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LOCAL HISTORY & GENEALOGY

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Rochester's African-American History

Research Guide

SCOPE

This guide is intended to assist in locating materials and information in the Rochester Public Library about African-American history in Rochester. There are too many individuals to list separately; however, this guide will help get you started. Materials that are available for checkout from other divisions are also listed below. Ask at the reference desk if you have any questions about a particular item.

INTRODUCTION

The Rochester region is well-known for its ties to former slave, abolitionist, orator, and publisher Frederick Douglass, who made his home here from 1847 to 1872. Aside from its well-deserved place in abolitionist history, however, Rochester has a rich and varied past that is alive with stories of notable African-American citizens who helped contribute to a more progressive way of thinking not only in Rochester, but in Western New York and the state as a whole.

There is **Asa Dunbar**, said to be the first African-American settler, who cleared land for his farm in Irondequoit (near present-day Winton Road North) in 1795. **Austin Steward**, a runaway slave who came to Rochester in 1816 and opened his own meat market on what is now West Main Street. Or **Frank Stewart**, who started the first African-American baseball team in 1866, called the Unexpected. (Frederick Douglass's son Charles is rumored to have been a member.) Activist **Hester C. Jeffrey** came to Rochester in 1891 and founded a number of local African-American women's clubs, including the Susan B. Anthony Club for Colored Women. **Isabella Dorsey** incorporated the Dorsey Home for Dependent Colored Children in 1917. **Dr. Charles T. Lunsford**, Rochester's first licensed African-American physician, opened his private practice at 574 Clarissa Street in 1921. The following year, **Dr. Van Tuly Levy** became the first licensed African-American dentist in Rochester. The city's first African-American architect, **Thomas Boyde, Jr.**, joined the Siegmund Firestone Architectural Firm in 1930. Boyde was the chief architect for the Monroe Community Home and Infirmary and contributed to the design of the

Rundel Memorial Library, the Great Lake Press Building, and the Strathallan, to name a few. In 1931, **Beatrice Amaza Howard** earned the distinction of being the first African-American woman to graduate from the University of Rochester. **Howard Coles**, who founded the *Frederick Douglass Voice* newspaper in 1934, was a noted historian, journalist, activist, and expert on the writings of Frederick Douglass. In 1948, **Charles Henry Price** became the first African-American member of the Rochester Police Department. Price became the first African-American captain in the department 30 years later. **Kathryn Green Hawkins**, the first African-American woman in the Rochester Police Department in 1956, was promoted to lieutenant in 1964. **Dr. Freddie Thomas**, scientist, inventor, biologist, and scholar, moved to Rochester in 1952 and is known for his pioneering research in genetics and plastic surgery at the University of Rochester. Internationally renowned, Tony Award-winning choreographer **Garth Fagan** moved to Rochester in 1970. He still resides in Rochester, serving as Artistic Director and President of Garth Fagan Dance. (Sources: *Rochester History* (various issues); *African-American Who's Who, Past & Present, Greater Rochester Area*, 1998.)

These are only a few of the many unique individuals who helped contribute not only to Rochester's growth as a city, but also to its reputation in the advancement of science, technology, scholarship, and the arts. Many more await the light of discovery.

Key:

L/H = Local History Division (these materials do not circulate)

BUS = Business & Social Sciences Division – 4th floor, Bausch & Lomb Public Library Building (these materials circulate and may be checked out)

RMC = Reynolds Media Center – 1st floor, Bausch & Lomb Building (these materials circulate and may be checked out)

BOOKS

L/H Rqr323.1747 A425s Allen, Colwyn W. *The State of Black Rochester*. Rochester, N.Y.: Urban League of Rochester, Inc., 1978.

L/H Rr326 C693c Coles, Howard W. *The Cradle of Freedom; a History of the Negro in Rochester, Western New York and Canada*. Rochester, N.Y., Oxford Press, publishers; Riverside Book Bindery, 1941-.

L/H-OS Rr974.789 C693c year 1939/40 Coles, Howard W. *City Directory of Negro Business and Progress*. Rochester, N.Y.: Howard W. Coles, 1939-. Also available online: http://www.libraryweb.org/~digitized/miscdir/City_Directory_of_Negro_Business_and_Progress_1939-1940.pdf

L/H Rr974.789 D815c Du Bois, Eugene E. *The City of Frederick Douglass: Rochester's African-American People and Places*. Rochester, N.Y.: Landmark Society of Western New York, 1994.

L/H r286.1747 D815u DuBois, Eugene E. *The Urban Black Church and the Changing Metropolis: A Social History of the Mount Olivet Baptist Church*. [Rochester, N.Y.: Trustees, Mount Olivet Baptist Church], c1990.

