

African-American Genealogical Society - Cleveland, Ohio

NEWSLETTER



Know your history



Black history is
American history –

It's a collective journey

Family history is
individual history –

It's a uniquely personal journey

(Ever useful, ever evolving)

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

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(March, June, September, December)

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*To
Discover
Your
Ancestors

Is to
Discover
a Part
of You!*

GENEALOGY NEWS

- “U.S. government changing how it asks about people’s race and ethnicity” on the U.S. census - <https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/28/politics/race-ethnicity-census-changes/index.html>
- **Tennessee database of family bibles online** at Tennessee State Archives & Library - <https://tslaindexes.tn.gov/database-tn-research/index-family-bible-records>
- **Legal Genealogist** article re: the **U.S. Social Security application form**, “The unavailable SS-5 - When we don’t get what we asked for” - <https://www.legalgenealogist.com/2024/02/15/the-unavailable-ss-5/>
- **Free: 10 Essential Genealogy Forms** from *Family Tree Magazine* - <https://familytreemagazine.com/freeforms/>
- Article, “**The underwater hunt for the lost ship of an American slave trafficker**” - <https://tinyurl.com/2btefard>

2024-2025 AAGS Officers

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

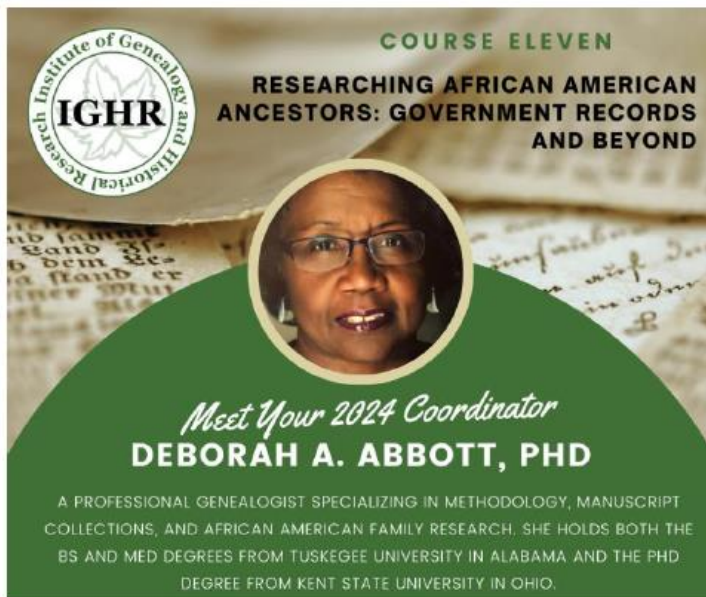
Treasurer..... Gayle Ector
Financial Secretary..... Ellecia Gant
Corresponding Sec’y... Maxine Hairston
Recording Sec’y.....unfilled

There's Still Time to Register!

2024 Virtual IGHR - July 21-26 Course 11, African American

Many times, people are under the assumption that attempting research on African Americans can be difficult or fruitless, with a lack of available records necessary to locate their ancestors.

Researching African American Ancestors: Government Records and Beyond will change your mind about that (<https://ighr.gagensociety.org/course-eleven/>). Led by the incomparable Deborah A. Abbott, PhD, the faculty for this course is outstanding with genealogical experts who know how to locate the records and repositories you need to expand your horizons in this unique area of research.



Course Faculty

Deborah A. Abbott, PhD, Course Coordinator
LaBrenda Garrett-Nelson,
JD, LL.M, CG®, CGLSM, FASG
Sharon Batiste Gillins, BS, MS
Shamele Jordon

J. Mark Lowe, FUGA
Timothy N. Pinnick, BS
Patricia Walls Stamm, CG®, CGLSM
Michael L. Strauss, AG®
Ari Wilkins, BS

This course is designed for intermediate to advanced researchers. Students will survey a variety of government records focused on the African American experience. The course format will consist of lectures and hands-on experiences based on strategies, methods and techniques needed to ensure African American research success. A solid understanding of genealogy basics will help students make use of the materials and concepts presented. Students should have experience using census records and general secondary records. This course will introduce you to researching federal land records, maps, congressional records, manuscript collections, military, Freedmen's Bureau, WPA and more. In addition to lectures, there will be scheduled Q&A time at the end of each day with opportunity to interact with instructors.

