

*African-American Genealogical Society - Cleveland, Ohio*

NEWSLETTER



With  
a **New**  
Year  
**2024**  
Comes  
**New**  
Possibilities

5...

As the final days ticked down last year, minds were likely focused on family and traditions.

4...

3...

As the days of the **new** year rang in, thoughts likely shifted to **resolutions**.

2...

1

For 2024, **resolve to resume family research** with clear goals and a **renewed** outlook.

**Count on AAGS to nurture the possibilities.**

**AAGS MEETINGS**

- Held on **4<sup>th</sup> 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**

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Permission is required to re-publish articles.

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*To  
Discover  
Your  
Ancestors  
  
Is to  
Discover  
a Part  
of You!*

**GENEALOGY NEWS**

- A Sept. 28 fire at **Western Reserve Historical Society library** (Cleveland, Ohio) left some basement archival materials damaged by water (the rest of the building has reopened) - Access WRHS digital collections and resources through the digital portal at <https://wrhs.saas.dgicloud.com/>
- **FamilySearch Library** (former name: Family History Library) has a new center in Las Vegas - <https://www.thechurchnews.com/members/2023/10/13/23915880/familysearch-opens-new-center-in-las-vegas>
- Need to be more focused with your research? Read **Shamele Jordan's** article, "**Five Clutter Traps with Cures**" - <https://mailchi.mp/6b408dfdc985/blackgenex-five-clutter-traps-with-cures>
- **Reuters** (news agency) conducted a project on "Slavery's Descendants," culminating in a six-part series; each portion is thorough (lengthy), including Part 2 - "**The Slaves Built That**" - <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-slavery-ancestry/>
- More than **five million records from the state of Maryland are now online** - <https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/records-request/31/>
- **Dick Eastman** newsletter article, "**How the National Archives Is Using AI to Make Records More Accessible in the Digital Age**" - <https://eogn.com/page-18080/13273114>

**2024-2025 AAGS Officers**

(newly elected\*)

President..... Joseph Houser, Sr.  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President..... Deborah Abbott  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President..... Joseph Jordan\*

Treasurer..... Gayle Ector\*  
Financial Secretary..... Ellecia Gant\*  
Corresponding Sec'y... Maxine Hairston  
Recording Sec'y.....unfilled

## CPL Family History Day

The October 28, 2023 downtown Cleveland Public Library event was full of kin keepers ready to broaden their research scope.

The high-caliber speaker roster enabled attendees to learn new strategies. Each session communicated ways to think differently about info already in hand, how to acquire more and how to best analyze it.

- **LaDonna Garner** “brought it” with her engaging presentation on **“Researching the Homes of Our Ancestors.”** Looking for property deeds and maps is pretty familiar. Who knew that assessor offices and surveyor, zoning and permit records could be so interesting?
- **Jayne Davis** presented on **“Children’s Homes & Orphanages Research,”** offering a look at how orphanages evolved, the orphan experience and where to find records.
- **Brian Rhinehart**, a seasoned expert on **Civil War records** at the National Archives, tackled four main records available that document Civil War service: pensions, compiled military service records, carded medical records and the company’s record of events.
- **Shamele Jordon** skillfully briefed us on **“First Freedom: Freedmen’s Bureau”** with a breakdown of its establishment and types of records available (marriage, education, living assistance, justice, land, medical, military and more). For those seeking ancestors (black or white) or social context during this timeframe, this is of enormous value.
- **Kate Townsend** covered **“Applying Investigative Skills from the Financial Crime World to Genealogy.”** The title says it all--a great guide to improve your techniques.
- **John Kerezy**, journalist, instructor and author, rounded out the day’s selections with **“Jesse Owens – The First Global Sports Hero.”**



LaDonna Garner, presenter



Dr. Deborah Abbott, AAGS

Terry Metter, CPL Librarian /  
Family History Day coordinator

and Shamele Jordon, presenter

Participants learned even more during the helpful Q&A periods. The program was well-designed, the venue great and the handouts loaded with references that will keep family historians busy for a long time.

*(Photos provided by Cathy Neal)*

## AAGS ACTIVITIES

### Supporting Genealogy In-House & In the Community

“Can we get hands-on RootsMagic database training from start to finish?”

