

TIPS FOR RESEARCHING AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

A SAMPLING OF RESOURCES IN THE Buncombe County Special Collections

Asheville-Buncombe Community Reparations Commission Zotero Library

https://www.zotero.org/groups/5071827/asheville_buncombe_community_reparations_project/library

In support of the work to support community reparations for Black Asheville, particularly the “Information Sharing and Truth-Telling” phase of the process, Buncombe County Special Collections is continuing to compile a Zotero library of resources available online and in our collections. Resources are organized into categories based on Community Reparations Commission Impact Focus Areas (IFAs).

You can also learn more about the work of the Community Reparations Commission, including meeting documents and recordings, at <https://www.ashevillenc.gov/department/city-clerk/boards-and-commissions/reparations-commission/>.

Books and Publications:

The CRC Zotero library contains a comprehensive list of resources, but here are some good titles to start from that are available for reference in the Buncombe County Special Collections library.

Materials in Special Collections don't circulate, but if you need to access them outside the reading room, BCSC staff are available to assist you in locating these items digitally, or through other libraries via NC Cardinal consortium or Interlibrary Loan.

- Andrews, William L. 2005. *North Carolina slave narratives: the lives of Moses Roper, Lunsford Lane, Moses Grandy, and Thomas H. Jones*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press.
- Dunaway, Wilma A. 2003. *Slavery in the American Mountain South*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Franklin, John Hope. 1943. *The free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Hornsby-Gutting, Angela. 2011. *Black manhood and community building in North Carolina, 1900-1930*. [Place of publication not identified]: Univ Press of Florida.
- Inscoe, John C. 2005. *Appalachians and Race: the mountain South from slavery to segregation*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky
- Inscoe, John C. 1996. *Mountain Masters: slavery, and the sectional crisis in western North Carolina*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Kay, Marvin L. Michael, and Lorin Lee Cary. 1995. *Slavery in North Carolina, 1748-1775*. Chapel Hill (N.C.): University of North Carolina Press.

- Turner, William Hobart, and Edward J. Cabbell. 1985. *Blacks in Appalachia*. Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky.
- Waters, Darin J. 2012. *Life Beneath the Veneer: The Black Community in Asheville, North Carolina from 1793 to 1900*. doi:10.17615/bte1-j211
- Cutshall, Katherine Calhoun. 2016. *In the Grip of Slavery: The Rise of a Slave Society Surrounding the Establishment of Stock Stands along the Buncombe Turnpike, 1790 to 1855*.
https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/unca/f/K_Cutshall_Western_2015.pdf

Special Collections Database

Home page: specialcollections.buncombecounty.org

Database search: <https://7039.sydneyplus.com/archive/final/Portal.aspx>

Our online database includes photographs, newspaper article index records, architectural drawings, maps, letters, manuscript collections, and oral histories. Try using the tab “Browse Subjects” and typing in the term ‘African Americans,” or using the Basic Search from the home page, then filtering your search by subjects, dates, or type of resource. African American can be found throughout many collections in the archives, but some manuscript and oral history collections that are specific to local Black history, family, and communities are:

- Andrea Clark Photograph Collection, [ACC](#)
- Johnny Baxter Collection, [MS094](#)
- Cannon Family Collection, [MS147](#)
- Stumptown Neighborhood Reunion Collection, [MS154](#)
- Bennie Mae Scott Davis Family Photographs, [MS301](#)
- Daphne Young Collection, [MS356](#)
- Virginia Bosman Collection, [MS357](#)
- Southside Community History Project Collection, [MS362](#)
(includes African American Communities oral histories, [MS362.002](#); and Stephens-Lee High School alumni oral histories, [MS362.004](#))
- Buncombe County and WNC slave ads, 1844-1863, [MS366](#)
- Cissy Dendy Family Collection, [MS363](#)
- John R. Hayes Collection, [MS369](#)
- African American High School Yearbook Collection, [MS376](#)
- Violet Hill Cemetery Collection, [MS390](#)
- Black Asheville History Harvest Collection, MS403
(includes Clifford W. Cotton II scrapbooks and photographs, [MS403.001A](#); Tim Means family photographs, [MS403.001B](#); Sophie Dixon family and church photographs, [MS403.002A](#); Bobbette Mays family photographs, [MS403.002C](#); and more)
- Asheville African American Heritage Survey Oral History Interview Collection, [MS406](#)
- Mae Bell Burton Scrapbook, [MS408](#)
- Asheville Colored Hospital Records, [MS410](#)
- James Edward Fleming Sr. Family Collection, [MS431](#)
- Initia Johnson Pullin Collection on Stephens-Lee High School, [MS445](#)
- Building Bridges of Asheville Records, [MS449](#)