- L/H
Rqr326
P367r
Episcopal Diocese of Rochester. *Report of the Bishop's Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester To Study the Work of FIGHT*. [Rochester, N.Y.: The Diocese, 1967].
- L/H-OS
Rqr326
H118w
Hacker, Harold S. *Who Is Saul Alinsky?* [Rochester, N.Y.?: s.n.], 1965.
- L/H
Rrq974.789
H232h
Hampton, Sam. *My Mother's Journey: A Documentary*. [Alexandria, VA: Sam Hampton, 2009].
- L/H-OS
Rqr305.896
H314s
Harris, Flora. *The Story of the Rochester, N.Y. Branch, NAACP, 1919-1959*. [Rochester, N.Y.: The Author, 1959].
- L/H-OS
RrJ29j
James, Thomas. *Life of Rev. Thomas James*. Rochester, N.Y.: Post-Express Print. Co., 1886.
- L/H
Rr286
J68m
Johnson, Robert R. *The Mountain of Olivet: A Historical Sketch of Negro Baptists in Rochester, New York*. [Submitted towards credits for Theological degree at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School.] Rochester, N.Y.: [The School, 1946].
- L/H
Rqr326
M154r
McKelvey, Blake. *The Rochester Riots: a Crisis in Civil Rights, Juvenile Delinquency, or "Cityatrics"?* [S.l.: s.n., 1964].
- L/H
Rr974.789
M717af
Molaire, Mike F. *African-American Who Was First, Greater Rochester Area*. Rochester, N.Y.: Norex Publications, c1999.
- L/H
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1998
Molaire, Mike F. *African-American Who's Who, Past & Present, Greater Rochester Area*. Rochester, N.Y.: Norex Publications, c1998.
- L/H
Rr277.4789
O96a
Overacker, Ingrid. *The African-American Church Community in Rochester, New York, 1900-1940*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1998.
- L/H
Rrq331.833
P394s
Pemberton, Prentiss L. *A Survey of Interracial Housing Attitudes in White Neighborhoods of Rochester and Suburbs*. [Rochester, N.Y.?: s.n.], 1961.
- L/H
Rr326
Q1b
Quarles, Benjamin. *Black Abolitionists*. New York, Oxford University Press [1969].
- L/H
Rr365.34
R323r
Reed, Austin. *The Life and the Adventures of a Haunted Convict*. New York: Random House, [2016].
- L/H
Rrq338.7089
B627b
Rochester Business Opportunities, comp. *Black Business Directory: Greater Metropolitan Area, Rochester, New York*. Rochester, N.Y.: Rochester Business Opportunities, [1969?].

- L/H-OS Rochester (N.Y.) City School District. *Human Rights Activists: Role Models in the Rochester Community*. [Rochester, N.Y.: City School District, 1972?].
Rqr920.073
R676c
- L/H Sanders, Joe L., ed. *Rochester Black History 1795-1990*. Rochester, N.Y. (218 Atkinson St.): Sanders Publishing, [1990].
Rqr974.789
R6763r
- L/H Sell, Ralph R. *Race and Underclass in a Middle-sized Metropolitan Area: Rochester, New York in the 1980s*. Rochester, N.Y.: Center for Governmental Research, Inc., 1991.
Rrq305.569
S467r
- L/H Sethi, S. Prakash. *Business Corporations and the Black Man; an Analysis of Social Conflict: the Kodak-FIGHT Controversy*. Scranton, Pa., Chandler Pub. Co. [1970].
Rr658.3
S495b
- L/H Srole, Ira. *Inner City Sanctuary: The History and Theology of Rochester's Black Jews*. Rochester, N.Y.: Srole, 1978.
Rqr296.83
S774i
- L/H *The State of Black Rochester 2013: Education + Employment = Equity*. Rochester, NY: Rochester Area Community Foundation's African American Giving Institute, 2013.
Rr305.896
S7972s
Also in BUS 305.896 S7972s
- L/H Steward, Austin. *Twenty-two Years a Slave, and Forty Years a Freeman*. New York: Negro Universities Press, [1856]. Available online:
RrS849s
http://www.libraryweb.org/~digitized/books/Twenty_Two_Years_A_Slave.pdf
Also in BUS 306.362 S849t
- L/H Stone, Albert R. *Images: Afro-Rochester, 1910-1935*. Rochester, N.Y.: Rochester Museum & Science Center, c1996.
Rrq779.9974
S877i

AUDIO-VISUAL

- RMC *Aging Trees of Knowledge II Command of Sankofa, Servant Leader: Dr. David Anderson*. [Rochester, N.Y.]: Espocinema, c2009.
974.789
DVD 5005
- RMC *July '64*. Directed by Carvin Eison. Produced by Chris Christopher. [San Francisco, CA]: California Newsreel, [2006?]. DVD.
323.1196
DVD 2987
- RMC *What Makes Us, Us? Conflict & Community*. [Rochester, N.Y.]: World of Inquiry High School, c2012.
974.789
DVD 7441

CLIPPING FILES

- RVF1 African-Americans (includes General; Black Muslims; FIGHT; Industrial Area Foundation; Martin Luther King Memorial; NAACP; Urban League of Rochester)
- RVF1 Segregation – Schools, Race Relations
- RVF1 Riots 1964

ONLINE RESOURCES

African-American Heads of Household in early Rochester, NY, 1838-1852:

<http://mcnygenealogy.com/vr/afr-am.htm>

The Circle Association's African-American History of Western New York:

<http://www.math.buffalo.edu/~sww/Ohistory/hwny.html>

The Frederick Douglass Institute for African and African-American Studies:

<http://www.rochester.edu/College/AAS/>

Rochester Voices. "African American Oral Histories."

