

Introduction

This bibliography is a compilation of sources that cover a range of African American historic topics in the Reconstruction Era, which is defined as the period between 1865 and 1896. The topics covered in this bibliography include but are not limited to African American religion, religious practices, cemeteries, funerary practices, and freedmen’s communities. A large amount of the listed scholarship contains a Virginia focus, while the rest has a national focus to provide a greater context. Some deal with political or Black history in general, both in Virginia and national contexts, to provide a contextual framework within which to place other scholarship and historic knowledge.

This bibliography was compiled through three months of painstaking research during the covid-19 pandemic. During the project period, research repositories were closed due to the public health emergency. Therefore, the project’s research methodology included only online sources, beginning with locating Virginia-centric works on each historical topic. Online excerpts from books, such as introductions and conclusions, were consulted, as well as full-text articles published in scholarly journals. Bibliographies of these publications also were mined to identify relevant sources. When online excerpts of books were unavailable, the researcher instead relied on multiple book reviews to determine if content relevant to Virginia’s history was included.

This bibliography is a work in progress and new scholarship and historic works will be added as staff schedules and resources permit. Readers are welcome to send suggestions of publications to include, and report any broken links herein, to lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov.

Articles and Books


This book is a biography of one of the major figures in the African Methodist Church in the Reconstruction Era. It is emblematic of several other works on this list that profile prominent leaders in the African American churches of the day.


Ayers’ book is an analysis of life for all in the South, and the economic, social, and political conditions faced by all. Though slightly older, it remains a strong, overall Southern history of the Reconstruction period.


This article is a Virginia centric analysis of the Freedmen’s communities in the closing stages of the Civil War and its immediate aftermath.


This dissertation is a Norfolk centric analysis of the Freedmen’s community within Norfolk. This is especially important because Fort Monroe across the Chesapeake was the first place to which formerly enslaved people fled to escape enslavement and were protected by Federal forces under the command of General Benjamin Butler.


   This article is an analysis of one of the major Protestant denominations in Virginia. Though its teleological focus is longer than this bibliography, it does compare the progression of the faith among whites and blacks.


   This article is a geographic and historic analysis of the patterns of settlement and movement for African Americans within Richmond since the Civil War.


   Though this dissertation covers a cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri, it is relevant to this bibliography for two reasons. Firstly, the cemetery it discusses is African American. Secondly, it is an analysis and history of a cemetery that could serve as an example to anyone researching an African American cemetery in Virginia.


   This work discusses the gender roles and the role of women in African American churches, some in Reconstruction, some in the early 20th Century


This book discusses the Reconstruction history of Richmond, mostly discussing the city in economic and social terms, with the latter discussing race relations, black history, and the readjuster movement.


This book is another discussion of the roles that women filled, some given, some created, in African American churches.


This work provides an insightful discussion of racial politics and the politics of race in Virginia between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of Jim Crow and segregation, especially concerning the readjusters.


This is a local history of the African American cemeteries of Richmond.


Another history of the roles women played within the African Methodist Church.


The full text of this report is available online at https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalhistoriclandmarks/upload/Reconstruction.pdf.


W. E. B. Du Bois is considered the preeminent African American scholar of the Late Reconstruction and early Jim Crow eras. This is his prime treatise on African American Religion.


Another of Du Bois’s preeminent works on African American Religion.

This work concerns the relations between the black and white wings of various religious denominations in the south, including the Methodists, Southern Baptists, and Episcopalians and how these faiths developed separately and how racial divides appeared and worked out.


Article discusses a non-Virginia cemetery, but is another example of how to take cemetery data and create a vibrant local history from it.


This archeological article discusses the differences in death practices between Blacks and Whites.


This is one of the premier modern scholarly books on slavery and it remains such within American historical scholarship.


Inventory of the Church Archives of Virginia: Negro Baptist Churches of Richmond. Richmond, VA: Historical Records Survey of Virginia, 1940.


Online Collections

Academia, https://www.academia.edu/. Open access clearinghouse for academic papers, easily searchable; full-text papers can be read online or downloaded.

American Civil War Museum, https://acwm.org/. Several online exhibits are relevant, including Civil War to Civil Rights: Education and Emancipation.


JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/. Subscription-based clearinghouse for full text of academic journals, easily searchable, but requires a subscription.

Library of Congress, digital collections, https://www.loc.gov/collections/. African American Odyssey may be helpful, see http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aaohtml/aoahome.html. This collection includes digitized pamphlets from 1822-1909 and covers themes of African American freedom, educational and economic opportunities, and civil rights across the United States. Finding sources specific to Virginia will require patient searching.

Library of Congress HABS/HAER/HALS collection, http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aaohtml/aoahome.html. This site has digitized documentation of important architecture and engineering in the United States. It includes places associated with African American history in Virginia, but the site can be tricky to navigate due to its vast scope.


National Archives, African American History, https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/african-american-history. As the name indicates, this website is national in scope. Although Virginia-specific topics and places may be difficult to locate, information pertinent to the broad context of Black history across more than 4 centuries can be found here.

Southern Historical Association, https://thesha.org/. The SHA Journal’s compiled tables of contents at https://thesha.org/sites/default/files/Bibliography.pdf are useful for identifying articles that discuss specific people, places, time periods, and events.

Vernacular Architecture Forum bibliography at https://www.zotero.org/groups/131637/the_vernacular_architecture_forum/items/8Z5X3PXB/library. The VAF bibliography has 25,000+ entries, nationwide in scope and covering all historic periods with particular emphasis on researching, evaluating, and understanding historic architecture and landscapes that are vernacular (as in, not professionally designed) in character.

Zotero, https://www.zotero.org/. This free online tool allows users to organize their research.

**Sources/Places Specific to African American History in Virginia**

African American Civil War Museum and Memorial, https://www.afroamcivilwar.org/


Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia, https://www.blackhistorymuseum.org/


Virginia Humanities, AfroVirginia, http://afrovirginia.org/, an excellent place to find many of the most important sites in Virginia associated with African American history.