United States History Primary Source Web Sites
Bakersfield College Library

**General Sites about American History**

**From the National Archives**

**Docs Teach**

[http://docsteach.org/documents](http://docsteach.org/documents)

This web site from the National Archives, geared towards students of history, is divided into historical periods and has thousands of primary sources.

**National Archives Online Public Access**


Search the digital holdings of the National Archives for copies of primary sources from throughout American history at this site. Use the search box on the main page for your research topic. On the results page, use "View all online holdings" to see what is available in the digital realm about your research area of focus.

**Our Documents: 100 Milestone Documents in American History**


This site brings together transcripts of 100 important documents covering American history from 1776 to 1965. The documents were compiled by the National Archives and Records Administration as part of a cooperative effort with National History Day and USA Freedom Corps.

**AMDOCS: Documents for the Study of American History**

[http://www.vlib.us/amdocs/](http://www.vlib.us/amdocs/)

This large collection has documents related to the earliest American history through 2005 and is organized by time period. It is hosted by a combination of libraries and museums.

**America in Class**

[http://americainclass.org/primary-sources/](http://americainclass.org/primary-sources/)

Historical documents covering the span of American history from 1492 to the 1920s are listed at this site, created by the National Humanities Center. Click on the era that matches your research and find many helpful resources.

**American Experience**


Over the years these PBS programs have examined important American events. Primary sources are available for many. Use the search function to look for specific programs related to your research topic, and then explore the programs for primary sources.

**Documenting the American South**

[http://docsouth.unc.edu/browse/collections.html](http://docsouth.unc.edu/browse/collections.html)

Sources gathered at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill give a glimpse into the history of the American South. The link above will start you at the Collections page.
Famous Trials
http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/FTrials/ftrials.htm
Primary sources associated with important American trials are located at this site organized by Famous Trials by Douglas O. Linder from the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) School of Law.

The Making of America
http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?page=browse;cc=moa;c=moa;key=subject
The social history of the United States from antebellum times to reconstruction are captured in books and journal articles printed during this period. The site describes its focus as “particularly strong in the subject areas of education, psychology, American history, sociology, religion, and science and technology. The book collection currently contains approximately 10,000 books with 19th century imprints.” A subject list is available at this web site sponsored by the University of Michigan.

New Deal Network
http://newdeal.feri.org/default.cfm
The New Deal Network focuses on the Great Depression of the 1930s and is sponsored by the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute. It contains speeches, photographs, articles, and other documents.

New Perspectives on the West
http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/resources/
The PBS documentary that examined the exploration of settling of the American West brings together an archive of memoirs, journals, letters, photos and transcripts. Click on “Archives” in the left hand panel of the page. The site also has a list of other Internet resources related to the American West.

Speech Bank
http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speechbank.htm
Famous speeches from history can be discovered from this online listing. Sponsored by the American Rhetoric, the site claims to have over 5,000 “full text, audio and video versions of public speeches, sermons, legal proceedings, lectures, debates, interviews, other recorded media events.”

University of Virginia Hypertext Collection
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/hypertext.html
A variety of primary source writings and photographs linked to influential American figures, such as Lewis and Clark, Harriet Jacobs (Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl), WPA interviews.

U.S. Historical Texts
This site has a mix of primary and secondary sources related to different subtopics in American history.

Colonial and Revolutionary America

Massachusetts Historical Society
http://www.masshist.org/
This web site offers the primary sources related to John and Abigail Adams as well as other historical documents important to American history from the first settlers to the 20th century.
19th Century America

American Civil War
http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war/warweb.html
Use the “Documentary Records” link to see primary sources. Abundant secondary source information including biographical information, battles and campaigns, general resources and more are available at this site hosted by the University of Tennessee.

The Civil War
http://jimjanke.com/civilwar/civilwar.htm
This index, maintained a Civil War buff, by offers links to a wide variety of subtopics about the Civil War, many of which contain primary documents.

From Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond
http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/documents/
Various primary documents related to American history from before 1600 to after 1951 are gathered at this web site sponsored by a university in the Netherlands.

Harper's Weekly from the 1800s
http://www.harpweek.com/07Features/features.asp
During the mid 1800s to the early 20th Century, Harper’s Weekly offered the nation news in magazine form. Primary sources linked to the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments as well as other historical events can be searched here via the site’s own database. The site says, “The paper’s editorials played a significant role in shaping and reflecting public opinion from the start of the Civil War to the end of the century.”

