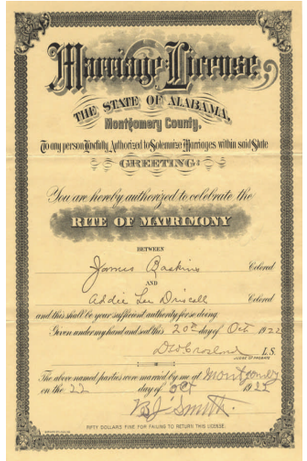
# Research Techniques

Researching your African-American ancestors requires the same techniques as researching families of any other ethnic background, especially when using records created after 1865. However, enslaved African-Americans will generally not be listed by their own names in records created before 1865. Learning the name of the slave owner may provide the necessary key to other records which may contain information about your enslaved ancestors. This brochure will provide tips to help you discover your family roots.

# Beginning Your Search

- Begin your research before you visit the Alabama Department of Archives and History.
- Begin with yourself and work backwards, recording what you know about each family member, such as dates of birth and death, where he or she lived, parents' names, names of spouse and children, date and place of marriage.



Marriage License

THE STATE OF ALABAMA,
Montgomery County.

To any person duly Authorized to Solemnize Marriages within said State

GREETING!

You are hereby authorized to celebrate the

RITE OF MATRIMONY

BETWEEN

James Gastine Colored

AND

Addie Lee Driscell Colored

and this shall be your sufficient authority for so doing.

Given under my hand and seal this 20th day of Oct. 1922

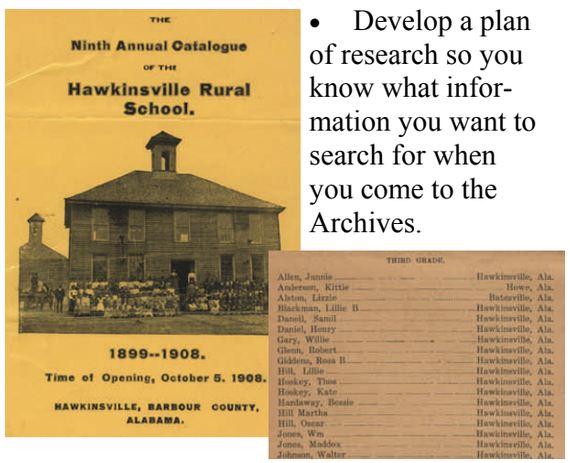
D. B. Crosen LS
Judge of Probate

The above named parties were married by me at Montgomery on the 22 day of Oct 1922

R. L. Smith

FIFTY DOLLARS FINE FOR FAILING TO RETURN THIS LICENSE.

- Check records at home for information. Family Bibles; birth, death and marriage certificates; obituaries; school records; letters; baptismal or other church records; and legal records, such as wills and deeds, can be helpful.
- Interview older relatives and family friends. Oral history interviews may help establish family lines and locations of land ownership or enslavement. Ask about any nicknames family members might have used. If oral tradition has passed it down, make a note of possible slave owners' names and locations.
- Record information on an ancestral chart and family group sheets. Many blank forms are available on the internet at Ancestry.com or FamilySearch.org or at the Archives.



THE
Ninth Annual Catalogue
OF THE
Hawkinsville Rural School.

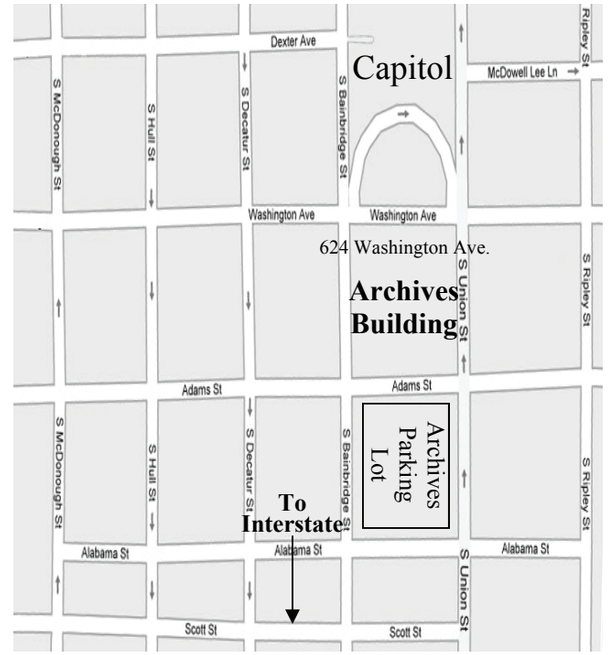
1899--1908.

