can come in handy if you're not sure if Google Books has the issues that you need of a particular newspaper title.

*For full article - <https://lisalouisecooke.com/2023/01/18/newspapers-google-books/>

Did you attend
RootsTech 2023?

How was your experience?

Drop us a line at
newschair@aagsclev.org



In Remembrance:

Jane Campbell Arrington
died October 22, 2022

Jane was the first AAGS-Cleveland member to register with the Ohio Genealogical Society; her ancestors are officially documented in its "Settlers and Builders of Ohio" lineage society. AAGS was very fortunate to be able to lean on Jane for her accounting knowledge. She was part of the Oberlin group (OAAGHG) as well. RIP



**P.O. Box 201476
Cleveland, Ohio 44120-1476
aagsclev.org**