



African American History Resource Guide

Black History is Oklahoma History

This page offers free Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) resources related to the Black experience in Oklahoma. Find articles, images, videos, podcasts, webinars, materials for educators, and more at okhistory.org/blackhistory.

African American Newspapers on Microfilm

The Research Center houses the largest collection of Oklahoma newspapers in the state. Listed below are titles and founding dates of publications in the OHS archives.

Ardmore

Baptist Rival, 1902
Indian Territory Sun, 1901

Boley

Beacon, 1908
Boley Informer, 1911
Boley News, 1918
Boley Progress, 1905
Boley Weekly Progress, 1926

Bookertee

Bookertee Searchlight, 1917

Castle

Castle News, 1908

Clearview

Clearview Patriarch, 1913
Clearview Tribune, 1904
Lincoln Tribune, 1904
Patriarch, 1913

Fallis

Fallis Blade, 1904

Garvin

Garvin Pioneer, 1908

Guthrie

Guthrie Progress, 1903
Oklahoma Guide, 1892
Oklahoma Safeguard, 1894
Western World, 1902

Langston

Church and State, 1911
Langston City Herald, 1891
Western Age, 1904

Muskogee

Baptist Informer, 1909
Daily Search Light
Muskogee Lantern, 1902
Muskogee Cimeter, 1901

Muskogee Comet, 1904

Muskogee Star, 1912
Oklahoma Independent, 1936
Pioneer, 1898
Saturday Evening Tribune, 1913
Tattler, 1915

Oklahoma City

Black Chronicle, 1979
Black Dispatch, 1914
Ebony Tribune, 1926
Oklahoma Dispatch, 1983

Taft

Taft Enterprise, 1912

Tulsa

Oklahoma Eagle, 1921
Oklahoma Sun, 1920
Tulsa Guide, 1906
Tulsa Star, 1913

Historic Places

Historic All-Black Towns

Learn about historic All-Black towns in *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*. The Oklahoma History Center also offers traveling exhibits about All-Black towns.

okhistory.org/encyclopedia | okhistory.org/traveling-exhibits

The National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is our nation's official list of properties significant in our past. A list of National Register properties related to Black history is available at okhistory.org/blackhistory.

Find out more about the process for adding properties to the National Register and explore the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory at okhistory.org/shpo.

Historical Markers

A database of more than 700 historical markers is available at okhistory.org/markers. You can search by marker name/topic and browse by county or subject.

OHS Quick links

The Gateway to Oklahoma History

gateway.okhistory.org
Search and view thousands of historic photographs, newspapers, maps, and documents online.

Research Online Catalog

okhistory.org/catalog
Explore OHS holdings including manuscripts, maps, oral histories, film and video, photographs, books, periodicals, and newspapers. Select materials are available to view online.

The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture

okhistory.org/encyclopedia
Read more than 2,600 entries about the people, places, and events that shape Oklahoma's history.

Film and Video on YouTube

youtube.com/@OHSfilm
youtube.com/@kforarchives
View selections from the OHS Film and Video Archives and the WKY KTV KFOR Archives on YouTube.

Oral Histories on YouTube

youtube.com/@OHSaudioDept
Listen to oral history interviews on YouTube.

Events Calendar

okhistory.org/events
Learn about programs, workshops, demonstrations, festivals, and other events at OHS museums and historic sites across the state.

Manuscript Archives

The Oklahoma Historical Society Manuscript Archives contain paper items including letters, scrapbooks, and journals, personal or business-related records and correspondence, brochures, and ephemera. The collections listed here include a variety of materials pertaining to Black history in Oklahoma.

Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher Collection 2006.55: includes a marriage certificate, greeting cards, 1992 Langston University yearbook, a working manuscript and research for her autobiography, and other personal items.

African American School Records, Garvin County 2007.31: records of teachers in District 46. The schools included are Sweet Home, Avery View, and Avriett View.

Charles and Barbara Burton Collection 2008.96: publicity material for the musical performances of the Burtons.

Clara Luper Collection 2012.188: contains decades of correspondence, event programs, flyers, business information and church information collected by civil rights leader Clara Luper. The collection covers the last forty years of Luper's life.

Currie Ballard Collection 2007.148: created by Currie Ballard, a collector of African American historical items; collection includes letters, commission records, and ephemera.

Cherokee Freedmen Collection 1981.111: contains photocopies of Cherokee Freedmen applications.

Chickasaw Nation Constitution and Laws Collection 2013.255: a copy of the Chickasaw Nation Constitution and Laws. Laws regarding Freedmen are included.

Dunbar High School (Shawnee, OK) Alumni Association Collection 2011.136: scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, and alumni information for the high school.

Eileen Charbo Collection 1983.226: manuscript about Dr. George Tann, an African American doctor in Indian Territory.