See the course page for more details, including a list of recommended books

Registration is open until July 1, 2024 - <https://ighr.gagensociety.org/2024-ighr/>

Member Spotlight on...

Reginald Barker

“Bringing Two Hobbies Together”



Genealogy and Lego building are two of my interests. Both are fun. Both are rewarding. Both involve assembling and constructing pieces step by step, bit by bit, leading to a finished product.

A few years ago, I found out about AAGS through Joe Houser, where I learned how to research and made some discoveries about my ancestors. Recently, I discovered that the makers of Lego have created a new set called **“Family Tree.”** It is available online or in-store and, when completed, it has clips that can display family photos. A perfect way to combine two favorite hobbies.



I like to compare them both with life--the concept of continuously moving day by day to complete your goals. Each day builds upon another.

When I was in art therapy, I slowly worked on a creative Lego project that is now going to be part of an art show. Gradually and creatively is also how I look for my ancestors.

Admittedly, I did not do much researching during the pandemic. But, over the last couple of months, I've been using what I have learned in AAGS meetings to try to get deeper into the research information that I already have. No doubt, my knowledge base will get wider.

As with many things, it may take some time to get through. You start with nothing and eventually, bit by bit, you end up seeing the results.

AAGS ACTIVITIES

Supporting Genealogy In-House & In the Community



“Breaking the Brick Wall”

Dr. Deborah Abbott

AAGS Meeting - March 23

Throughout the year, Debbie has been promoting more hands-on practice during monthly sessions. This was well-accommodated in March as she involved the group with solving a genealogical brick wall case, using step-by-step strategies.

A new tool mentioned for researchers: FamilySearch.org has a new feature called FamilySearch Labs. This is an experimental area that includes AI (artificial intelligence) elements.

After signing in, scroll down the home page to reach the labs. One available experiment is “Expand your research with full text.” It is currently limited to some land and probate collections that are not yet indexed but can be browsed (AI attempts to decipher the handwriting). It contains some errors and limited data, yet may be worth exploring. A “how to search” video is posted. Documents can be downloaded.



“Researching Kentucky Records”

J. Mark Lowe

AAGS Meeting - April 27

It’s always a pleasure to hear from Mark.

His first words of advice: “Sometimes we’re so busy collecting information, we need to *stop & look* at the records.”

He then proceeded to detail where to find records, which resources are accessible, what to pay attention to, why it’s important to learn local history and how to make the most of researching.

Among the many points of interest covered:

- Land purchases, grants, deeds
- Property records, maps
- Tax records/lists, court records
- County histories (become familiar with adjacent areas & jurisdictions)
- Marriage records, dower laws
- State laws, slave laws & resources

Although Mark gave examples related to Kentucky, the overall information is comparable to other states. Some of his reminders: deeds tie individuals together, enslaved name changes can be found in deed records, collect vital records of all relatives and build complete family groups. In addition, look at each record (more than once), to determine next steps.



"Documenting Your Research"

