

Researching Enslaved & Recently Free Northerners

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URLs Mentioned in Talk

- Digital Archive of Massachusetts Anti-Slavery and Anti-Segregation Petitions dataverse.harvard.edu/?q=&fq0=authorName_ss%3A%22Digital+Archive+of+Massachusetts+Anti-Slavery+and+Anti-Segregation+Petitions%2C+Massachusetts+Archives%2C+Boston+MA%22&types=dataverses%3Adatasets&sort=dateSort&order=desc
- 1771 Massachusetts Tax Inventory online database (index only): sites.fas.harvard.edu/~hsb41/masstax/masstax.cgi
- 1745 Massachusetts Slave Census primaryresearch.org/slave-census-all/
- The Legal Map for Interracial Relationships, 1662-1967 www.lovingday.org/legal-map
- FamilySearch.org: Records and index-only databases from around the world. Many of the most detailed record sets are unindexed or only partially indexed.
- Fold3.com: Originally a general research site, now focused mostly on military records. Includes extensive records from the National Archives relating to the Revolutionary War. Subscription site; some archives have on-site access.
- Old Fulton Post Cards: Originally focused on New York newspapers from 1850 forward, this free one-man-run site has expanded both backwards in time and geographically. Digitizes over 200,000 pages per month. fultonhistory.com
- Chronicling America: The Library of Congress's free site digitizing newspapers from 1836 to 1922. chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/
- GenealogyBank.com: A subscription site that includes a collection of African-American newspapers from the 1820's to recently.
- Don's List: Free site with directories, gazetteers, and more. www.donslist.net
- Blog post: "No Negro Shall Have the Right" – The Black Struggle for the Vote Across the North and South" (looking at the issue from 1776 forward) www.thiscruelwar.com/2016/03/10/no-negro-shall-have-the-right-the-black-struggle-for-the-vote-across-the-north-and-south/
- "Black Loyalists" from the National Archives [UK] www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/work_community/loyalists.htm
- "Black Loyalists Exodus to Nova Scotia (1783)" www.blackpast.org/gah/black-loyalists-exodus-nova-scotia-1783
- "Slave Tenure Under the Royalls" www.royallhouse.org/slavery/slave-tenure-under-the-royalls/
- "The Stephen Jacob House" (includes information on Jacob illegally owning enslaved people in Vermont): historicwindsor.com/pdf/Jacob_House.pdf

Books and Articles Mentioned in Talk

- *The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont, 1777-1810: Essays and Primary Sources* by Harvey Amani Whitfield (Vermont: Vermont Historical Society, 2014).
- *To Plead Our Own Cause: African-Americans in Massachusetts and the Making of the Antislavery Movement* by Christopher Cameron (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2014).
- *Slavery in the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts* by Robert H. Romer (Florence, Massachusetts: Levellers Press, 2009).
- *Unfreedom: Slavery and Dependence in Eighteenth-Century Boston* by Jared Ross Hardesty (being released by NYU Press in April 2016).
- *The Pynchon Papers*, 2 vols., edited by Carl Bridenbaugh (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, vol. 1 in 1982 & vol. 2 in 1985).
- “Angola and Elizabeth: An African Family in the Massachusetts Bay Colony” by Melinde Lutz Sanborn, *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (March 1999), pp. 119-129.
- Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic
- Site Historic Resource Study by J. L. Bell; available at www.nps.gov/long/learn/news/upload/George-Washington-s-Headquarters-and-Home-Cambridge-Massachusetts.pdf
- "Hunting for Hidden History: How Slavery Came to the Town of York" by Hilary Dawson, *Families* (Ontario Genealogical Society's magazine), February 2012 issue, pp. 26-31.

A Few Additional Resources

- African-American Intellectual History Society’s blog: Covering all time periods in African-American history. www.aaihs.org/blog/
- Slavery in the North: A solid starting place for laws regarding enslavement and free people of color – though double-check, especially regarding the slow process of Northern emancipation. slavenorth.com/
- “Thoughts on the Proliferation of Ahistorical Irish Slaves Articles and Memes” by Liam Hogan, an introduction to the topic: medium.com/@Limerick1914/thoughts-on-the-proliferation-of-ahistorical-irish-slaves-articles-and-memes-70889400c819#.fk9m9tq6x

Some common misperceptions

From "Researching Enslaved and Recently Free Northerners"
presented by Liz Loveland at History Camp Boston 2016

1. Only the wealthiest Northerners owned enslaved people
2. People always acted legally
3. Full emancipation occurred immediately after a law was passed or a case was decided
4. Historical documents always represent “the truth”
5. “Servant” always or never meant “slave” in the colonies
6. Persons of color with the same name are definitely the same person

A brief recap: Working with sources

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- Look in as many record sets and repositories as possible for the research subject and any person, place, and organization associated with them.
- Always do your best to work from a published work or a transcription back to the original document. With each step removed from the original document, the potential for errors increases.
- Don't rely only on indexes.
- Don't believe everything you read: Consider possible problems and biases with every source, and verify everything elsewhere if at all possible.
- There is lots of help available for reading old handwriting if needed; check for books and tutorial websites on palaeography.

A brief recap: Strategies for research

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- Track the research subject, any identified family and associates, and for an enslaved person also their owner(s).
- Enslaved people may not be mentioned by name in records about them, so try to work around this.
- Determine as many sources as possible for the time and place you are researching.
- Search in all the types of sources you have identified – online, offline, and printed. Don't rely just on indexes.
- Expand your search for sources beyond that time and place to see what else you can find.
- Be alert in records for the "dog that didn't bark."
- Keep in mind that people did not always act legally.
- The North was not a bubble: People came in and out.
- Remember that if someone disappears from records in one location, these are a few of the most likely reasons:
 - Because they are no longer there, whether voluntarily or not
 - Because they changed their name
 - Because they died