**WEB-SITE REVIEW**

**Accessible Archives.** URL: http://www.accessible.com Contact: Rob Nagy, Accessible Archives, 697 Sugartown Road, Malvern, Pennsylvania 19355; Phone (610) 296-7441; fax (610) 725-1745; Toll Free (866) 296-1488. E-mail: rnagy@accessible.com.

Accessible Archives is a database collection of county histories, newspapers, and magazines. The database is divided into two sections, *American Counties to 1900* and *Newspapers and Magazines.*

At the present time, *American Counties to 1900* includes digitized versions of county histories published between 1872 and 1931. Histories of counties in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, part of New York, and Pennsylvania are currently available through this database. In the future, Connecticut, Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Vermont, along with the rest of New York, will be available. Prices for an annual subscription to *American Counties to 1900* range from $105 for *American Counties...*
to 1900—Delaware to $315 for each of the remaining sites (one each for Maryland and New Jersey, two for New York, and four for Pennsylvania). Permanent access to Delaware county histories costs $525, while Accessible Archives charges $2,100 for permanent access to each of the remaining sites. Permanent subscriptions to these (and the other sites discussed in this review) also entail a $325 annual maintenance fee, regardless of the number of databases in the subscription.

The county histories available through this collection are an invaluable resource for historians. Typically, they provide detailed summaries of the county's physical geography and geology, Native American activity, formation and European settlement, religious and ethnic diversity, internal improvements, agricultural and industrial development, education system, legal activity, medical profession, government officials, and military activity. In addition, these volumes supply descriptions and histories of the cities, boroughs, towns, and townships located in these counties. In some cases, these county histories contain the sole surviving copy of primary source materials, particularly lists of taxpayers (but not amount of tax paid) from the colonial period.

These volumes, which range in length from 229 to 2,935 pages, also contain short histories of prominent industries, churches, and schools. In addition, they include biographical sketches of prominent persons (mostly men) from the county's past, although some editions occasionally contain biographies of contemporaries who perhaps contributed toward publication costs. These accounts certainly reflect the historiography of the era, as they emphasize industrial and religious leaders at the expense of laborers and parishioners. Furthermore, while both historians and genealogists view these county histories as invaluable resources, one caveat to using them is that they seldom provide attribution for their information.

The county histories' portrayal of national events is particularly interesting. Generally, they focus on local contributions to the various war efforts, even including lists of soldiers who served in the various conflicts. For instance, Morton L. Montgomery's History of Berks County in Pennsylvania (1886) includes chapters on the French and Indian War, Revolution and Independence, Whiskey Insurrection of 1794, Mexican War, and Civil War. The "Whiskey Insurrection of 1794" chapter is more inclusive than the title suggests, as the chapter contains sections that discuss "House Tax and Liberty Poles of 1799," "Embargo of 1807," and "War of 1812–15 and Companies of County
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Enlisted.” John F. Meginness’s *History of Tioga County* (1897), meanwhile, includes the American Revolution, War of 1812, and Mexican War in a ten-page chapter entitled “Early Military History” yet devotes thirty-three pages to a chapter on the “War of the Rebellion.” Overall, these books are a good resource for evaluating the late nineteenth and early twentieth century perceptions of the ways communities viewed their role in United States history.

More significant to researchers, however, is the collection of newspapers and magazines available through this database. *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (1830–1885), published in Philadelphia, was the premier women’s magazine of the nineteenth century. The periodical included book reviews, short stories, and poetry, in addition to information related to fashion, food, and handicrafts. This database is divided chronologically into six separate sites, each of which are available for an annual subscription of $420 per site or a fee of $3,150 for permanent access to each site.

*The Pennsylvania Gazette* (1728–1800), published by Benjamin Franklin, David Hall, and others, was one of the major newspapers of the eighteenth century. More than a repository of local news and advertisements, *The Pennsylvania Gazette* contained articles and essays relating to colonial, imperial, and global events. This database is divided into four folios: 1728–1750, “Benjamin Franklin’s Newspaper”; 1751–1765, “The French & Indian War”; 1766–1783, “The American Revolution”; and 1784–1800, “The New Republic.” Each of these folios costs $315 for an annual subscription or $2,100 for permanent access.

William Lloyd Garrison’s *The Liberator* (January 1831-December 1865), which will be divided into seven five-year increments, was the premier abolitionist newspaper of the nineteenth century. The newspaper ceased publication following the end of the Civil War and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment outlawing slavery. Throughout *The Liberator’s* thirty-five year existence, Garrison denounced pro-slavery Congressional legislation and Supreme Court decisions and cheered John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia. As of Fall 2006, the first two folios (through 1840) are available, with the last five folios to become available over the next few years. Access to *The Liberator* costs $525 annually per folio or $3,675 per folio for permanent access.

