



# Arkansas Resources

## Family History Sources in the Natural State



### Arkansas History

Long before frontiersmen from the newly formed United States crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains and attempted settlement along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, Spanish and French explorers came upon the native peoples living in what is now Arkansas.

Following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, Arkansas settlements officially came under United States jurisdiction as part of the Louisiana Territory. In June 1812, Arkansas became part of Missouri Territory as a result of Louisiana's admittance to the union.

The northern quarter of Arkansas was established as part of the New Madrid District in the Louisiana Territory. Directly to the south and running to the Arkansas River, an area shaped like a mirror image of Virginia formed the District of Arkansas. Both districts became counties when the Missouri Territory was created. The remaining half of Arkansas, located on the southern side of the Arkansas River, was claimed by Native Americans.

The Osage and Quapaw resided in the area from a much earlier time, while the Cherokee and Choctaw received land grants from the federal government for land in Arkansas, having been forced out of their homelands in the east. Delaware, Shawnee, Caddo, and other native tribes also made Arkansas their home.

Two million acres - situated between the Arkansas and St. Francis River - were offered as bounty land for military service in the War of 1812. Each veteran was given a warrant for 160 acres, allocated by a lottery process.

Arkansas became the 25th state in 1836. Following the Panic of 1837, many people moved into Arkansas from both southern and eastern states. Men from Arkansas served in the U.S. Army during the Mexican War, some received bounty lands prior to 1855. The Gold Rush in California attracted people from Arkansas; most began the trek from Fort Smith.

During [the Civil War](#), Arkansas men served in both the Union and Confederate armies, although the greater majority served for the Confederate cause. In May 1861, after Arkansas seceded from the United States, the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America divided Arkansas into eastern and western districts, with governmental seats at Little Rock and Van Buren, respectively.

*This section is from [History of Arkansas in the Ancestry.com Wiki](#), and was originally published in [Red Book: American State, County and Town Sources](#).*





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### Significant Dates (through 1942)

- 1541** – Hernando DeSoto's explorers first entered Arkansas.
- 1686** – The Arkansas Post became the first settlement on the Mississippi River.
- 1738** – The French began a war against the Chickasaw Indians lasting two years.
- 1762** – France ceded the Louisiana Territory, including the land that is now Arkansas, to Spain.
- 1803** – The United States purchased the Louisiana Territory; all residents of Arkansas, except for Native Americans, became U.S citizens; Native Americans were considered part of a separate nation until 1924.
- 1804** – Arkansas was part of the District of Louisiana
- 1806** – The District of Arkansas is formed when the Louisiana Territory is split.
- 1811** – The New Madrid earthquake left many homeless and caused many more to migrate to other places.
- 1812** – Congress created the Missouri Territory which included Arkansas.
- 1817** – The Cherokee were given land in northwest Arkansas; Fort Smith was established.
- 1819** – The Arkansas Territory was created.
- 1821** – The capital was moved to Little Rock.
- 1822** – The first steamboat on the Arkansas River reached Little Rock.
- 1836** – Arkansas became the 25<sup>th</sup> state on June 15, 1836; constitution was adopted based on the common laws of Missouri, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi.
- 1851** – Legislation was signed freeing all the slaves.
- 1852** – Marriage contracts were recorded as mandated by law; property that was acquired by women before or after marriage did not have to be sold to pay off her husband's debt.
- 1861** – Arkansas seceded from the Union on May 6 and became part of the Confederate States; Arkansas had units that served the Union as well as the Confederacy.
- 1864** – A unionist convention abolished slavery and adopted a new constitution.
- 1866** – Ex-confederates gained control of the legislature and reversed many laws giving freedom to blacks.
- 1867** – Congress passed the Reconstruction Act and voided the government of Arkansas.
- 1868** – Arkansas was re-admitted to the Union on June 20; most of the state was placed under martial law due to Ku Klux Klan violence.
- 1874** – A new state constitution was adopted.
- 1891** – Arkansas granted pensions to Confederate widows.
- 1902** – County Clerks were required by law to issue marriage licenses.
- 1906** – Diamonds discovered near Murfreesboro.
- 1913** – Statewide registrations of births and deaths were required by law; however, full compliance took 30 years.
- 1915** – General Assembly passed statewide prohibition of liquor sales.
- 1917** – Women in Arkansas could vote in primary elections.
- 1920** – Oil discovered near the town of Smackover; women received complete suffrage when the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment became part of the U.S. Constitution.
- 1942** – Internment camps established for west coast Japanese-Americans.



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### Arkansas Censuses

Arkansas was first included in the Federal census in 1830, and is included in all subsequent censuses. Territorial censuses taken in 1810 and 1820 are said to be lost, but the 1820 census has been reconstructed using tax returns and other sources. Sheriff's censuses do exist for some areas, though are fragmented and in inconsistent formats.

#### Arkansas Census Records on Ancestry.com

- [Arkansas, Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1819-1870](#)
- [U.S. Census Reconstructed Records, 1660-1820](#)
- [Arkansas Census, 1840](#)
- [Census records and Cherokee muster rolls](#)

### Arkansas Vital Records

Statewide registration of births and deaths in Arkansas began in February, 1914, but full compliance was not achieved for another thirty years.

- [Arkansas Vital Records](#): Holds birth and death certificates from February 1, 1914, as well as some limited earlier records for Little Rock and Fort Smith; marriage records from January 1917; and divorce records from January 1923. Earlier records may be available from the clerk of the county where the event was recorded.