AAGS held a version 8 workshop in April; will set up another for version 9 at the Shaker Library. YouTube is a great reference; remember to check the RootsMagic tools available with the program.

“Ancestry DNA and 23&me show 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> cousins. How do I determine relationships?”

At the great-great grandparent level, if found ancestor in 1870 census, look to identify slaveholder and follow their records. Won't find thru DNA only; need paperwork. Pull vital & other records; use FamilySearch wiki.

“How much should we rely on DNA testing?”

DNA is medical. Must understand each DNA company's focus to fit your own use for genealogy. Why are you selecting? Which is best for you? Maternal test will have different results than paternal. How far back with relationships do you want to spend time? STILL, must align thru paper trail.

“Are there advantages to in-person library visits?”

They sometimes have hanging files that are not listed in a catalog or digitized (e.g., old newspaper clippings or old railroad & other company archives). Be specific when you ask for access. Note: some librarians may not be aware of what's in older buildings.

**AAGS  
Meeting  
Sep. 23**

**Member Questions:  
“Asked & Answered”**

“Is it possible to have a simple once-a-month AAGS research project (to become a better researcher)?”

In previous AAGS study groups, members worked on assignments and individual research. **\*Follow up\* Oct. 23 | AAGS held a case study at Shaker Library; Nov. 25 | Held a case study after the FamilySearch Wiki session.**

“Should I search immigration records?”

Don't negate just because you may not have experienced them before. Explore history: U.S., military, relocations, etc. Black ancestors are in immigration records too. Learn to follow the trail.

“What are some best practices for saving documents for the future?”

Ancestry.com is not recommended. Try using a database program, hard drive files, the cloud or jump drives—they are more accessible to pass along to others that you choose to “carry the torch” with your data.

“How to organize material?”

Must take the time to input data into a central spot. Create different file categories. It's useful to download records into separate folders. Note: external files can be attached to RootsMagic. Keeping track of certain items (e.g., maiden/married names) can be tricky--use a timeline to keep it straight.

**Oct. 23** | AAGS held a case study for members at Shaker Hts. Public Library. The session was a deep dive into a specific research scenario, including explanation, demonstration and hands-on participation—showing and giving examples. This approach targets analytical research skills.



**Nov. 4** | For the Lorain County Historical Society's Genealogy Workshop Series, national expert Deborah Abbott, Ph.D. presented, "Strategies and Techniques: Breaking the Brick Wall of Slave Research." Afterwards, attendees had the opportunity to see the land owned by renowned inventor Garrett Morgan and to meet his descendant, Garrett Morgan II.

Photo: Marilyn Wainio, Maxine Hairston, Deborah Abbott, Joseph Houser, Sr., Annessa Wyman, Garrett Morgan II, Quintilla Draper, Ethan West and Stacey Balmuta



AAGS volunteer Ellecia Gant assisting Oscar Lyde

**Nov. 18** | AAGS wrapped up year 2023 CPL research clinics with a number of visitors experiencing personal successes and promising to return in 2024



AAGS volunteer Maxine Hairston with Robert Peterson, Jr.

*(Photos provided by Joseph Houser, Sr.)*

## AAGS Meeting | Nov. 25



### **“Don’t Just Type in a Name: Getting Comfortable with the *FamilySearch* Wiki and Catalog for County-Level Records in African-American Research”**

Presenter: **Eli Kirshner**  
explorestoryllc@gmail.com

Practical instruction. That’s exactly what was needed—and Eli delivered.

Let’s face it: some information is not easily obtainable. So, we must think differently.

The FamilySearch Wiki is designed for much more than searching for surnames. Instead of learning what’s on it by “hit or miss,” Eli recommended reading in its entirety to build understanding (of place histories, when and why records were kept, maps, land boundary changes, etc.).

Eli gave concrete steps and showed by example how to use the FamilySearch Catalog and browse film images:

- Set up an account to access content
- Start with the state
- Search by record type (some are indexed, some not)
- Browse images in the record set  
(figure out in which manner the data is recorded, such as county or date)
- Determine how to maneuver among the images (which have the detail)
- Use the data to compare with other records in the Catalog (or in your possession)

He covered the importance of research questions and developing a table or cheat sheet to keep track of findings. His handout even included a basic assignment plus explanations of the little icons on the screen.