*African American Newspapers: The 19th Century* is the largest single collection in *Accessible Archives*. This database includes the following newspapers: *Freedom’s Journal* (New York, March 1827-March 1829); *The Weekly Advocate* (New York,
January-February 1837); *The Colored American* (a continuation of *The Weekly Advocate*) (New York, March 1837-December 1841); *The North Star* (Rochester, New York, December 1847-April 1851); *Frederick Douglass Paper* (a continuation of *The North Star*) (Rochester, New York, April 1851-December 1855); *The National Era* (Washington, D.C., January 1847-March 1860); *Provincial Freeman* (Toronto, Ontario, March 1854-August 1857); and *The Christian Recorder* (Philadelphia, 1861-December 1898, excluding 1892). *The Christian Recorder*, published by the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, is particularly noteworthy because of its chronological span, as it is the only one of these periodicals to publish accounts of anti-freedmen activity in the post-Civil War era. *African American Newspapers: The 19th Century* is divided into ten parts, and each part costs $525 for an annual subscription and $3,675 for permanent access. In addition, subscribers must acquire the parts in this database in succession (i.e., Parts 1 and 2, not Parts 1 and 3).

Two newspaper collections focus on Pennsylvania newspapers during the nineteenth century. *The Pennsylvania Newspaper Record: Delaware County* (1819-1870) is a collection of extracts from newspapers published in Chester, Darby, and Media. The database contains articles and advertisements from the *Delaware County American* (Media), the *Delaware County Republican* (Darby and Chester), *The Upland Union* (Chester), the *Delaware County Democrat* (Chester), and *The Post Boy* (Chester). These excerpts particularly focus on industrial development in the region during the nineteenth century. *The Pennsylvania Genealogical Catalogue* is a compilation of vital records that appeared in the *Village Record*, published in West Chester between 1809 and 1870.

Two other databases are included in the *Newspapers and Magazines* section. *The Civil War: A Newspaper Perspective* includes issues of *The New York Herald*, *The Charlestown Mercury*, and the *Richmond Enquirer* between 1860 and 1865. This database costs $210 annually and $1,575 for permanent access. In addition, the first ten years of *The Charleston South Carolina Gazette* became available in late fall 2006, covering the period from 1732 to 1741. This database costs $525 for an annual subscription and $3,675 for permanent access to the site.

Undoubtedly the greatest benefit of *Accessible Archives* is that all of the documents are searchable by keyword. The researcher can enter a topic/keyword, select which database to search, and access the results. The one drawback is that often only one database can be searched at a time; for instance, the researcher would have to enter four separate databases (Pennsylvania-East, Pennsylvania-Central, Pennsylvania-Southwest, Pennsylvania-Northwest) to find information on what the different county histories include on a particular topic.
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Caution must be taken when performing these searches. For instance, a search for information related to “Christiana riot” in the African American Newspapers database identified six documents, four from The National Era and two from Frederick Douglass Paper. However, if you enter “Christiana Riots” as the search term, three issues of Frederick Douglass Paper appear, none of them identified during the previous search. A search for “Christiana” in the same database found 206 documents from these two newspapers, plus the Provincial Freeman, The North Star, The Christian Recorder, The Colored American, and Freedom's Journal, with entries dating from 1827 to 1885. Interestingly, Godey's Lady's Book, according to the searchable database, contained 2,162 articles related to “tea,” while the Pennsylvania Gazette included 2,477 articles on this topic.

Accessible Archives also provides a study guide that contains sample articles from the collections. Topics covered in the study guide include Abraham Lincoln, American Civil War, American Revolution, Biography, Black History, Business and Manufacturing, Crime and Punishment, Documents, Education, Events, George Washington, Human Interest, Native Americans, Poetry and Prose, Science and Technology, Speeches, Sports and Recreation, Travel (Geography), War with Mexico, Women, and World Events. Additionally, the collection provides lesson plans and worksheets for Native American-Colonial Relations, Indentured Servitude, Civil War Technology, Abraham Lincoln Assassination, Frederick Douglass, and Researching Ethnicity Through Local Histories.

Overall, Accessible Archives is an interesting compilation of resources for historians and genealogists. The county histories, which are out of print and often housed in rare book collections, are useful tools for researching background information for the various counties included in the collection. Some of the county histories included in the database, however, are actually regional histories that include several counties. Most of these county histories did not initially include indices, so the searchable feature of this collection is especially useful. The Newspapers and Magazines databases contain important primary sources, most of which are only available on microform, microfiche, or microfilm. Over time, the information available through this online resource will continue to grow as additional folios and parts become available, and its usefulness will only increase as more primary sources and county histories become available.

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