

# Black and White and Read All Over: Delving into African American Newspapers

“The newspaper is a greater treasure to the people than uncounted millions of gold.”  
— Henry Ward Beecher

Newspapers served as the television, radio, and social media of earlier times, acting as the primary means of disseminating information at local, state, national, and global levels.

## Newspaper History

In 1690, the initial newspaper in the American colonies, named *Publick Occurrences*, made its debut in Boston. It was published without official approval, leading to the arrest of the publisher and the destruction of all copies, save for one fortunate surviving example unearthed in the British Library in 1845. The first prosperous newspaper, the *Boston News-Letter*, was established by postmaster John Campbell in 1704.

In 1827, *Freedom's Journal* emerged as the inaugural African American newspaper in the United States, originating in New York City as a weekly publication advocating for abolitionism. Following its inception, over 3,000 African American newspapers have come and gone throughout history.

## Why Newspaper Research

Newspapers provide us with the opportunity to peer into the everyday existence and societal norms of our forebears, offering comprehensive insights into our ancestors and their familial connections. They prove instrumental in overcoming genealogical roadblocks and uncovering the narrative of their lives. Newspapers can effectively stand in for missing vital and civil records, bridging the information gap in situations where official records were not yet maintained or where these records have been lost.

## Types of Records One Might Find:

Births/Christenings	Estate Notices/Settlements	Unclaimed Letters
Engagements/Weddings	Personal Notices	Announcements
Anniversaries	Socials/Club Meetings	Real Estate Transactions
Family Reunions	School events/Attendance	Church News
Deaths/Funerals/Obits	Rolls/Graduates	Slave Runaways
Thank You Notices	Ship Arrivals	Indentured servants
Disasters/Accidents	Military Lists	Civil War battles
Lists of people traveling	News from Soldiers	Information Wanted Ads

## Two Databases provided for On-Site Research

*Accessible Archives African American Newspapers* - <https://www.accessible.com/>

Search or browse this unique collection of 19th century African-American newspapers, including *The Christian Recorder* (1861-1891, 1893-1902), *The Colored American/Weekly Advocate* (1837-1841), *Douglass' Monthly* (1859-1863), *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (1851-1855), *The Freedmen's Record* (1865-1874), *Freedom's Journal* (1827-1829), *The National Era* (1847-1860), *The Negro Business League Herald* (1909), *The North Star* (1847-1851), and *Provincial Freeman* (1854-1857).

User guide:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e90acdb4071b32e8bf66813/t/64dc1229fa08dc4155885456/1692144170051/AAI-User-Manual-4.0.pdf#SEARCHING>

*African American Historical Newspapers* - <https://www.proquest.com/>

A collection of nine distinct African-American newspapers, featuring the *Atlanta Daily World* (1931-2003), *The Baltimore Afro-American* (1893-1988), *Chicago Defender* (1910-1975), *Cleveland Call and Post* (1934-1991), *Los Angeles Sentinel* (1934-2005), *New York Amsterdam News* (1922-1993), *The Norfolk Journal and Guide* (1921-2003), *The Philadelphia Tribune* (1912-2001), and *Pittsburgh Courier* (1911-2002).

User Guide: <https://proquest.libguides.com/proquestplatform>

### **Finding Newspapers**

Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/directory-of-us-newspapers-in-american-libraries/about-this-collection/>

### **Learn More**

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