



# *African-American Records*

Genealogical Research Series Pamphlet No. 6

**T**HIS PAMPHLET IS ONE IN A SERIES DESIGNED TO ASSIST THE GENEALOGICAL researcher in using the most pertinent of related federal, state, and local governmental records in the possession of the Illinois State Archives and its Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) system. The purpose of this pamphlet is to inform researchers about the Archives' unique holdings of Illinois African-American servitude, emancipation, and military service records from the 18th and 19th centuries.

## Servitude and Emancipation Records (1722–1863)

### ***Historical Background***

The first Africans to arrive in Illinois came to the French settlements on the Mississippi in the early 18th century. The director general of mines for the Company of the Indies arrived with African slaves in 1720. In succeeding years it was not uncommon to find ordinary Frenchmen owning African as well as Indian slaves. Thus established, the system of slavery remained in Illinois in one form or another until just after the American Civil War.

By 1732 about 284 slaves lived at the French settlements of Cahokia and Kaskaskia. Of this number 165 were Africans. French settlers registered their chattel property with the royal notary. English victory in the French and Indian War and subsequent seizure of the Illinois country did not alter French practices significantly. When George Rogers Clark and his Virginia militia conquered the Illinois country in 1778 the slave population totaled no more than 1,000.

Arthur St. Clair, the governor of the Northwest Territory, arrived in the Illinois country and established American authority in 1790. Despite the Ordinance of 1787's prohibition of slavery, many African-Americans remained in a state of de facto slavery as indentured servants. The 1800 census of the Indiana Territory, which encompassed the Illinois country, listed 135 slaves and 163 free persons of African descent. By 1810 the Illinois Territory itself had 781 African-American residents of which 168 were registered as slaves.

After Illinois achieved statehood in 1818 the General Assembly began enacting a series of laws known as the "black codes." These restrictive laws continued the practice of indentured servitude, denied legal protection to African-Americans, and required local governmental officials to maintain registers of indentured servants and free Negroes and mulattoes.

The 1820 federal census listed 917 slave and 457 free African-Americans. Ten years later the numbers were 747 slave and 1,637 free. The 1840 census was the last one to record free and slave African-Americans in Illinois. For that year there were 331 slave and 3,598 free African-Americans in Illinois. The 1850 and 1860 censuses enumerated 5,436 and 7,628 African-Americans respectively. Illinois repealed the "black codes" after Union victory in 1865.

### ***Record Contents***

The Illinois State Archives and its Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) system hold various records which provide information on servitude and emancipation. These records encompass the colonial era of French and English occupation (1720–1790) as well as the American period (1790–1865). The Archives has created an on-line database of persons appearing in its servitude and emancipation records. The following records are indexed and variously abstracted:

**Bond County**

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' MINUTES, 1817

**Edwards County**

SERVITUDE AND EMANCIPATION RECORD, 1815-1860

**Gallatin County**

SERVITUDE REGISTER, 1815-1839

**Madison County**

SERVITUDE AND EMANCIPATION REGISTER, 1805-1826

EMANCIPATION REGISTERS, 1830-1860

**Massac County**

EMANCIPATION REGISTER, 1849-1855

**Pope County**

SERVITUDE REGISTER, 1816-1819

**Randolph County**

RECORD BOOK 1, 1736-1782

DEED RECORD J-M, 1797-1815

SERVITUDE AND EMANCIPATION REGISTERS, 1809-1863

KASKASKIA MANUSCRIPTS, 1714-1816

**St. Clair County**

REGISTRE OF INSINUATION, 1737-1769

RECORD OF AUCTION OF CHARLEVILLE ESTATE, 1782

DEED RECORD A-C, 1790-1796; 1800-1813

SERVITUDE REGISTER, 1805-1832; 1846-1863

SLAVE REGISTRATION FILES, 1807-1849

EMANCIPATION REGISTER, 1812-1843

**Union County**

EMANCIPATION REGISTER, 1835-1844

**U.S. General Land Office, Kaskaskia District**

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS TRANSCRIPTS OF DOCUMENTS COLLECTED,  
1722-1814

**Publications**

Alvord, Clarence Walworth, ed. *Cahokia Records*, 1778-1790. Springfield:  
Illinois State Historical Library, 1907.

Norton, Margaret Cross, ed. *Illinois Census Returns*, 1810, 1818. Springfield:  
Illinois State Historical Library, 1935.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Illinois Census Returns*, 1820. Springfield: Illinois State Historical  
Library, 1934.

***Finding Your Ancestors*****Researching On Your Own**

For those researchers having Internet access, the Archives' Web site has a searchable on-line database of the Archives' servitude and emancipation records. The Web address is: **www.cyberdriveillinois.com**. The on-line database can be accessed by the names of the free blacks, slaves, or servants as well as by the names of the other parties (i.e., owners, buyers, sellers, affiants). It variously provides the subject's name, sex, age, and race; transaction date and county location; names of owners, buyers, sellers, or affiants; and citation to the original document. An abstract of the record can be viewed by clicking the record number of an entry after conducting a database search.

Many documents, especially for the colonial period, either provide only the slave's or servant's given name or fail to give any name for the slave or servant at all. The database includes all named persons in servitude, whether by complete or only given name. For those

documents which do not provide a name for the servant or slave, a search can be conducted by the owner's surname. Because the index references citations, the researcher can consult the original or published record to obtain a copy of his or her ancestor's entry.

### **Mail, Telephone, and Internet Requests**

If the genealogist can provide his or her ancestor's name and as much supporting information as possible, Archives staff will provide an uncertified and unofficial photocopy of the original record. If only a given name or the owner's name can be provided, the Archives will copy all pertinent database entries with that name. As a result of limitations on staff research time, the Archives can do no more than two name searches per request. Send your request to: Reference Unit, Illinois State Archives, Norton Building, Capitol Complex, Springfield, IL 62756. Telephone (217) 524-6700. Fax: (217) 524-3930. E-mail: jreinhardt@ilsos.net.