<http://rochestervoices.org/content/collections/african-american-oral-histories/>:

PAMPHLET FILES

RVF2 African-Americans – General (2 folders)

RVF2 F.I.G.H.T. Organization

RVF2 Marcus Garvey Memorial Black Solidarity Committee (includes P.A.C.E.)

RVF2 Clubs & Associations – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

RVF2 Genealogy – African-American

PERIODICALS

L/H-IS *About...Time* (1970-current)

L/H-IS *American Negro* (1961)

L/H-ST *Annual Report*. Urban League of Rochester, N.Y. Rochester, N.Y., Urban League of
Rqr326 Rochester. 1967-2008.

U72r

L/H-OS *Annual Report*. Urban League of Rochester, N.Y. Rochester, N.Y., Urban League of
PBRqr326 Rochester. 2000-2001.

U72r year

2000/01

L/H-IS *Communicade* (1972-1986)

LH-IS *The Fighter* (1966)

L/H-IS *Frederick Douglass Voice* (1972-1996)

LH-IS *Friends of F.I.G.H.T.* (1967-1968). Rochester, N.Y.: Friends of Fight.

BUS *Member Profile: Black Business Association of Greater Rochester.* [Rochester, N.Y.]:
q338.7089 Greater Rochester Metro Chamber of Commerce, [1992]-.
B6272m
year 1992/93

L/H-IS *Minority Reporter* (2007-curent)

L/H-ST Monroe County Human Relations Commission. *Report to the Community.* Rochester,
Rrq323.1 N.Y.: The Commission, 1974-1981.
M753rc

L/H-IS *News n' Views* (1973-1996)

L/H-IS *The Pride of Rochester* (2002)

L/H-IS *Week End Newsmagazine* (1951-1952)

Note: *Rochester History* is available both in the Local History Division's public area and online at <https://roccitylibrary.org/digital-collections/rochester-history/>. There are numerous citations in the *Index to Rochester History* under Blacks/Black Community.

Rochester History (vol. 21, no. 4, 1959). "Lights and Shadows in Local Negro History."
Also available online: http://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v21_1959/v21i4.pdf

Rochester History (vol. 37, no. 4, 1975). "The Autobiography of Rev. Thomas James."
Also available online: http://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v37_1975/v37i4.pdf

Rochester History (vol. 46, nos. 1 & 2, 1984). "A Growing Agitation: Rochester Before, During, and After the Civil War." Also available online: http://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v46_1984/v46i1-2.pdf

Rochester History (vol. 54, no. 1, 1992). "Goin' North." (Alice Branson Mathis)
Also available online: http://www.rochester.lib.ny.us/~rochhist/v54_1992/v54i1.pdf

Rochester History (vol. 66, no. 4, 2004, and vol. 67, no. 1, 2005). "Liberian Dreams, West African Nightmare: The Life of Henry W. Johnson." Also available online:
Part I: http://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v66_2004/v66i4.pdf
Part II: http://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v67_2005/v67i1.pdf

Rochester History (vol. 67, nos. 3 and 4, 2005). "Rochester's Frederick Douglass." Also available online:
Part I: https://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v67_2005/v67i3.pdf
Part II: https://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v67_2005/v67i4.pdf

Rochester History (vol. 72, no. 2, 2010). "Rochester: A Transnational Community for Blacks Prior to the Civil War." Also available online: https://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v72_2010/v72i2.pdf.

Rochester History (vol 71, no. 1, 2009) "'We Called Her Anna': Nathaniel Rochester and Slavery in the Genesee Country." Also available online: https://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v71_2009/v71i1.pdf.

Rochester History (vol. 76, no. 1, 2014). "The Rochester Royals' Maurice Stokes: Kodak City's (and the NBA's) First Black Basketball Star." Also available online:
https://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v76_2014/v76i1.pdf

Rochester History (vol. 78, no. 2) "Racial Segregation in Rochester Schools, 1818-1856." Also available online: https://www.libraryweb.org/~rochhist/v78_/v78i2.pdf

SCRAPBOOKS

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Rqr305.896 Rochester Public Library, Local History Div., 2004]. Available online:
W352r http://www.libraryweb.org/~digitized/scrapbooks/Rochester_riots_1964_vol.1.pdf

SUBJECT HEADINGS

Subject headings to try when searching:

African Americans – New York (State) – Rochester
African Americans – New York (State) – Rochester – Economic conditions
African Americans – New York (State) – Rochester – History
African Americans – New York (State) – Rochester – Social conditions
African Americans – New York (State) – Rochester – Race relations – 20th century