

# **African-American Composer Jacob J. Sawyer: Research Methodology, Biography, and Analytical Approach**

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## **Poster Abstract**

Newspapers are excellent sources of music-historical research, especially when focusing on the ‘forgotten’ composers. While newspaper research used to be archival research, it is becoming more and more online research, as more and more newspapers are being digitized and become available online. Digitized newspapers can also be supported by electronic collections and databases. This conference poster is both a methodological reflection on such research as well as a biographic-analytical study, focusing on the ‘forgotten’ African-American composer Jacob J. Sawyer (1856-1885).

So far, little was known about Jacob J. Sawyer. A very sketchy biography was published in E. Southern’s *Biographical Dictionary of Afro-American and African Musicians* (Westport, CT, 1982). One of Sawyer’s compositions was printed in J. M. Trotter’s *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (Boston, MA, 1880). Even dates such as for birth and death were unknown. The authors of this study will present how online databases, electronic collections, and electronic archives were used to reconstruct some of the life and work of Jacob J. Sawyer as a pianist, composer, teacher, and arranger. An introduction and analytical approach to his important compositional work, which includes a march for the Seventh Cincinnati Industrial Exhibition in 1879, will also be included.