Time of Opening, October 5. 1908.

HAWKINSVILLE, BARBOUR COUNTY, ALABAMA.

THIRD GRADE.

| | |
|---|---|
| Allen, Jannie | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Anderson, Kittie | Howe, Ala. |
| Alston, Lizzie | Batesville, Ala. |
| Blackman, Lillie B | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Daniel, Samil | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Daniel, Henry | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Gary, Willie | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Glenn, Robert | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Giddens, Ross B | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Hill, Lillie | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Hookey, Thes | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Hookey, Kate | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Hardaway, Bessie | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Hill Martha | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Hill, Oscar | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Jones, Wm | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Jones, Maddox | Hawkinsville, Ala. |
| Johnson, Walter | Hawkinsville, Ala. |





**Directions:**

From I-85 South, take exit 1/Union St. and bear to the right onto Union St. At the 3rd traffic light take a left onto Washington Ave. The Archives building is on the left. Metered parking is available on the street. **Free parking is available in the Adams Street parking lot. To proceed to the parking lot from the front of the Archives building, take a left on Bainbridge Ave. and left on Adams St. The parking lot is directly across the street from the Archives/War Memorial building.**

From I-65 North or South, exit onto I-85 North. Get in the far right lane and exit at the Court St. exit. Stay in the left lane on the service road and follow it to Union St. Take a left onto Union St. At the 4th traffic light take a left onto Washington Ave. The Archives building is on the left. Follow directions above to parking lot on Adams St.

Alabama Department of Archives and History
P. O. Box 300100
Montgomery, AL 36130
Phone: 334-242-4435
Website: www.archives.alabama.gov
Research Room Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 8:30-4:30

# AFRICAN AMERICAN ROOTS IN ALABAMA

## Resources at the Alabama Department of Archives and History

ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY
ESTABLISHED 1901

**Mission Statement:**

*"We tell the story of the people of Alabama by preserving records and artifacts of historical value and promoting a better understanding of Alabama history."*

