

# African Americans in New England

Students in English course bring history to life

---

Friday, October 4, 2019

⋮



Students in [Kabria Baumgartner's English](#) department capstone seminar spent a semester researching African American figures in New England history and learning the skills needed to tell that history through video.

The seminar combined the study of the African American experience in New England with an exploration of the challenges and opportunities in the public humanities. What

are the public humanities? How can the academy better engage the public, specifically local communities? How can dynamic public humanities projects be built that bring to life the stories of African Americans in New England? The seminar took up these questions and more.

Students read literary texts about slavery and emancipation, studied race and racism, and learned about historic African American festivals like Negro Election Day.

To build skills in research and storytelling, students took an archival research training workshop led by Bill Ross at [UNH Special Collections](#). They learned digital research skills with Kathrine Aydelott at [UNH Library](#) and digital media technology with Shane McGray of the [UNH Parker Media Lab](#).

Armed with a quiver of new skills, students conducted research at historical sites, museums and repositories throughout New England. Some students sifted through collections at UNH Special Collections, others researched the People's Baptist Church in Portsmouth, and a few explored the stories of African American figures like barber and abolitionist John Levy and preacher Jacob Stroyer.

The final videos, three of which are highlighted below, bring to life some of the many stories of African Americans in the region, and their place in and impact on New England communities.

---

### **Ellen Bruton, English major**

This video reviews the jail records of some African American prisoners who were held at the Essex County Jail in Lawrence, Mass., during the 1860s and 1880s. These records at the Lawrence History Center provide fascinating details about these and other prisoners, making it possible to shed some light on the place of African Americans in New England communities during the late 19th century.

---

### **Madelyn O'Leary, English major**

This video tells the story of Allen and Mary Hinton, who ran a successful ice cream business in late 19th century Andover, Mass. Their daughter, Alice, eventually took over the business, earning praise from leaders such as Booker T. Washington. A well-respected African American family, the Hintons were valued members of their community and inspired many people whom they met.

---

## Christopher Craycraft, Spanish and English teaching majors

This video explores the social and religious activism of Clayton and Hazel Sinclair, a successful African American couple from the Seacoast area. In the 1940s, the Sinclairs opened Rock Rest, an inn located in Maine that welcomed people of color who otherwise would not have had a place to stay. In addition to operating this inn, the Sinclairs participated in the NAACP in Portsmouth and the People's Baptist Church in Portsmouth. This video concludes with a discussion of the Sinclairs' lasting impact and legacy in the Seacoast area.

- **COMPILED BY:**  
[Susan Dumais '88 '02G](#) | College of Liberal Arts

**COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS**



University of New Hampshire

UNH Today is produced for the UNH community and for friends of UNH.  
The stories are written by the staff of [UNH Communications and Public Affairs](#).  
Email us: [unhtoday.editor@unh.edu](mailto:unhtoday.editor@unh.edu).

[MANAGE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION](#)   [CONTACT US](#)

Like us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter

Follow us on YouTube

Follow us on Instagram

Find us on LinkIn

UNH Today RSS feeds

UNH Today • UNH Main Directory: 603-862-1234  
Copyright © 2022 • TTY Users: 7-1-1 or 800-735-2964 (Relay NH)  
[USNH Privacy Policies](#) • [USNH Terms of Use](#) • [ADA Acknowledgement](#)