Asheville City Directories: 1883-Present

The city directories are a great way to learn the history of neighborhoods, businesses, and personal occupations. The directories include listings by occupant name, street name, and business types. Until 1950, directories indicated which people and businesses were African American by using an asterisk or other symbol. Print copies of Asheville city directories are available at Buncombe County Special Collections (BCSC) in the lower level of Pack Memorial Library. Digitized copies of Asheville city directories can be found online at [DigitalNC](#), [Archive.org](#) and other providers.

Buncombe County Register of Deeds

You can search for property deeds, birth, death, and marriage records at the Buncombe County Register of Deeds office or online at www.buncombecounty.org/rod. About halfway down the home page, click on the “Online Record Lookup” box to search by names for these types of resources. The Register of Deeds office has also compiled a list of documents that record the trade of people as slaves (considered “property”) in Buncombe County at this link: <https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/depts/register-of-deeds/slave-deeds/default.aspx>

Newspapers.com

[Newspapers.com](#) is a digital database of historic newspapers, accessible on-site at BCSC. It has great keyword search capabilities and can be used to find news about Black life in WNC. When keyword searching, remember that the terminology used to refer to African Americans has changed over time. Newspaper results can also be filtered by the category “Enslavement” to search only records of fugitive slave ads, indexed by name of the enslaver and the enslaved person.

Other Resources:

UNC Asheville’s Ramsey Library

The Special Collections and University Archives at the D. H. Ramsey Library of UNC Asheville offer still more resources. The rich website at www.toto.lib.unca.edu provides online access to books, pamphlets, manuscripts, photographs, oral histories, and a wealth of other material. The oral histories in the Ramsey Library are a strong suit. Extensive photographic archives, including the E. M. Ball Collection, are yet another strength of the Ramsey Library’s holdings. Notable collections for researching African American history at UNCA are:

- Heritage of Black Highlanders Collection, ca. 1888-1972, [M77.10](#). This collection contains important institutional and biographical materials on African Americans in Asheville, NC. Accounts of African American congregations and schools are included, as are representative issues of local African American newspapers such as the Church Advocate and Southern News, and other publications. Included also are biographies of leaders in education, business, and religion, and various photographs.

- The South Asheville Colored Cemetery, 1840-1943, [OH-SAC](#). This collection contains information and documentation on Asheville's early African-American burial ground, gathered through oral histories and other documentation.

The Southern Appalachian Digital Collections, a collaborative effort of UNCA and Western Carolina University, offers a “collection of digital collections” featuring thousands of records: <https://southernappalachiandigitalcollections.org>.

UNC Asheville also hosts the annual African Americans in Western North Carolina Conference, <https://aawnc.unca.edu/>.

North Carolina African American Heritage Commission

<https://aaahc.nc.gov/>

Notable resources from this state commission include the Green Book Project:

<https://aaahc.nc.gov/green-book-project>

Library of Congress

www.loc.gov

On their website, try searching “Asheville African Americans.” This search alone pulls us thousands of photographs, and oral histories, papers, etc. Use filters at left to refine your results by date, format, and more. Notable resources held by the Library of Congress include [a Federal Writers’ Project interview with Sarah Gudger](#), the only written, personal eyewitness account of a person who was enslaved in Buncombe County

DID YOU FIND ANYTHING? PLEASE LET US KNOW!

We are actively seeking to improve representation of African American history in our collection, and would greatly appreciate it if you’d share what you learn so that we can add it to our collection. Come by and see us in the Buncombe County Special Collections in the lower level of Pack Library; hours are Tuesday through Friday 10AM – 6PM and Saturday, 10AM – 5PM. Or contact us at packnc@buncombecounty.org or 828-250-4740.