So, level down the genealogy hunt that’s based solely on surnames. It requires patience, but aim for an expanded range of techniques and resources (especially underutilized ones like the FamilySearch Wiki and Catalog).

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Following the presentation, Dr. Deborah Abbott led a hands-on case study to help improve member research strategies.

2024

## Genealogical Events

### Conferences:

In-person and virtual

#### FEB 29-MAR 2 † RootsTech Connect 2024

In-person & Virtual • Salt Lake City, UT • Theme: "Remember" • Keynote speakers include Lynne Jackson, great-great-granddaughter of Dred Scott • [rootstech.org](https://rootstech.org)

#### APR 10-13 † OGS (Ohio Genealogical Society)

In-person • Kalahari Resort, Sandusky, OH • "Rockin' Around Your Family Tree" • [ogs.org/2024-conference/](https://ogs.org/2024-conference/)

#### MAY 16-18 † NGS Family History Conference

(National Genealogical Society) • Virtual • Richmond, VA • "Expanding Possibilities" • [ngsgenealogy.org](https://ngsgenealogy.org)

#### JUN 23-28 (Zoom) & JUL 14-19 (in-person) † GRIP

(Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh) • LaRoche College • Pittsburgh, PA • [gripitt.org](https://gripitt.org)

#### JUL 9-11 † MAAGI

(Midwest African American Genealogy Institute) • Hybrid (In-person & Virtual) • Fort Wayne, IN • Genealogy Center at Allen County Public Library • [maagiinstitute.org/location.html](https://maagiinstitute.org/location.html)

#### JUL 21-26 † IGHR

(Institute of Genealogy & Historical Research/ Georgia Genealogical Society) • Athens, GA • [ighr.gagensociety.org/](https://ighr.gagensociety.org/) • [facebook.com/IGHR.Georgia](https://facebook.com/IGHR.Georgia)

#### OCT † AAHGS

(Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society) • To be determined • [aahgs.org](https://aahgs.org) • [facebook.com/aahgs](https://facebook.com/aahgs)

### Check Sites for Additional Events

- **AAGHSC** (Afro-American Genealogical and Historical Society of Chicago) • [aaghsc.org](https://aaghsc.org)
- **NEOGR**T (North East Ohio Genealogy Round Table (previously Cleveland District RT)) • <https://neogrt.org/>
- **Detroit Public Library** Family History Festival • Fred Hart Williams Genealogical Society • [fhwgs.org](https://fhwgs.org)
- **Franklin County Genealogical Historical Society** Columbus, OH • [fcghs-oh.org](https://fcghs-oh.org)
- **Indiana African American Genealogy Group** • [iaagg.org](https://iaagg.org)
- **Oberlin African-American Genealogy & History Group** • [oaaghg.com](https://oaaghg.com)

### Webinars / Free Online Resources

- **Allen County Public Library** genealogy programs - [genealogy.acpl.lib.in.us/](https://genealogy.acpl.lib.in.us/)
- **Genealogy QuickStart** (hosted by Shamele Jordan) - broadcasts / videos / discussions • [youtube.com/c/GenealogyQuickStart](https://youtube.com/c/GenealogyQuickStart) • [facebook.com/GenealogyQuickStartTV](https://facebook.com/GenealogyQuickStartTV)
- **Georgia Genealogical Society Webinars** - [gagensociety.org/events/webinars](https://gagensociety.org/events/webinars)
- **Legacy Family Tree Webinars** - [familytreewebinars.com](https://familytreewebinars.com)  
(Closed captioning added for those with difficulty hearing or with understanding English)
- **Southern California Genealogical Society Webinar Series** - [scsgenealogy.com/](https://scsgenealogy.com/)
- **BlackProGen LIVE** (hosted by Nicka Smith) - web broadcasts / videos / chats • [facebook.com/BlackProGenLIVE](https://facebook.com/BlackProGenLIVE) • [youtube.com/user/whoisnickasmith](https://youtube.com/user/whoisnickasmith)

## Genealogy Database Safety

by Cecelia McFadden



**Welcome readers to 2024.** What are your genealogy tech goals for this year? Have you incorporated any of the 2023 tools we discussed into your research routine? In lieu of review, the first article of the year's focus is staying safe online when your genealogy database provider has a security breach. We'll review what happened at 23AndMe late last year and provide some strategies and lessons learned.

