Researching African-American Genealogy: An Introduction to the Records
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General Procedures

1. Start with yourself and work back.
   A. Interview the oldest relatives first
   B. Video- or audio-tape interviews
   C. Don't take family traditions at face value
2. Organize your work - Ancestry charts – for recording direct ancestors
   A. Family group sheets – for recording children of direct ancestors
   B. Numbering systems – Stradonitz, NEHGR, NGS
   C. Genealogy programs – many good ones for purchase, some good free ones – Brother's Keeper, at http://www.bkwin.org/
3. Document, document, document
   A. Sources as complete as possible
   B. You may need to double-check facts
4. Trace both paternal and maternal lines as they both contributed equally to who YOU are
5. Trace collateral lines, as these may give clues on main lines
   A. Often, brothers can help trace female lines
   B. Useful if some left more records than others
6. Useful records for both European- and African-American families include
   A. Census, 1870-1940
   B. Marriage records, 1865-present
   C. Death records, 1911-present, with some prior
   D. Deeds and wills, more common as time passed
   E. City directories – prior to 1945, Danville listed African-Americans with (c)
   F. Newspaper obituaries – again, more common and more complete as time passed

The Bad News -- Difficulties

1. In the South, records more scarce than in the North for both European- and African-Americans
2. Church records almost non-existent
3. Obituaries for African-Americans less common than for European-Americans
4. Lack of published materials, researchers must use primary sources
5. Lack of organizations, though this is changing, DBCAAHS, AAGGKY, others, organized within the past 5 years or so
6. Inaccuracies in the records that DO exist -- Birth dates may differ wildly from record to record -- Earliest records most accurate, latest least accurate for births
7. Census records only as good as the information given to census taker

The Good News -- Records Useful to African-Americans

1. Census, every 10 years, 1870 on, and 1790-1860 for free African-Americans
2. Vital records record B, M and D of all, regardless of race.
3. KY – beginning in 1911. Death certs are online 1911-1953 at www.ancestry.com (PAY SITE, shows actual document) or www.familysearch.org (FREE but only abstracts information)
4. Death index to 2000 also online
5. Online newspapers may be helpful – Kentucky Digital Library has many at http://kdl.kyvl.org/?f%5Bformat%5D%5B%5D=newspapers
6. KDL also has oral history collections at http://kdl.kyvl.org/?f%5Bformat%5D%5B%5D=oral+histories
7. Funeral programs

8. Tax records for owners
9. Wills and deeds of owners
10. The US Census –
    A. 1870 - critical date, represents beginning of difficult research period, pre-1870 world of slavery
    B. Do your homework in post-1870 records
    C. From 1870 on, listed by name to the present
    D. 1870 may be difficult as slavery only ended 5 years prior, names still subject to change
    E. From 1850-1870, slaves only listed as numbers, with age (often inaccurate), gender, and race
    F. Prior to 1850, only numbers in age (very inaccurate) and gender groups
    G. Names – many took owner's surname, but don't assume – look for documentation; family in Garrard Co where half the brothers took owner's last name, other half took wife's maiden name
    H. Free Persons of Color – 1860 records 200,112 free blacks in North, 287,958 in South, with KY having very high numbers; many had been free for some time.
11. Proof of free status – Boyle Co Order Book #2 lists dozens of FPC; other counties may have these in deed records or even in separate volumes. Proof of freedom protected free blacks somewhat.
12. Deeds and wills – VERY few African-Americans left deeds or wills, as they seldom owned property. As time passed, more and more are recorded though.
13. Vital Records
    A. Prior to 1911 in KY, few exist – but CHECK ANYWAY.
    B. Births and deaths not generally recorded in KY until 1911
    C. SOME scattered birth records prior – Alex Givens, 1859, Lincoln Co, lists mother and "owner or father"
    D. Marriage Records – as slave marriages were not recognized, they were not recorded prior to 1866.
    E. "Declaration of Marriage", Book 1C in Boyle Co, lists couples who had been together "as man and wife" allowing them to register their living arrangement as legal.
14. Identifying Last Owner
    A. Don't ASSUME your ancestor too the name of his or her owner – only ¼ to 1/3 generally did
    B. Sources for finding owner – many are online, some are indexed
       1. Freedman's Savings and Trust Company
       2. Compiled Military Service Records
       3. Ex-slave narratives
       4. Southern Claims Commission
       5. Military enlistment records
15. Freedman's Bureau records – seldom indexed, but may be a gold mine
    A. Freedmen's Bureau established to transition nation from war to peace.
    B. As the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, operated from 1865 to 1868, and was reauthorized from 1868 to 1872 with limited operations.
    C. Activities –
       1. Drawing up and enforcing labor contracts, Registering people and supervising work details
       2. Legalizing slave marriages, Processing Civil War military claims
       3. Establishing schools (5-6 Freedmen schools in Boyle County), Conducting trials for complaints, outrages, and murders
       4. Managing, leasing, and selling land abandoned by Confederates and sympathizers