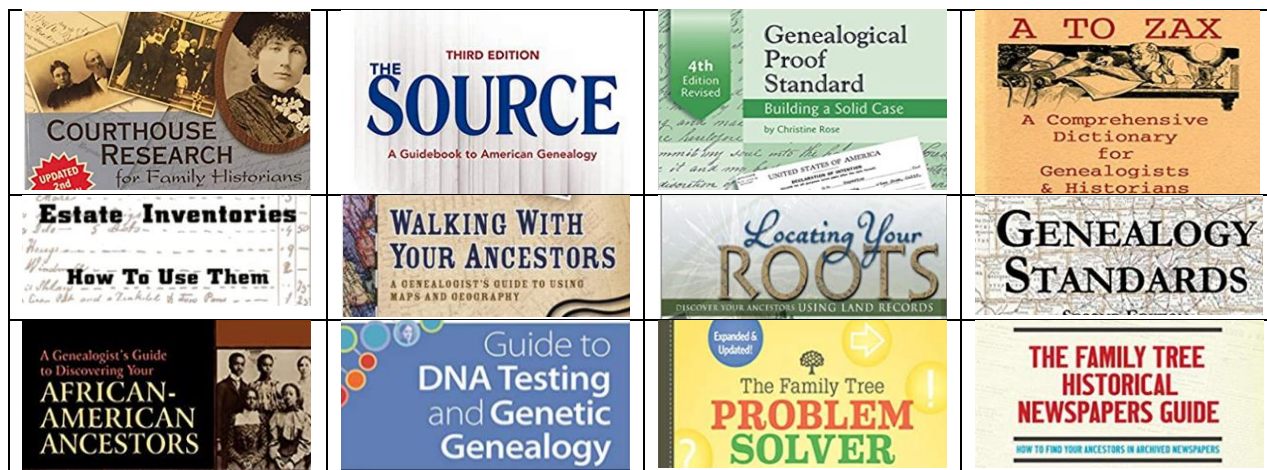
Robyn N. Smith

Robyn’s pertinent presentation kept the focus on some overlooked basics:

Good research questions
 shape a workable **research plan**,
 which helps produce good **research notes**.

She led with the premise that the types of research questions you begin with will determine the kinds of resources you will need to pursue. She then offered up “bad” questions (broad) vs. “good” ones (more specific, structured around a document/tangible evidence). This hands-on exercise helped solidify how to actually get started with developing a practical plan. Once your plan is under way, record your research (what is found and *not* found). Be as detailed as possible in your notetaking (whether using a notebook, binder, spreadsheet or electronic software) and make sure to jot down follow-up questions to come back to later. Robyn shared numerous tips, such as: search multiple databases—they may have different info; take thumb drives; cameras are faster than printing and can be used to zoom in/out; do collateral searches; timelines are very useful; don’t neglect county level info not yet digitized but still on microfilm; and check for non-digitized records at courthouses & other repositories. She commented that how you record your research can tighten your practices, help you become more methodical and aid in success.

Robyn also took the time to guide us through her blog site, *Reclaiming Kin: Taking Back What Was Once Lost*. It contains many appealing topics, including recommended reading for family historians. Some titles from her “Genealogy Bookshelf” are below. <https://reclaimingkin.com/>



NEXT AAGS meetings:

- June 22: “Preparing for a Research Trip to Allen County Public Library” – Curt Witcher, ACPL
- July 27: “How to Use RootsMagic” – Joseph Houser, AAGS

AAGS community support continued throughout the quarter:



April 6 | Olivet Baptist Church
“Rites of Passage” program – Maxine Hairston, Joe Jordan & Anthony Jackson assisted Dr. Deborah Abbott in introducing genealogy to youth.

April, May & June | Family history research clinics – AAGS volunteers aided patrons at the Downtown Cleveland Public Library, Louis Stokes building.



OF NOTE:

The **Board for Certification of Genealogists (BCG)** awarded its 2024 Scholarship for Genealogists Under 40 to AAGS/OAAGHG member **Eli Kirshner**. Winners can attend one of four to five premier national genealogical institutes in 2025.

Family Tree Magazine May/June 2024 edition includes an article regarding AAGS member **Rochelle McNorton** and her family’s 100 years of reunions.

National Archives Expands Joint Digitization Effort With Ancestry

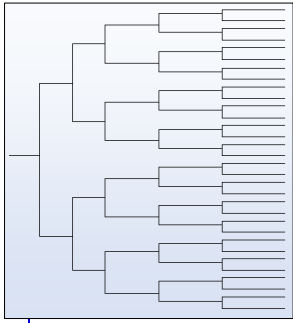
Press Release · Thursday, May 9, 2024

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) today announced a new multi-year agreement with Ancestry to digitize, index, and publish tens of millions of historical United States records, previously unavailable online.