**23AndMe Cyberattack.** In early October, the genealogy database company discovered that a cybercriminal illegally accessed several customer accounts with compromised passwords found on other websites that were also used in 23AndMe accounts. With account access, the hacker exploited and mined additional information from those accounts linked with two features in the database, namely DNA Relatives and FamilyTree. Although the hacker only compromised 14,000 accounts, the information link features in the database allowed exponential access to information profiles. What was initially believed to be approximately 1 million compromised profiles has now grown to 6.9 million exposures as of this writing. Before you launch this year's tech adventure, let's consider how you are staying safe online and protecting your family history data. Though most data compromises are financially motivated, a hack can have longer term impacts on both your device and how you conduct online searches. What are some protection strategies? Read on.

**Password Hygiene.** To avoid the 23AndMe cyberattack consequences, it's essential for you to use different passwords across different applications. You should never use the same password repeatedly in different locations on the world wide web. Next, it's important for you to change your password frequently (every 90 days is suggested) and use a combination of the best practices that follow. First, your password length goal should be 15 characters or more. Next, your password should be a combination of three elements: upper case letters, lower case letters and special characters. Finally, if the system you're accessing has a multifactor authentication feature, please opt into the service. 23AndMe has enabled multifactor authentication on its site and other genealogy service providers are following suit. Ancestry is changing its access policy and it is a trend that will expand in this market segment.

**Additional Strategies.** Regardless of your choice of Android or Apple devices, the next seven tactics are essential.

- Do not use public wi-fi connections unless you are protected with a VPN (virtual private network) application
- Analyze the need for and eliminate default location services on your device
- Always update applications with software updates as they become available
- Make sure to completely shut down your device and power it back up weekly
- Do not click on links or open attachments from unknown sources
- Install antivirus software on your device and enable it to scan periodically for vulnerabilities and threats
- Consider using a browser that doesn't track your search habits and blocks online trackers; one such browser is DuckDuckGo

**Conclusion.** AAGS has taken steps to upgrade our online presence and enable the ability to make online access more secure for our users. Additionally, we will spend time in future newsletters reviewing the most recent updates to tools and techniques for you to stay safe online. Let us know how we can be of assistance. If you run into issues, we're here to help. **Contact us at [newschair@aagsclev.org](mailto:newschair@aagsclev.org).**





**Main Campus**  
of CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

# Genealogy & Family History Research Clinics

The Library's Genealogy Clinics are informal sessions that allow you to drop in to receive help from Library Staff and expert volunteers from the African American Genealogical Society of Cleveland. Please bring copies of any research-to-date and an idea of what you want to learn during the session.

**For beginners:** volunteers provide informal instruction in starting your family history and genealogy. Please plan to arrive by 10:45 a.m. to take advantage of the group instruction for beginners.

**For more advanced researchers:** volunteers draw on their extensive experience to help you answer your genealogy questions and to help you find strategies to move your research forward.



## 2024 Clinic Dates

Join us anytime between  
**10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.**  
Free and open to all.

- January 13**
- February 10**
- March 9**
- April 13**
- May 11**
- June 8**
- September 14**
- October 12**
- November 9**

**Louis Stokes Wing**  
**6th Floor, Center for Local &  
Global History**  
**525 Superior Avenue**



Questions?  
Please call the Center for Local & Global  
History at (216) 623-2864

**cpl.org**

## Why Was the Information Removed from Online?



*Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter*  
<https://eogn.com/page-18080/13282762>  
22 Nov 2023 [Updated]

Two newsletter readers sent email messages to me recently expressing dissatisfaction that a set of images of vital records has been removed from a popular genealogy site. Indeed, removal of any online records of genealogical value is sad, but not unusual. Changes such as these are quite common on FamilySearch, MyHeritage, Ancestry.com, Fold3, FindMyPast, and many other genealogy sites that provide old records online. Removal of datasets has occurred dozens of times in the past, and I suspect such things will continue to happen in the future. I thought I would write a brief explanation.

