



Beginning Southern  
Research-Highlighting VA,  
West VA and African-  
Native American Research

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- Basics of conducting genealogy research
- Southern Records: where to obtain Birth, Death, Will, Federal Population Census and Land records, etc.
- Popular online databases
- Jefferson County Virginia & West Virginia
- Challenges in researching African and Native American roots in the South
- Bringing it all together

# Basics-getting started

- It does not matter who or where in the U.S. you are researching, you need to know the basics about genealogy research, records & resources. Most importantly you need to know how to ask questions, managing your files and document your resources.
- This presentation provides the basics to start researching your family tree in the Southern states (highlighting Virginia and West VA and recognizing the challenges of African & Native American research).

# Who do you start with? YOU!

- Write down your information-Document!
- Who is your oldest living family member?-Call them-  
Today
- Review Oral History, Photos, and initiate sharing  
information

# Southern States & Records

- Also called Southeastern and South-central United States
- Settled by Native Americans, early European settlements of English, Irish, Scottish, French, and German and hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans which later became African-Americans who continued to be slave labor
- The South developed its own customs, culture and cuisines

# Old South

- States: Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, Georgia, North and South Carolina
- African Americans have a long history in the South, they accompanied some of the earliest European settlers to the region. In early 17th century, planters imported Africans for labor. Some were purchased as slaves; many others served terms as indentured servants and could earn their freedom.

# Virginia (Old Dominion)

- Virginia is bordered by Maryland and Washington, DC, to the north and east; the Atlantic Ocean to the east; by North Carolina and Tennessee to the south; by Kentucky to the west; and the now West Virginia to the north and west.

# Virginia Records

- **Birth and Death:** State office has records from January 1853 to December 1896 and since June 14, 1912. Only the cities of Hampton, Newport News and Norfolk have records between 1896 and June 14, 1912.
- **Marriage (State) Address:**  
Division of Vital Records  
P.O. Box 1000  
Richmond, VA 23218-1000. Records since January 1853. Clerk of Court in county or city where license was issued.
- **Divorce-**Clerk of the Court in the city or county where divorce was filed. State has records since Jan 1918

# Virginia-Richmond

- Anyone requesting a vital record must submit a photocopy of their identification.
- Personal check or money order payable to **State Health Department**. Call to check on the current fees, (804) 662-6200. Information on how to obtain certified copies is available via the Internet at the Virginia Dept. of Health.
- Chancery Records-early 18th century through the First World War

# More records

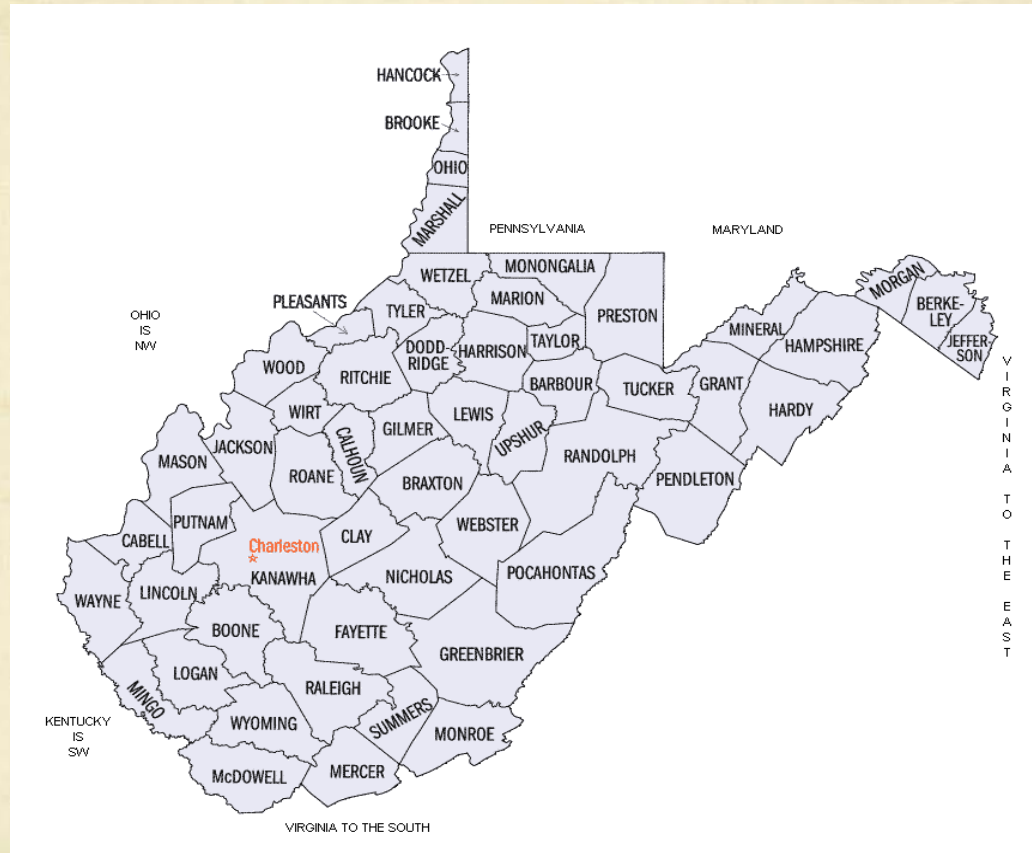
- Library of Virginia
- University of Virginia
- National Archives
- Allen County Public Library
- LDS/Salt Lake City UT, area local Family History Centers
- Military



