



A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Diane L. Richard gives an overview of image collections you'll want to explore

WE CRAVE IMAGES. THERE IS SOMETHING about seeing a photograph of an ancestor we have never met that is priceless. Pictures of where they lived, worked, worshipped, played, and more are also extremely powerful. Whereas now most cellphones have built-in cameras, photographs were only taken in a studio for decades and were not affordable for most. Occasionally you will discover such photos in extant family papers.

We often rely on others' photographs that still survive, which are sometimes labeled and/or indexed. Many more pictures are available to us with no identification and no indexing. We can often access them and then hope we can correlate them with a person, place, or familiar event.

Many institutions in possession of photographs use Flickr and other crowdsourcing methods ("many hands make light work") to get more images identified in terms of where, when, what, and who. The photo of an "African American young woman approximately 16-20 years old" is an example of an unidentified photograph part of an archival collection. The forthrightness and strength exuded in this image enralls me. This collection, Brock Photo Collection, PhC.109, includes 20 additional photos presented in an online Flickr collection, <https://tinyurl.com/z0wqea3u>.

In fact, the State Archives of North Carolina, which houses the mentioned collection, www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives, has almost 110,000 images on Flickr. That is more than many of the national collections named below.



Bon Ton size tintype of an African American young woman approximately 16-20 years old. No date; estimated 1870-1885. Unknown Photo Studio (Tintype, 2.5"x3.75"). Allen Houston Brock Photograph Collection, PhC.109, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC, <https://tinyurl.com/5a535ynr>.

Here is a list of a few photograph collections that you might want to spend a bit of time and trawling through

1 Flickr, www.flickr.com/explore – look for the Library of Congress, www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress (almost 40,000 images), National Archives and Records Administration, www.flickr.com/photos/35740357@N03 (nearly 20,000 images), and collections for other large repositories. Don't forget to search for terms of interest. I was surprised to see how many images resulted when I searched on Masonic "North Carolina," www.flickr.com/search/?text=masonic%20%22north%20carolina%20%22. Or, something like Texas