# Resources at ADAH

- ***Federal Population Census Records*** are where you begin your family history research. The first federal population census was in 1790 and is taken every ten years. The latest federal census available to the public is the 1930 census. Start your research by working backward through the census records. ADAH provides access to all the federal census records for each decade for every state through a subscription to Ancestry.com. Working through the census records can help establish where your ancestors lived, when and possibly where they married, how many children they had, their parents' names, as well as other information**. It is important to know that enslaved people were not recorded by name on census records. However, free blacks were included by name on the census before 1870. Starting in 1870 all African Americans were listed by name. When researching census records look for changing surnames. Some African Americans changed surnames several times.**
- ***Other Federal Census Records*****,** such as the slave schedules, agricultural schedules and mortality schedules, may also provide clues for family history research. The 1850 and 1860 slave schedules provide enumerations of the numbers of enslaved people on each plantation. The slave schedules list the name of the slave owner and enumerate the number of slaves owned in categories of color, age, and gender. There is also a category for slaves manumitted and for runaways. **The slave schedules do not list enslaved people by name**. The 1850 and 1860 Mortality Schedules list names and details of every individual who died in the year before the census was taken, including those enslaved and their owners. The 1870 agricultural census gives details about farmers of all races and their farms, giving a glimpse at rural life in the years after emancipation.
- ***Alabama State Census Records*** - Conducted by the state of Alabama, state census records enumerated the population of Alabama in 1850, 1855, and 1866**. As with the federal census records, enslaved persons were not enumerated by name. African-American heads of household were first enumerated by name in the 1866 census. This census is very important because it was the first census taken of newly freed African Americans in Alabama**. Unfortunately, the census only lists the names of the heads of households and does not include names of other family members.
- ***Local Government Records*** are another major type of record to search. They are available on microfilm in the Research Room for every county in Alabama and include records created by local government offices from the early 1800s to the 1950s. The types of local government records available vary from county to county, but they may include marriages, deeds, wills/estate case files/inventories, divorce records, guardianship records, military service records, and some birth and death registers. The ADAH Local Government Records on Microfilm database at www.archives.alabama.gov lists specific records available for each county. **Records documenting African Americans as citizens began in 1865 after the end of slavery. In many of the county records, African Americans are listed as "colored" and names may have "Col" of "c" by them. Counties often recorded information for blacks and whites in separate volumes, or in separate parts of the same volume, or together with the race designated in the record. Before 1865, you may find records of your enslaved ancestors if you know the name of the possible slave owner. If the slave owner died prior to 1865, a list of slaves by given name, often by age and value, will be listed in the property records found in estate, inventory, will, or probate records of the slave owner. Deed records may have transactions in which the enslaved were sold or transferred as property.**
- ***State Government Records*** of potential use to family historians include the 1867 voter registration records, professional licensure files, state/local official commissions registers, military service records, and state and county prison records. Surname Clippings Files, which largely consist of newspapers clippings and family history information. Public Information Subject Files, which are arranged by subject, county, and military conflict, are also available. State government records are arranged by the creating agency. A listing of these records is available in our on-line catalogue - ADAHCAT - and a complete and detailed listing is available in the Research Room. **The 1867 Voter Registration records are very important in African American family research. This record was created right after emancipation. It is the first state record listing African-American males 21 years of age or older.** Prison records provide a wealth of personal information about prisoners and their families. Since the Alabama penal system was used as a means of social control in late 19th and early 20th centuries, it should always be considered as a potential source of family history information.
- ***Newspaper Collections*** at the ADAH are the most extensive in the state, and include many African-American newspapers. The earliest newspaper in the collection is dated 1811. A listing of our newspapers, both on microfilm and hardbound, is available in our newspaper databases at www.archives.alabama.gov. You can search by newspaper title, county of publication, or by type such as African American newspapers. Since indices are generally not available for newspapers, it is important to have a fairly specific date or time frame in which to search. Prior to 1865, the advertisement section of many newspapers contain notices of runaways or slave sales.
- ***Private Manuscript Collections*** include not only private papers of individuals and families, which may consist of correspondence, diaries and some family Bibles, but also Alabama city directories for many cities, church records, and records and publications of schools, associations, and organizations. Private record collections from the antebellum time period may contain bills of sale for slaves, slave inventories, and other plantation records. City directories are good sources of information and often designate residents by race and occupation.
- ***Books*** are another great resource when doing family history research at ADAH. The books available in the Research Room include family histories and state, local, and county histories for Alabama, as well as for many other states. Each Alabama county has its own shelf with books that have been compiled from various sources such as marriage records, cemetery indices, newspaper abstracts, and census abstracts. Each Alabama county has its own *Heritage* book. Many books are not in the Research Room and our on-line catalogue - ADAHCAT - has a complete listing. These books may provide important information on the history of the area in which your family lived and the customs which might have affected your African-American ancestors.
- ***The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, & Abandoned Lands*** was established in 1865 to care for freedmen and destitute whites after the Civil War The Bureau was divided into five departments: abandoned and confiscated lands; records, labor, schools and supplies; finance; medical; and bounties. The purpose of the Bureau was to develop systems of compensated labor; provide for the destitute, aged and sick; provide schools for refugees and freedmen; protect loyal refugees; and adjudicate civil disputes involving freedmen. These records are available on microfilm at ADAH and are a rich source of information on the Reconstruction era.
- ***ADAH Digital Collections*** provide online access to photographs, state publications, and other digitized records at www.archives.alabama.gov. The photograph collections contain significant photographs of early 20th-century African-American schools.