Eleanor Casey Collection 2020.024: contains 365 documents relating to the life of Rebecca McIntosh Hawkins Hagerty; includes slave transactions, correspondence, legal documents, family history, and medical documents.

F. D. Moon Collection 1997.016: letters written by or received by Moon, 1932–1940, when Moon was in charge of the African American schools in Wewoka, a leader of the Langston Alumni Association, and an advocate for higher education.

Federal Writers Collection 1981.105: ex-slave narratives and biographies of African Americans in Oklahoma. Collection also contains information on towns, monuments, and schools.

Finley-Slaughter Family Collection 2009.159: diplomas, certificates, licenses, and awards from Dr. Gravelly Eugene Finley Sr., Gravelly Eugene Finley Jr., Wyatt Hardy Slaughter, and Saretta Slaughter Finley.

Hannah Atkins Collection 2007.114: personal papers, publications, news clippings, speeches, political material and memorabilia documenting Atkins's years of public service and involvement in politics, women's issues, education, and civil rights.

Issac Kimbro Collection 2008.161: materials related to Evelyn La Rue Pittman and her lyric theater compositions.

Jake and Joan Diggs Collection 2007.110: contains Diggs family papers with a focus on the lives and careers of Jake and Joan Diggs; includes business and personal correspondence, ephemera, and financial, legal, and administrative documents.

Dr. James L. and Lois L. Mosley Collection 2010.69: documents related to the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers during the 1940s–1950s.

Jerusalem Community Missionary Baptist Church Collection 2010.79: four record books from the church in Washington, Oklahoma. Most feature pastor B. F. Daniels and were recorded by secretary Myrtle Goff.

Jimmy Stewart Collection 2006.75: collection includes manuscripts, photographs, and audiovisual materials. Stewart was a leader in the Oklahoma City Civil Rights Movement.

John Harrah Collection 1966.020: handwritten letter from Cherokee attorney T. M. Wright to Colonel Garrett at Fort Gibson, Cherokee Nation thanking officers and soldiers of 40th Iowa Volunteers for ending theft after the War of the Rebellion.

Katie Mae Watkins Collection 2008.28: Includes scrapbooks highlighting the career of civic leader Katie Mae Watkins.

Kaye Watkins Collection 2011.217: materials on the Urban League of Oklahoma and Zeta Phi Beta, with newspaper clippings and correspondence.

Kevin Cox Collection 2013.227: items relating to the career of Oklahoma State Representative Kevin Cox including programs, newspaper articles, correspondence, and papers related to the Oklahoma Legislative Black Caucus.

Lucius Curry Collection 2006.40: collection contains funeral programs for African American Oklahomans.

Martha “Marti” Hayes Collection 2013.292: certificates, newspaper clippings and correspondence regarding Martha Hayes’s appointment to the county election board.

Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame Collection 2013.415: contains interviews and nominations for the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame.

Oklahoma City Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs 2011.154: photographs, scrapbooks, ledgers, paintings, and financial records documenting the group’s history

Robert L. Williams Collection 1982.115: consists of professional papers accumulated during his service as governor of Oklahoma and US District Court judge.

Rubye Hall Collection 2006.006: personal and business correspondence, meeting minutes of several groups, photographs, news clippings, awards, and certificates.

Samuel W. Brown Collection 1992.001: Muscogee and Euchee education, allotments, and the Indian Welfare Act. Also includes letters, ledger books, deeds, guardianships, litigation, land documents, probate cases, and memorials.

Sapulpa Historical Society Collection 2007.057: contains materials donated from the museum in Sapulpa, Oklahoma.

Shirley Nero Collection 2011.293: quarterly report of the Oklahoma African American Educators Hall of Fame, October 19, 2011, and program from that organization’s first Induction Ceremony and Banquet, September 30, 2011.

Sylvia Pollard Driggins Collection 2013.256: articles, awards, and correspondence highlighting Sylvia Pollard Driggins’ achievements as Miss Black Oklahoma, as a performer, and as a humanitarian.

Tulsa Race Riot (Massacre) Commission Collection 2006.018: interviews with survivors, death certificates, court cases filed against insurance companies, photographs, and statistics documenting the devastation of 1921.

William H. Murray Collection 1982.294: letters, documents, and scrapbooks relating to his time as governor.

Winner Williams Collection 2008.048: copies of galleys from the comic strip “Winner Williams” that ran in the *Black Dispatch* 1969–71 and the *Oklahoma City Times* 1971–73. Also includes a copy of *The Gospel According to Winner, Larry and Friends*.

Zella Patterson Collection 1983.09: Zella Patterson (1909–86) was head of the Home Economics Department at Langston University from 1965 to 1971. She co-authored *Langston University: A History and Churches of Langston*.