Index of Civil War Information Available on the Internet
http://www.civilwarhome.com/indexcivilwarinfo.htm
This collection of links hosted by a Civil War enthusiast is grouped by topic. Primary sources are within many topics, but the Diaries and the Letters sections offer voices of the war time to readers. Background information is also available through the multitude of sites listed for each topic.

Nineteenth Century Documents Project
http://facweb.furman.edu/~benson/docs/
This site based at Furman University offers primary documents related to women’s rights, slavery and sectionalism, editorials and speeches regarding secession, and post-Civil War America, among other topics. Its holdings have many materials related to South Carolina history.

Reconstruction: The Second Civil War
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/index.html
The web site linked to the PBS series describes itself as “Spanning the momentous years from 1863 to 1877, Reconstruction tracks the extraordinary stories of ordinary Americans -- Southern and Northern, white and black -- as they struggle to shape new lives for themselves in a world turned upside down.” Each subsection contains primary documents as well as helpful background information.
The Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War.
http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/
This site describes itself as, “a digital archive of primary sources that document the lives of people in Augusta County, Virginia, and Franklin County, Pennsylvania, during the era of the American Civil War.” Letters, diaries, newspapers articles, and more offer a window into the daily lives of these Southern and Northern communities from 1859-1870.

20th Century America

Alcohol, Temperance & Prohibition
http://library.brown.edu/cds/temperance/
Find essays and primary sources that focus on the role of alcohol in society, Prohibition, and its repeal. “The digitized pamphlets were published by various groups leading up to prohibition, during the prohibition era, and ending with the 21st amendment in 1933, which repealed the 18th amendment from 1919 prohibiting the manufacturing, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors.”

African Americans

Africans in America
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/home.html
PBS offers this overview of “America’s journey through slavery.” The site can be explored through four distinct time periods spanning from 1450-1865. Use the Resource Bank to find the primary documents. Overviews and biographies are also available for helpful background information.

Freedmen and Southern Society
http://www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen/sampdocs.htm
This site offers a sampling of primary documents related to the emancipation of slaves and covers the years 1861-1867. The transcriptions are from originals housed in the National Archives. The web site explains, The documents convey with first-person immediacy the experiences of the liberated…. the hope that freedom would bring a new world and the fear that, in too many ways, life would be much as before.

Race and Place: An African American Community in the Jim Crow South: Charlottesville, VA
http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/afam/raceandplace/
Oral histories, letters, newspaper articles, and photographs bring to life the experiences of the African Americans who lived in Charlottesville from the late 1880s through the mid-1960s. Sponsored in part by the University of Virginia.

Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition
http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/subject.htm#458
Find links to many primary sources involved with both pro-and anti-slavery sentiments throughout early American history. The subject list breaks the documents into categories. A part of the Yale University Library system.
Asian Americans

The Chinese in California, 1850-1925
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award99/cubhtml/cichome.html
This site contains almost “8,000 images and pages of primary source materials…. [that] describe the experiences of Chinese immigrants in California, including the nature of inter-ethnic tensions. They also document the specific contributions of Chinese immigrants to commerce and business, architecture and art, agriculture and other industries, and cultural and social life in California…. The materials ... are drawn from collections at The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley; The Ethnic Studies Library, University of California Berkeley; and The California Historical Society, San Francisco.”

Native Americans

Cherokee Nation
http://www.cherokee.org/AboutTheNation/History/Default.aspx
Background information and primary sources related to Cherokee history, such as the Trail of Tears, are available at this official site of the Cherokee Nation.

Native American History—University of Washington
http://guides.lib.washington.edu/content.php?pid=87308&sid=649463
The library at the University of Washington has gathered together links to primary sources related to Native American history for many tribes. Both general and specific links are available here.

Women

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Papers
http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/documents.html
A selection of letters, speeches, and other primary sources related to the lives of Stanton and Anthony, two important women reformers in U.S. history, are located here.

Our Army Nurses
http://www.edinborough.com/Learn/cw_nurses/Stories_Nurses.html
Read the firsthand accounts of women who helped the sick during the Civil War.