The records to be digitized include U.S. military morning reports from World War II; Selective Service draft cards covering the post-World War II draft registration between 1948 and 1959; naturalization and immigration records held at the National Archives at San Francisco, CA; records held in San Francisco, CA, related to Asian Americans; and records held at the National Archives at Denver, CO, relating to Native Americans. The scope and depth of these records reflect the richness and diversity of America’s history.

Additional collections and projects will be identified, agreed, and announced between the parties under this agreement. Records from Record Group 21, Military Petitions for Naturalization, 1918–1947, will be scanned beginning this month at the National Archives at San Francisco.

[Entire release content at <https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2024/nr24-27>]



Technology and You: Family Tree Backup Review



By Cecelia McFadden

Welcome to our third article of the year. We've covered online safety and mobile productivity software. Our focus in this edition is the visual depiction of our hard work, the family tree. A family tree is a chart or diagram depicting kinship and genealogical descent of generations of lineage groups over time. Family trees are a source of pride and heritage and are the culmination of months and years of dedicated genealogy research. Our trees contain evidence, family heirlooms, photos and clues for other family legacy seekers. Often, our trees live in an online family database software like Ancestry or FamilySearch. Over time, our trees grow, and out of convenience or neglect, we don't have the tree data backed up. Read on to review best practices for creating an online and offline backup copy of your graphical research product.

Online Backup Strategies

Save or export your family tree to a **GEDCOM format**. GEDCOM is the most widely used file format for backing up and transferring family tree file data. Email the GEDCOM file to yourself as an additional safeguard. That file can be **retained in your email box or in an online storage location** like Google Drive, Dropbox or OneDrive. Once the file is at your online storage destination, use the SYNC function to keep the file updated with any other copies that are online in family tree software. Next, keep a copy of the GEDCOM file in **family tree software** like RootsMagic, Legacy Family Tree or Family Tree Maker. Make sure you export your tree out of subscription software (Ancestry, MyHeritage) on a regular basis. Remember your **photos and attachments need to be backed up separately**. The GEDCOM file only maintains the alphanumeric data and descendency of your family tree.

Offline Backup Strategies

Hardware media is very inexpensive these days. **External hard drive** space that is a terabyte or larger can be purchased for less than \$60. **Portable USB drives** with 256 gigabytes space can be ordered for less than \$25. An offline backup of your family tree is created by saving your GEDCOM files and photos to your hardware device of choice. You may also **save a copy of your family tree file to your laptop**, with the understanding that you have a hardware backup routine for your laptop files.

Conclusion. Backing up your family tree file is an essential component of your overall genealogy tech and organization strategy. Decide if you will create an online or offline backup, or have both, which is considered best practice. After you've settled on your backup plan, consider creating an export of your family tree file in the GEDCOM format on a seasonal basis. Every 90 days is ideal.

Consider creating a backup plan for major holidays. A sample plan would start off in January (New Year's or MLK Day), backup again at Easter, Juneteenth or July 4th, and then one day in October (Indigenous People's Day, United Nations Day, Sweetest Day, Halloween or Family History Day Commemoration).

Now is the time to get started with your family tree backup if you haven't already. Get organized and get ready for your July 4th download. We're here to support you if you have issues. We're always here to help.

Contact us at newschair@aagsclev.org

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"City Directories: No Town Too Small, No Clue Too Little"

[Reprinted with permission, excerpted]

Written by Thomas MacEntee, of Abundant Genealogy

Prior to the invention of the telephone and the telephone book, most cities and even small towns had a directory listing information on its inhabitants. Even after the telephone became popular, and up through the 1920s and 1930s, many towns continued to publish these directories. City and business directories are filled with clues to help you break down brick walls and better understand your ancestors.

The City Directory: More Than Meets The Eye

When we say "directory" we mean much more than an alphabetical list of residents and their addresses. Here's the basic type of information you can often find in directories related to an ancestor:

- Name
- Address
- Spouse / Marital Status
- Employer
- Occupation

Keep in mind that a directory for a large city such as Buffalo, New York or Chicago, Illinois will offer more information than a small town directory. However, I have seen some small town directories that even list when residents died in the previous year, and the ailment or cause of death!

