

Historic Michigan African American Book Digitally Available

A new Michigan history resource is now available from WMU Libraries in an Internet digital version for anyone to use. 'Michigan Manual of Freedmen's Progress' book, 1915 edition has been fully digitized including photographs, charts, and searchable text and is available as pdf files.

Marion Gray, WMU History Department Chair comments, "We are extremely pleased to have this unique primary source available for our students to use. It is also wonderful that, thanks to Western's Digitization Center, we can make such a resource available to students and scholars virtually anywhere in the world."

A collaborative effort of Mitch Kachun, Associate Professor, WMU History Department; Sharon Carlson, Director of Archives and Regional History Collections, and the Digitization Center of WMU Libraries has made it possible. The goal of the project was to have comprehensive access by history students and colleagues to this out-of-print book in the classroom and for research anywhere. Financial support is from the History Department's Burnham Macmillan Endowment fund and the College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Research and Teaching Awards program.

Kachun shares, "This book was originally compiled to record and preserve the history of African Americans and to demonstrate to the broader society the achievements and advances made by blacks in the half-century after emancipation. It's extremely valuable today for similar reasons. A researcher might scour numerous libraries, archives, and historical societies and still not find information on the dozens of black educators, journalists, professionals, veterans, politicians, and community leaders contained in this single volume. It's just a fantastic tool for researchers, students, and teachers."

Carlson says, "This is unprecedented access for this book, and for this type of information on Michigan African Americans. This first edition book is in most Michigan libraries but usually only one copy or a later edition from the 1960s or 80s. Also it is one of those out-of-print 'orphan works' that is a challenge to get into the classroom."

The book is a 371 page item containing accomplishments of Michigan African Americans through 1915. Optical character recognition (OCR) technology was used for capturing the text for searchability. Two digital versions of the book are presented; a large file of 8.7 MB, and a file without photos of 2.3 MB size for options in downloading.

Paul Howell, manager of the Digitization Center comments, "We are please to offer this level of classroom support and academic research through technology. It opens many new possibilities to teaching and research. This book is now accessible around the world 24/7 with full searchability."

Links to the item will be available through the WMU Libraries Catalog [WestCat](#); [WMU History Department website](#); [WMU Archives and Regional History Collections](#), where the original book is also housed; [MelCat](#) (Michigan's elibrary); [WorldCat](#) (a global catalog of library collections); and the [Digitization Center](#) at WMU Libraries website.

The Digitization Center is a full service center within Waldo Library that offers comprehensive digitization and planning for access, preservation, and research and is available to estimate custom digitization projects for the University and community partners.