# West Virginia-Charleston

- After the 1863 Wheeling Convention, 48 counties in the northwest area of Virginia separated to form a new state West Virginia, who remained loyal to the Union.
- Most counties have records from 1853. Some counties also have marriage records from 1870.
- Divorce records are kept by the county clerk of the circuit court. Probate records have been kept by the county courts and are found in deed books and court order books. Naturalization proceedings were recorded in the minutes and dockets of the courts until 1906, since any court could naturalize immigrants. After 1929, only federal courts handled naturalizations.

# West Virginia



# West Virginia

- **Birth and Death**-State office has records since January 1917. For earlier records, write to Clerk of County Court.
- **Marriage**-(State) Records since 1921. Certified copies available from 1964:Vital Registration Office  
Room 165  
350 Capitol Street  
Charleston, WV 25301-3701
- **Divorce**: Index since 1968. Some items may be verified. Clerk of Circuit Court, Chancery Side, in county where divorce was granted.

# West Virginia

- Personal check or money order should be made payable to **Vital Registration**. Verify current fees, call (304) 558-2931. Information on how to obtain certified copies is also available via the Internet at the [West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources website](#).
- West Virginia Archives & History [http://www.wvculture.org/vrr/va\\_select.aspx](http://www.wvculture.org/vrr/va_select.aspx)
- Native American Communities in West Virginia  
<http://www.wvculture.org/arts/ethnic/native.html>

# Jefferson County VA to Jefferson County West VA

- Jefferson County was formed in 1801 from the eastern part of Berkeley County in what was then Virginia and was named for Thomas Jefferson
- The county seat is Charles Town, the courthouse was the site of the trial for the abolitionist John Brown after his 1859 raid on the federal armory in Harpers Ferry.

- **Jefferson County Clerk**  
Courthouse  
Charles Town, WV 25414  
(304) 725-9761
  
- **Jefferson County Historical Society**  
P.O. Box 485  
Charles Town, WV 25414
  
- **Libraries, Museum, Harper's Ferry Historical Association and Bookshop, Funeral Homes, Newspapers**

- Jefferson County USGenWeb  
genealogical resources USGenWeb Archives Jefferson County  
free transcriptions of vital records, deeds, censuses,  
obituaries & other public records Search Death  
Records Online  
West Virginia Division of Culture & History

- Jefferson County Black Preservation Society

<http://jeffctywvblackhistory.org/>

- Deed Books
- Fiduciary Accounts
- Tax lists
- Marriage books
- Land records, etc

# Online Resources

- Vital Stats records: birth, death, marriage, divorce
- Federal Census & State Census\*
- Public records-probate, wills, deeds, tax lists, personal property list, mortgages, bill of sales
- Media Records-newspaper, Obits, Funeral notices
- Military Records
- Headstones, cemetery records
- County Boundaries (Thorndale & Dollarhide's Map Guide)

# County Boundaries (Thorndale & Dollarhide's Map Guide)

- Know about the area you are researching....what county did your county form from?
- Jefferson came from Berkeley, Albemarle from Goochland and Louisa

# Online...

- <http://www.ancestry.com>
- <http://www.afrigeneas.com/>
- <http://www.afrigeneas.com/guide/>
- <http://ccharity.com/>
- <Http://www.worldvitalrecords.com>
- <http://www.familysearch.org>
- <http://freedmensbureau.com/>
- <http://www.rootsweb.com/>

# More...

- <http://www.cyndislist.com/african.htm>
- <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/african/>
- <http://www.familytree.com>
- <http://geneasearch.com/more.htm>
- <http://www.footnote.com/>

# Virginia Slave Records

- <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/african/virginia/>
- Limited Slave records in VA collected by P. A. Miller (by county):  
<http://home.comcast.net/~p.a.miller/genealogy/docs/slaverrecords/va.htm>
- Runaway records-<http://people.uvawise.edu/runaways/>
- <http://etext.virginia.edu/subjects/runaways/1740s.htm>  
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# Schedules, etc.

