

A CHAT WITH CHAR #1

“They were in the North in the 1930s”

By Char McCargo Bah

This chat will draw on my experience in researching in New York City and in Cleveland, Ohio of ancestors that appeared on the 1930 censuses.

Researching in New York City was very expensive for me, but the rewards were priceless. I found my great uncle Charlie Clark and his wife Euda on the 1930 census in Brooklyn, New York. I reviewed the 1930 census by paying attention to details on the census. I noticed that both of them were lodgers in a rooming house. They both said they and their parents were born in Virginia. There were others living close to them that came from Virginia. The 1940 census was not available for me to continue my search on them in the census records. These are the next steps I took before my visit to New York City.

- City Directory
- Marriage Records
- Social Security Death Index
- Death Records
- Current Telephone Book listing
- Family oral history interviews
- Undertaker office
- Cemetery Office personnel

After going through the above process, I went to New York and below are the methods I used to research this family.

- Interviewed descendants of Euda, the wife of Charlie Clark
- Visited the New York Archives and was told that a 1930s picture (WPA Records) of the house he lived in was available
- Visited the neighborhoods he lived in until his death in 1956
- Talked to individuals who had lived in the neighborhood for more than 40 years
- Obtained pictures of Charlie Clark and his wife from relatives of Euda
- Took pictures of his last know neighborhood
- Identified his Church where he was a deacon, but it was no longer there
- Identified the cemetery that he and his wife were buried
- Euda out lived her husband for more than 30 years. Her senior citizen apartment was identified and neighbors who knew her were interviewed.

Unlike New York, my Cleveland ancestor Thomas Wyatt was born in Virginia and married to a woman who stated on the 1930 census that she was from Georgia. This was a clue that he might have married her in Cleveland.

My Cleveland, Ohio research was similar but it provided a more enjoyable and detailed research experience. What was different from New York research was the assistance and kindness of the people. All the research I did in New York, I did in Cleveland, Ohio but I received substantial assistance.

This is how my research went in Cleveland, Ohio:

- Contacted the Cleveland, Ohio Public Library prior to my trip; they gave me their website to download their finding aid to their library
- Contacted each section of the library that I needed information from; which included the old newspaper section, mapping section, city directory section, photograph section, and history section
- On arrival, each section had the materials I needed waiting for me
- Provided me with a photocopy of my ancestor's home
- The house was no longer there, but the Library provided me a 1960 picture of the house. My ancestor died in 1958. The library also provided me a Sanborn map of his neighborhood in the 1940s and 1950s
- The Church where his funeral took place gave us a tour and a brief history
- Visited the neighborhood where he lived and the newspaper provided information about his death and his surviving family
- Identified his last occupation as a Pulliam Porter – received history on Pulliam Porter from the Library
- In the 1960, his neighborhood was part of a number of racial riots and burnings – the Library had many pictures of the destruction of his neighborhood during that time
- Library provided me of early pictures of my relative's church and I took additional pictures during my visit
- The records/institutions that I visited were marriage records, death records, property records, undertaker office, cemetery office and taxes records during a four-day visit to Cleveland

Our Wednesday, October 10, 2007 at 9 p.m., "A Chat with Char" will discuss the kinds of records one can find in the city that deal with the 1930s.

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