In most cases, information of genealogical value obtained from government agencies, religious groups, museums, genealogy societies, and other organizations is provided under contractual agreements. The contracts specify what information is to be provided, how it is to be made available, and what price the web site has to pay to the provider for the records. All contracts also have a defined expiration date, typically 2 years or 3 years or perhaps 5 years after the contract is signed.

When a contract nears expiration, the two parties usually attempt to renegotiate the contract. Sometimes renewal is automatic, but more often it is not. Maybe the information provider (typically an archive) decides they want more money, or maybe they decide they no longer want to supply the data to the online genealogy service. For instance, in the time the information has been available online, the information provider may have learned just how valuable the information really is. The information provider may decide to ask for more money or may even refuse to provide the information any more since the provider may have a NEW plan to create their own web site and offer the same information online on their new site for a fee.

Sure, that stinks for those of us who would like to have free information everywhere; but it makes sense to most everyone else. I am sure the budget officer at most any state or local government archive thinks it makes sense.

Every contract renegotiation is different, but it is not unusual to agree to disagree. The contract ends, and the web site provider legally MUST remove the information from their web site. The same thing frequently happens to all the other online sites that provide old records online.

**Moral of this story:** If you find a record online that is valuable to you, SAVE IT NOW!

Save it to your hard drive and make a backup copy someplace else as well. If there is no option to save, make a screen shot and save it on your hard drive or some other place where it will last for many years. Just because you can see the record online today does not mean that it will be available tomorrow.

## “A Piece of Personal History:

### How I Crossed Paths with Lucille”



by LaVera Wingfield

The 1950 U.S. census is the first one in which I appeared (as an 8-year old). In Memphis (Shelby), Tennessee, my family (headed by my father Mitchell McKinley Brown) resided on a street named Humphreys Place.

Relationship	Name	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Place of Birth	Year of Birth	Occupation	Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Property
No one at home									
Head	Mitchell M. Brown	M	48	Mar	Mississippi	1902			
Wife	Vertina	F	31	Mar	Mississippi	1919			
Daughter	Lavera	F	8	Never	Tenn	1942			
Daughter	Marion	F	7	Never	Tenn	1943			
Son	Mitchell	M	6	Never	Tenn	1944			

On the next street over, which was Laudersdale, lived a 24-year old musician by the name of Riley B. King – better known as “B.B.” King.

Relationship	Name	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Place of Birth	Year of Birth	Occupation	Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Property
Head	Riley B. King	M	24	Mar	Mississippi	1926			
Wife	J. King	F	20	Mar	Mississippi	1930			

My family was one of the few in the neighborhood that had a telephone during that period. So, a lot of people came to our house. I still remember the phone number.

My dad worked for the railroad company as a coach cleaner, but he also had supplemental job hustles. For instance: at that time, the Bruce Lumber Company (1921-61) was headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee and didn’t use their end pieces of flooring, considering it scrap. Well, my dad sold those scrap pieces and it was a good side business. Some people even received wood on credit; the cost was around twenty cents for a bushel.

Like many others at the time, B.B. had a wood/coal-burning stove and it so happened my dad sold wood and coal. One day, B.B. ordered some lightwood and a sack of coal. Unfortunately, my father wasn’t available to make the delivery. So, the task fell to me, my younger sister and brother. Using our red wagon, I steered and my siblings helped push. Since they were too little to help me take the goods up the third floor where B.B. lived, I dragged it up the stairs as far as I could. At the last few steps, I put it on my back. At the top of the stairs, B.B. took the purchases inside his door. When he turned to get the payment (about \$3), **that’s when I saw the famous guitar Lucille**...hanging on the wall...on a long nail...larger than life...shining from head to toe. That was an awesome sight for a child like me, one that I’ll never forget.

(Image sources: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki> and "United States 1950 Census" database, FamilySearch. <https://familysearch.org>; 10 October 2022)



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