## **MILITARY SERVICE RECORDS (1861–1899)**

### ***Historical Background***

During the Civil War (1861–1865), African-Americans served in significant numbers in the U. S. Armed Forces. The 1860 census counted 7,600 African-Americans in Illinois. Over the war years more than 1,800 enlisted in the U.S. military. African-Americans exclusively comprised the rosters of enlisted men in their units. Beginning in November 1863, the 29th U.S. Colored Infantry, the regiment with the largest number of African-American Illinoisans, began enrolling men at Quincy, Illinois. Its most noteworthy action was at the Battle of the Crater near Petersburg, Virginia on July 30, 1864. This unit was mustered out of service on Nov. 6, 1865, at Brownsville, Texas.

In the Spanish-American War (1898–1899), the 8th Infantry, composed entirely of African-Americans, enrolled men from Illinois. This regiment was mustered in on July 21, 1898, at Springfield. It served in Cuba and was mustered out of service on April 3, 1899, at Chicago.

### ***CIVIL WAR (1861-1865)***

#### ***Record Contents***

Record series 301.020, MUSTER AND DESCRIPTIVE ROLLS, 1861–1865, includes the roster of the 29th U.S. Colored Infantry. For each soldier mustered into service entries include his name, rank, regiment number, company letter, age, residence, date and place where mustered in; name of mustering officer; date and place of mustering out; name of mustering out officer; remarks concerning transfers, promotions and special duty; and indication of injury or death. Infrequently included are entries for height, occupation, and nativity. The researcher may locate this missing information by consulting the original muster rolls contained in the record series 301.018, ADMINISTRATIVE FILES ON CIVIL WAR COMPANIES AND REGIMENTS, 1861–1903. Rolls are arranged by companies. Abstracts of this record series have been published in *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois* (vol. 8). This publication also includes African-Americans from Illinois who enrolled in other U.S. military units.

The original muster rolls for the various Illinois regiments are found in record series 301.018, ADMINISTRATIVE FILES ON CIVIL WAR COMPANIES AND REGIMENTS. Occasionally, entries include African-Americans from southern states who enrolled in various Illinois units as cooks, undercooks, and teamsters during military campaigns. These individuals also can be found in the *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*.

### ***Finding Your Ancestors***

#### **RESEARCHING ON YOUR OWN**

The Archives has an online database through the Secretary of State's Web page, which indexes the publication, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*. The Web address is [www.cyberdriveillinois.com](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com). This database also is available for public consultation at the Archives building. The name index will identify the unit in which the African-American ancestor served. With the information the researcher can identify the

appropriate muster roll in either record series 301.020, Muster And Descriptive Rolls or record series 301.018, Administrative Files On Civil War Companies And Regiments. Federal records for all soldiers may be obtained by contacting The National Archives, Washington, D.C. 20408.

#### **MAIL, TELEPHONE, AND INTERNET REQUESTS**

The genealogist should identify the conflict as the Civil War. He or she should provide the ancestor's complete name and his regiment number. (An online index is available on the Secretary of State's Web home page as explained previously.) An unofficial and uncertified copy of the best available record will be sent if located. Because of limitations on staff research time, the Archives can do no more than two name searches per request. Send your request to: Reference Unit, Illinois State Archives, Norton Building, Capitol Complex, Springfield, IL 62756. Telephone: (217) 524-6700. Fax: (217) 524-3930. E-mail: jreinhardt@ilsos.net.

### **SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR (1898-1899)**

#### **Record Contents**

The most complete source of information on Illinois African-Americans having served in the 8th Infantry is record series 301.089, MUSTER OUT ROLLS, 1878-1899. This single volume is arranged by company. Entries for each soldier include the soldier's name and rank; date, place and term of enrollment; name of enrolling officer; places of residence and discharge; and amounts of pay, travel, and reimbursement due. Volume 4 of the *Adjutant General's Report Containing the Complete Muster Out Rolls of the Illinois Volunteers Who Served in the Spanish-American War, 1898-1899*, provides a duplicate copy of this record. This publication, which is not indexed, is available for use in the reference room at the Archives.

Record series 301.087, MUSTER IN ROLLS, 1898-1899, includes a single volume for the 8th Infantry arranged by company. Although not as comprehensive as the MUSTER OUT ROLLS, the MUSTER IN ROLLS do include unique information consisting of age, birthplace, eye and hair colors, complexion, height, marital status, occupation, and the name and address of the soldier's nearest relative.

#### **Finding Your Ancestors**

##### **RESEARCHING ON YOUR OWN**

The Archives has an online database available on the Secretary of State's Web page, which indexes another Spanish-American War publication, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois* (vol. 9). The Web address is [www.cyberdriveillinois.com](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com). This database also is available for public consultation at the Archives building. The name index will identify the company in which the African-American ancestor served. With this information the researcher can search the MUSTER OUT ROLLS in their original or published forms and the MUSTER IN ROLLS, which are available only in their original form.

#### **MAIL, TELEPHONE AND INTERNET REQUESTS**

The genealogist should identify the conflict as the Spanish-American War. The ancestor's complete name and his regiment number should be given. (An online index is available on the Secretary of State's Web page as explained above.) An unofficial and uncertified copy of the best available record will be sent if located. Because of limitations on staff research time, the Archives can do no more than two name searches per request. Send your request to: Reference Unit, Illinois State Archives, Norton Building, Capitol Complex, Springfield, IL 62756. Telephone: (217) 524-6700. Fax: (217) 524-3930. E-mail: jreinhardt@ilsos.net.