- Agriculture, Mortality, etc.
- U.S. Federal Population: 1790 -1930
- 1890 Veteran's Schedules
- Slave Schedules
- Freedman's Bank Records (1865-1874)
- 1930 Merchant Seaman

- State Archives: generally located in the state capital.
- County Records: usually located in the county seat. There is always more information in the county courthouses than has been microfilmed by your local genealogical society.
- If the vital records you seek have not been filmed, write to them to find out if the material may be obtained elsewhere. (or check an online resource)
- City-Town Records: Some cities and towns began keeping vital records before counties assumed the responsibility. A letter of inquiry to the town or city clerk may prove beneficial (or check the county genweb or rootsweb internet sites)

2/16/08 Taken from

<http://ce.byu.edu/courses/pe/999016073004/public/start.htm>

- Birth Records : These documents generally include the individual's name, date and place of birth; parents' names and residence.
- Marriage Records: This type of record usually includes the date and place of marriage, names of the bride and bridegroom and their ages, places of residence, witnesses' names, and occasionally parents' names.
- Death Records: This source of information may include some or all of the following: name, age, occupation, residence, and names of parents of the deceased; date, place, and cause of death; date and place of burial; occasionally date and place of birth.

2/16/08 Retrieved from BYU online course:

<http://ce.byu.edu/courses/pe/999016073004/public/start.htm>

# Typical African American Research Records

- Census Records: 1850 Slave Census & 1860 Slave Census, etc
- Bibles, Letters, Inventories, Property Records-Owners, Oral history, Slave Narratives
- Wills, Bill of Sale, Obits, Headstones
- Military records, References, narratives, books, dissertations

What are the challenges you will face?

# Challenges in Genealogy, including African American and Native American Research

- Records not recorded into public record
- Records destroyed
- Denial-don't want to know, it's the past
- Don't want to share the information
- Received information that is not the truth or reliable-questionable Oral History
- They are located in other people's records

# tips

- Don't assume anything
- Write down the different spellings of the surnames (Goens/Goins/Goings/Gowins/Gowens/

Gowings)

- Ask questions, document, document...listen to oral history, take notes, listen and ask questions
- Research the entire family\*
- Don't assume all African-Americans have Native American roots/do your research, but you need to be aware if your ancestors lived from Maine down to Florida, close to the coast, there is a high probability there are Native American roots.
- Prove your research, learn about the area you are researching
- Chat with those who have done it

# Records and where to find them...

- Recorded property & probate records, tax list-  
Courthouse
- Historical societies, libraries, archives, attic's
- Look for the plantation owner-who were the neighbors
- Plantation owner-find out if there is any information regarding the plantation in local city or county records, historical society
- Look for plantation owner descendants-maybe they are looking
- Google "surnames"

- Locate others searching the same surname and areas
- Wills, estate records, manumission (freeing of a slave) documents, insurance records
- Church and religious affiliation, check library records, special collections
- National archives-records that pertain to American Slavery and the International Slave Trade:  
(<http://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/slavery-records.html>)

- National & State Archives
- Library of Congress (two booklets)
- State Libraries, College Libraries
- Freedman Bureau Records (marriage, savings and trust company, branch offices)
- Newspapers and Historical Societies
- Join listserv's (rootsweb, afrigeneas)
- Plantation Records-family holdings

# More records...

- Emancipation papers (freeing a person from someone else)
- Slave narratives, families genealogy records
- Plantation records (check out Edward Ball's book)
- City and County directories
- Public notices or records, local courthouse and city hall's
- Find resources where Slave research has been successful...

# Native American

- Native American Communities in West Virginia

<http://www.wvculture.org/arts/ethnic/native.html>

- Check out Angela Walton-Raji's page:

<http://www.african-nativeamerican.com/>

- Virginia's first Native American's:

<http://virginiaindians.pwnet.org/>

- Saponi's <http://www.saponitown.com/>

# Bringing It All Together

- Join and participate in a genealogical society (national, state and local (Central VA, Afro-American Historical Genealogical Society, Family History Center, Native American groups, etc.)
- Attend genealogy training and conferences (keep a record of your attendance)
- Share your experiences
- Ask for help & Set up sharing time

Remember...

○ Your life story is your legacy

# References

- Ancestry.com
- Tony Burroughs book-Black Roots
- WV Archives and History
- Library of Virginia