



Image Archive on the American Eugenics Movement

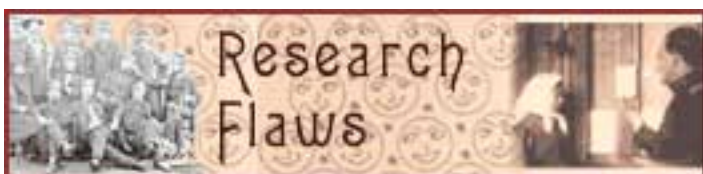
Dolan DNA Learning Center
Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory



Click here to enter the Archive image database.

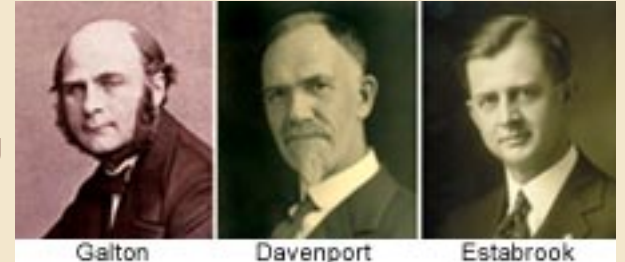
Virtual Exhibits

The buttons below link to essays (using the [Flash Player](#) plugin) that introduce the key events, persons, and social conditions that contributed to the development of eugenics. We suggest you visit these exhibits before searching the images in the Archive. [Click here](#) for text-only versions of the virtual exhibits.



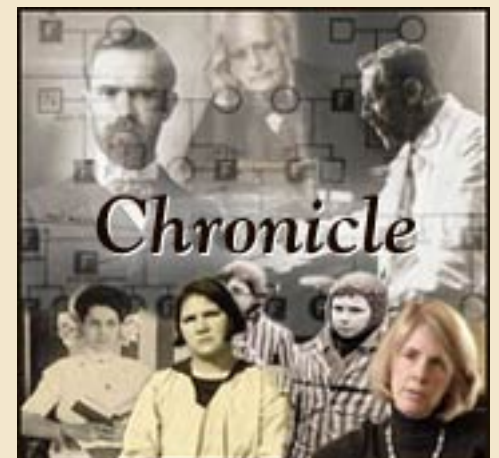
Eugenics Archive grows to 2200+ items

Browse 950 new photos, papers, and data – including extensive collections from noted

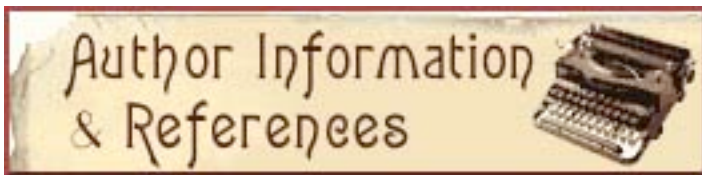


eugenicists. Discover Francis Galton's work on fingerprint analysis and composite portraiture, and read Charles Davenport's treatise, *Eugenics: The Science of Human Improvement by Better Breeding*, presented in its entirety. Explore Arthur Estabrook's field photos of subjects of his (in)famous studies: *The Jukes in 1915*, *Mongrel Virginians*, and *The Nam Family*. Click the "Search the Archive" button to access the image database. (New images have ID#s 1255-2320.)

Examine the Chronicle of how society dealt with mental illness and other "dysgenic" traits in the final installment of our website: [DNA Interactive](#). Meet four individuals who became objects of the eugenic movement's zeal to cleanse society of "bad" genes during the first half of the 20th century. Then meet a modern-day heroine for an account of mental illness and the lesson it holds for living in the gene age.



The philosopher George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." This adage is appropriate to our current rush into the "gene age," which has striking parallels to the eugenics movement of the early decades of the 20th century. Eugenics was, quite literally, an effort to breed better human beings – by encouraging the reproduction of people with "good" genes and discouraging those with "bad" genes. Eugenicists effectively lobbied for social legislation to keep racial and ethnic groups separate, to restrict immigration from southern and eastern Europe, and to sterilize



people considered "genetically unfit." Elements of the American eugenics movement were models for the Nazis, whose radical adaptation of eugenics culminated in the Holocaust.

We now invite you to experience the unfiltered story of American eugenics – primarily through materials from the Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor, which was the center of American eugenics research from 1910-1940. In the Archive you will see numerous reports, articles, charts, and pedigrees that were considered scientific "facts" in their day. It is important to remind yourself that the vast majority of eugenics work has been completely discredited. In the final analysis, the eugenic description of human life reflected political and social prejudices, rather than scientific facts.

You may find some of the language and images in this Archive offensive. Even supposedly "scientific" terms used by eugenicists were often pervaded with prejudice against racial, ethnic, and disabled groups. Some terms have no scientific meaning today. For example, "feeble-mindedness" was used as a catch-all for a number of real and supposed mental disabilities, and was a common "diagnosis" used to make members of ethnic and racial minority groups appear inferior. However, we have made no attempt to censor this documentary record – to do so would distort the past and diminish the significance of the lessons to be learned from this material.

During a two-year review process, involving a 14-member Advisory Panel, this site has developed an [editorial policy to protect personal privacy and confidentiality](#). For this reason, names and places have been deleted from pedigrees, medical documents, and personal photographs.

Contributing Archives:

[American Philosophical Society Library](#)
[Archiv zur Geschichte der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft](#)
[Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Archives](#)
[International Center of Photography](#)
[National Park Service](#)
[Rockefeller Archive Center](#)
[Truman State University](#)
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