

When I initially embarked on the research necessary to complete my history thesis project, the task seemed incredibly daunting. While I was unsure of how I should devote two quarters of researching and writing, I knew that I wanted my topic to have both local relevance and the ability to shine light on a historical topic that revealed the strength of local communities. After discussing research strategies with my professors, I turned to the Special Collections website and began looking through the vast archives of local history contained here at the university. During the course of this research, looking at various under-examined topics in Pacific Northwest history, I discovered what appeared to be a fascinating story of Black coal miners establishing a thriving community in the small mining town of Roslyn after facing intense racialized hostility from the initial community they found there. Searching for any records dealing with Roslyn's history in the Special Collections, I quickly found that the Special Collections contained numerous documents concerning the development of Roslyn during and after the arrival of these Black miners. Having never conducted archival research prior to this project, I nonetheless made an appointment online and headed down to the basement of Allen Library to look over the materials and gauge the viability of a thesis project centering on the development of a multiracial community in Roslyn.

After showing up to the Special Collections, I soon found that there was more than enough material to support my project. From communications sent and received by Washington Governor Eugene Semple to petitions made by miners in Roslyn striking under the banner of the Knights of Labor, the primary source materials I located provided a fascinating view into the arrival of Black miners in a territory (soon to be state) that had up to that point seen little Black settlement. Being able to hold and read documents from the time period I was studying gave me an unparalleled insight into the topic that I feel would have been lost by just conducting online

research. Reviewing documents one after another from various boxes in the archive allowed me to find documents that I would have never encountered when using an online text searchable database. This sense of serendipity in the archive was a new research experience for me, and one that I now think is key for conducting truly original work that seeks to make connections that other historians have not yet fleshed out. A perfect example of this is my discovery of Governor Semple's report to the federal Secretary of the Interior two months after the conclusion of the 1888 strike. This report was in a box of other material Semple had produced during 1888, but as it was not produced during the strike I may have missed this source if I had been conducting a date constrained search in an online database. This report provided me with crucial information on Semple's attitudes toward Black and Chinese workers in the state. This in turn helped me understand how the government response, no doubt shaped in part by Semple's racial attitudes, contributed to the conditions necessary for the establishment of a Black community in Roslyn in 1888.

Keeping in mind the advice my professors gave me, I used my limited time in the archive to scan over documents and determine if they may have any relevance to my paper. Then, I photographed these documents and sorted them into massive folders that would prove to be my companions for the remainder of my research and writing process. The earliest phase of my research thus consisted of repeated trips to the Special Collections to pour over boxes of documents related to Roslyn and the early history of coal mining in the state. Whereas previous research projects involved seemingly limitless bookmarks of various internet pages that made it comparatively easy to fly between the exact sources I needed when writing a particular section of a paper, this archival experience forced me to organize my photographs of archival material in a way that highlighted elements common to various groups of documents. Crucially, this

organizational thinking helped me make connections between various documents I uncovered that I may not have made so readily had I sorted the documents in another way. Reviewing the primary sources organized in this way when writing the paper, for example, helped me realize that a group of Black miners entering the state by rail described in Semple's notes and another group of Black miners described in a similar way by a newspaper article were in reality the same group.

Another crucial lesson I learned while conducting this research is the immense value that a researcher can find in having a discussion with someone possessing specialized knowledge about an archive. After looking through all of the sources contained within the Special Collections that seemed relevant to my focus on the development of a multiracial community in Roslyn around the turn of the twentieth century, I began to worry that I would not be able to completely tell the story about the growth of a multiracial community in which I was most interested. While the physical documents I had reviewed up to that point provided a comprehensive overview of how the Northwest Improvement Company broke the 1888 Knights of Labor Strike and brought in Black strikebreakers from the Midwest to work for lower wages, I had few primary sources dealing with how Black residents built community in the years after the strike. However, I was able to consult with labor archivist Conor Casey, who pointed me toward a group of oral history interviews contained in the library that documented the experiences of Black residents in Roslyn around the turn of the twentieth century. This collection turned out to be one of my most significant sources of information, and I may have missed it had I been too confident in my own research skills and avoided asking for help from those with more familiarity in the archive.