Oral Histories

Slave Narratives

In the 1930s, the Federal Writers Project employed writers to interview individuals who were formerly enslaved. These interviews bring to light stories of those who had lived in present-day Oklahoma for years, and also those who moved to the area after the Civil War in hopes of establishing a new home. The narratives from Oklahoma are also unique in that they include experiences of those enslaved by American Indian tribes.

The WPA Oklahoma Slave Narratives by T. Lindsay Baker and Julie P. Baker frames these narratives through extensive research on the interviews. This book is available at the OHS Research Center.

Indian Pioneer Histories

In conjunction with the Works Progress Administration, about 25,000 oral histories were conducted in the late 1930s. Those who were interviewed provided insight about life in Oklahoma prior to and during the annexation of Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory.

digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/pioneer/

OHS Oral History Collection

Among oral histories collected by the Oklahoma Historical Society are hundreds of interviews exploring African American history in Oklahoma. Included are authors, community leaders, veterans, educators, and citizens. Oral histories from political leaders and historians are also available. Just a few highlights from the collection include:

Hannah Atkins	Fannie Hill
Governor Henry Bellmon	Senator Maxine Horner
Wayne Chandler	Rev. W. K. Jackson
Colonel Major Clark	M. W. Lee
Dr. George Lynn Cross	Clarence Love
Rev. Charles Davis	Frederick Douglass Moon
Charles Ellison	Zella Patterson
Ralph Ellison	Julius Pegues
Ernie Fields Sr.	E. Melvin Porter
Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher	Representative Don Ross
Dr. Eddye Faye Gates	Edna R. Slaughter
Ed Goodwin	James “Jimmy” Stewart
James O. Goodwin	Jack and Mildred Todd
Ira Hall	Wesley Young
Rubye Hall	Veterans of World War II
Archibald Hill	

Oral Histories on YouTube

Select oral histories from the collection are available on YouTube at youtube.com/@OHSAudioArchives.

Additional Online Resources for Research

Freedmen's Bureau

The US Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (or the Freedmen's Bureau), was created by the US government to assist formerly enslaved people. The bureau was established in the eleven rebel states, three border states, Washington, DC, and Indian Territory in March 1865; it ceased to exist in the summer of 1872. During its operation, the bureau provided resources for African Americans including legalizing marriages, reuniting family members, and recording genealogical information.

In Indian Territory agents of the Freedmen's Bureau experienced difficulties. Freedmen in the territory generally had close relationships with Native nations. When new treaties were negotiated with the Five Tribes after the Civil War, the bureau ceased operations, therefore cutting funding for education and assimilation efforts.

The Freedmen's Bureau records have been microfilmed and are available at the National Archives. Various institutions are currently indexing the records which will make them more accessible to researchers. FamilySearch currently offers access to Freedmen's Bureau marriage records at familysearch.org.

Freedmen's Bank

The Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, also known as the Freedmen's Bank, was established in 1865 and maintained operations until 1874. The bank allowed newly-freed individuals to open their own bank account. The Freedmen's Bank records provide researchers information from forms that were required at the time an account was opened. The Freedmen's Bank was established in 17 states with 37 operating branches. The records have been microfilmed and are available at the National Archives; they are also online through HeritageQuest (subscription required) and free at familysearch.org.

Military Records

Military records of African American servicemen have been kept since the American Revolution. During the Civil War, the United States Colored Troops was formed and kept records of the 185,000 members. These records can be found at the National Archives. The National Park Service offers an online Civil War Soldiers and Sailors database which includes the names of individuals who served at nps.gov/civilwar.

Emancipation Petition Records - Washington, DC

In 1862, slave owners and formerly enslaved people were able to post slave schedules in order to receive compensation from the US federal government, as per the Emancipation Act. These records can include names, ages, gender, residence, familial ties, and personal descriptions. These records can be found at the National Archives or on [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) (with a subscription).

Southern Claims Commission

The Southern Claims Commission records contain information about those who lived in the South but remained loyal to the Union during the Civil War. These records can include personal descriptions, military records, letters, diaries, family bible records, wills, testimonies, and probate records. The testimonies were given by those who applied and provide information about family members and neighbors in the county in which the applicant resided. These records can be found at the National Archives or on [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) (with a subscription).

US Census Records

Census records are a valuable resource, but it is important to keep in mind some limitations pertaining to African American records. Although free African American families may be listed in the 1850 and 1860 census, enslaved people were enumerated in a separate schedule, which did not include the individual's name.

Enslaved people who died in the year preceding the 1850 or 1860 census may be listed in the mortality schedules for those census years. Mortality schedules listed the individual's name, age, sex, and birthplace. Census records can be found at the National Archives, online through [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) (with a subscription), or online for free at familysearch.org.

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