D. Field Office Records (locally, Danville, Stanford, Lebanon), much better genealogy source than other, higher-level records

16. Military Records
    A. United States Colored Troops (USCT)
        1. Camp Nelson was 2nd largest recruiting camp in the North
        2. Recruited infantry, cavalry, and artillery units
        3. Recruits came from all over central KY
        4. Muster rolls often give place of birth, age, height, unit, former owner
    B. Pension Records
        1. *Index to Compiled Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served with the United States Colored Troops* (*CMSR*)
        2. Because of name problems, starting with pension records not military records is often best approach
        3. The *General Index to Pension Files* is where to start
    C. National Park Service Soldiers and Sailors website, at http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm is also a good place to start
    D. The Regular Army
        1. After the Civil War, many veterans enlisted in 1866 into the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantries, commonly referred to as "The Buffalo Soldiers"
        2. Many volunteered to serve in the Spanish-American War (1898), the Philippine Insurrection (1899)
        3. Draft registration records for WW1 are online
        4. Many applied for pensions, included in *General Index to Pension Files, 1861–1934.*

Online Sources - Free

BOYLE COUNTY:
    Danville Boyle County African American Historical Society, page for History - http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~kydaahs/history.htm
    Boyle County Genealogy and History - http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~kyboyle2/Index.htm, note especially the African-American Records page.

KENTUCKY:
    Kentucky Record Collections at Familysearch.org - https://familysearch.org/search/collection/uri=http://hr-search-api:8080/searchapi/search/collection/uri=http://hr-search-api:8080/searchapi/search/collection/1932431/uri=http://hr-search-api:8080/searchapi/search/collection/1932431/?page=1&countryId=36. Some are indexed, others only browsable.
    Kentucky GenWeb - http://www.kygenweb.net/
    Kentucky Historical Society - http://history.ky.gov/research-genealogy/
    Notable Kentucky African Americans Database, at UK - http://nkaa.uky.edu/

NATIONAL:
    Familysearch.org - https://familysearch.org/search
    African American Cemeteries Online - http://www.prairiebluff.com/aacemetery
    African American Family Histories and Related Works in the Library of Congress, Research Guide No. 34 by Paul Connor, Washington, 1998 - http://www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/bib_guid/aframer
    African Genealogy Ring - http://x.webring.com/hub?ring=afamgenring
    Afrigeneas.com - http://www.afrigeneas.com/
    Christine's Genealogy Website - http://www.ccharity.com/
    Cyberpursuits - http://www.cyberpursuits.com/gen/ethnic-afam.asp
    Cyndi's List, African-American - http://www.cyndislist.com/african.htm
    Doll's Genealogy Website - http://www.dollsgen.com
    Freedmens Bureau Online - http://www.freedmensbureau.com
    Large Slaveholders of 1860 and African American Surname Matches from 1870 by Tom Blake, 2001-2003 - http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~ajac
    Lest We Forget - http://www.coax.net/people/lwf
    People of Color in the Old South - http://www.tngenweb.org/tncolor

Online Sources - Paid

    Ancestry.com - http://home.ancestry.com/. Some of their resources are free, however.
    Fold3 - http://www.fold3.com/. Mostly military records and newspapers. Search is free, but access to most actual documents requires membership.