Abbreviations in City Directories

The clue to solving many family history mysteries can be found in the abbreviations within a city directory listing. For most directories, there will be a table of abbreviations listed in the first few pages. The most common abbreviations are:

- Ab. – above (meaning the person could live above a store or business)
- Bd. or Bds. – boards (meaning the person is a lodger or boarder at the address)
- Emp. – employee
- Opp. – location "across" or "opposite" from an address
- Prop. – proprietor
- W. or wd. – widow or widower

Watch for abbreviations of street names, neighborhoods, neighboring towns, and given names!

GenealogyInTime Magazine has an EXTENSIVE list of abbreviations at <http://www.genealogyintime.com/dictionaries/city-directory-abbreviations.html>

Advertisements and Why They Matter

In most directories, a list of advertisers will appear at the front or the end of the directory. If your ancestor ran a business check to see if it is listed.

Advertisements can also help us understand how our ancestors lived. What were the prices for basic goods? What were the fashions of the time period? What items were in demand?

Creating Timelines and Using the F.A.N. Club concept

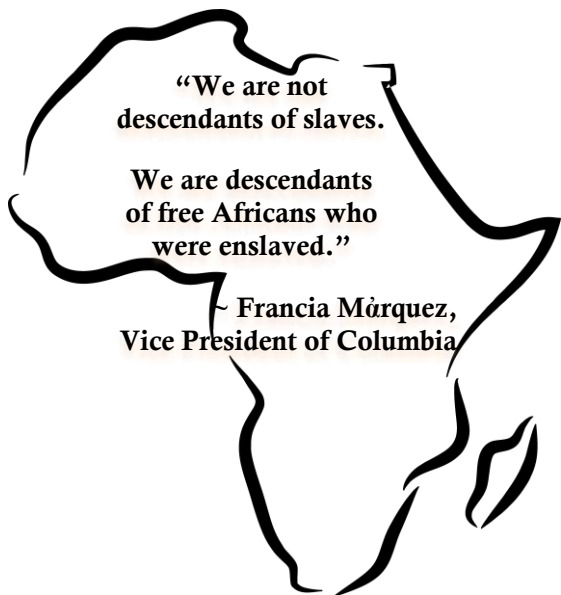
Very often information found in a city directory will be “direct” in that it will state a name, occupation, address, etc. But you need to be a sleuth and start using the “indirect” information to harvest those genealogy clues.

Tips and Tricks for Clue Gathering with City Directories

- Search last name only. The formatting for city directories is different than most records and using the “first name last name” search will prove frustrating.
- Browse images by surname. Make sure you review the entire list of people with the same surname of your ancestor. Check the names against your family tree and you may be able to fill in some gaps.
- What is the date of the directory? Keep in mind that the information listed in a directory was often collected up to one year PRIOR to the date listed on the cover of the directory. A 1908 directory could show where your ancestor lived in 1907. Check the front/back pages of the directory to see how information was collected.
- Don’t ignore the Table of Contents! You will be surprised at what is actually contained in a directory by consulting the “TOC.” Often there will be a list of street names, lists of churches, fraternal and charitable organizations, and more.
- Search by address. Once you’ve located an ancestor at a specific address, use that address to search other directories in the same town or city.
- Beware address changes! Many cities “reconfigured” their address schema or street grid at some point. This usually occurred as cities grew. The address listed in a directory in 1908 may not correspond to the current address.
- Understand the abbreviations. While most abbreviations were standardized across directories (“w” or “wd” for widow, “bd” for “boarder”), check the front or back of the directory for a list of abbreviations.
- Can’t find a directory for your small town? Locate the nearest larger town or city and check that directory. Often you will find that smaller villages and hamlets are included in the directories of larger cities.
- Use Google Maps Street View. Once you’ve determined an address, check out the current view on Google Maps Street View and see if the building still exists.

City Directories: No Town Too Small, No Clue Too Little
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QUOTABLES



“Each person deserves to be remembered. *Especially* the ended branches.

For if I don't remember them, then who will?”

~Melissa Finlay



“We enjoy the best days of our lives because of the past struggles of our ancestors.”

~Anonymous



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