#### Arkansas Vital Records on Ancestry.com

- [Arkansas, County Marriages Index, 1837-1957](#)
- [Arkansas Death Index, 1914-1950](#)
- [Arkansas Marriage Index, 1933-1939](#)
- [Arkansas Marriages, 1779-1992](#)
- [Arkansas Marriages, 1851-1900](#)

### Arkansas Military Records

- [U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947](#)
- [U.S., Confederate Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865 Free](#)
- [U.S., Union Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865 Free](#)
- [U.S., Second Draft Registration Cards, 1948-1959](#)
- [Arkansas, Confederate Pensions, 1901-1929](#)

### Arkansas Immigration & Travel

<i>Population</i>	
<b>1810</b>	<b>1,062</b>
<b>1820</b>	<b>14,273</b>
<b>1830</b>	<b>30,388</b>
<b>1840</b>	<b>97,574</b>
<b>1850</b>	<b>209,897</b>
<b>1860</b>	<b>435,450</b>
<b>1870</b>	<b>484,471</b>
<b>1880</b>	<b>802,525</b>
<b>1890</b>	<b>1,128,211</b>
<b>1900</b>	<b>1,311,564</b>
<b>1910</b>	<b>1,574,449</b>
<b>1920</b>	<b>1,752,204</b>
<b>1930</b>	<b>1,854,482</b>
<b>1940</b>	<b>1,949,387</b>
<b>1950</b>	<b>1,909,511</b>
<b>1960</b>	<b>1,786,272</b>
<b>1970</b>	<b>1,923,295</b>



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- [Arkansas, Naturalization Records, 1907-1968](#)

### Arkansas Land & Wills

- [Arkansas, Homestead and Cash Entry Patents, Pre-1908](#)
- [Fort Smith, Arkansas, Criminal Case Files Index, 1866-1900](#)

### Other Collections

#### City Directories

Use the browse box in the upper right corner to determine what directories are available for your ancestor's area. If they lived in a rural area, check to see if that area was included with a larger city in the vicinity.

#### **Other Resources**

In addition to the following state-level resources, many counties and towns maintain important genealogical collections in local libraries, genealogical societies, or historical societies, so check for a local resource when researching.

#### **Statewide Research Resources**

The organizations listed below provide information about Arkansas history and genealogy. In addition to these state-level resources, many counties and towns maintain important genealogical collections in local libraries, genealogical societies, or historical societies, so check for a local resource when researching.

- [Arkansas History Commission and State Archives](#): The extensive collections include census, military, land, newspaper, cemetery, and church records and a photograph collection. See the Research section for searchable indexes.
- [Arkansas State Library](#): The library is home to publications about Arkansas, its history and people.
- [Arkansas Genealogical Society](#): Sponsors research trips and conferences, and publishes the quarterly journal *The Arkansas Family Historian*. The web site includes a useful set of links for researchers.
- [Arkansas GenWeb](#): Includes links to Arkansas county genealogy web sites.
- [RootsWeb Arkansas Resources](#): Contains links to Arizona genealogy resources, including state and county-level websites; societies and organizations; and personal and miscellaneous web sites related to Arkansas research.
- [Arkansas Historical Association](#): Although their focus is on history, the Association maintains a list of web sites for Arkansas genealogical and historical societies.
- [The Butler Center for Arkansas Studies – Genealogy page](#): Describes the resources available for family researchers at the archives in Little Rock.
- [Arkansas Studies Institute \(Little Rock\)](#)
- [Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives](#)



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- [Birmingham Public Library](#): The Library's [Genealogy page](#) describes the resources available in the Southern History department, including local indexes and a list of surnames in the family files. The Library's [Digital Collections](#) also contain information of interest to genealogists, including digitized newspapers, yearbooks, and maps.
- [The National Archives at Fort Worth](#): This NARA facility maintains records from Federal agencies and courts in Arkansas, including census, military, court, naturalization, and immigration records.
- [Bureau of Land Management \(BLM\) General Land Office Records](#): The BLM administers Federal Land for public land states including Arkansas, and maintains records of land patents which granted land from the Federal Government to individuals. Use the Land Patent Search to locate land grants by name. Many record images are available on the web site. See the FAQ for more information on how to locate and use land patents.

### Help and Advice

- [Arkansas Family History Research](#)
- [Counties of Arkansas](#)
- [Research in the Deep South](#)
- [Why Southern Research Is Different, Part I](#) and [Part II](#)
- [The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands](#)

[View all Arkansas collections on Ancestry.com](#)



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## Important Dates for Arkansas Counties

From [Arkansas County Resources](#), part of the [Ancestry.com Wiki](#), and was originally published in [Red Book: American State, County and Town Sources](#).

County	Date Formed	Parent County(ies)	Birth	Marriage	Death	Land	Probate	Court
Arkansas	1813	original		1839		1808	1809	1819
Ashley	1848	Chicot/Union/Drew		1848		1849	1849	1849
Baxter	1873	Fulton/Izard/Marion/Searcy		1873		1876	1874	1874
Benton	1836	Washington		1861		1837	1866	1837
Boone	1869	Carroll/Marion		1869		1869	1869	1869
Bradley	1840	Union		1846		1841	1850	1841
Calhoun	1850	Dallas/Ouachita/Union		1851		1851	1880	1880
Carroll	1833	Izard		1870		1870	1870	1870
Chicot	1823	Arkansas		1840		1823	1839	1824
Clark	1818	Arkansas		1821		1819	1840	1838
Clay	1873	Randolph/Greene		1893		1893	1893	1893
Cleburne	1883	White/ Van Buren/ Independence		1883		1883	1883	1883
Cleveland	1873 ( as Dorsey; renamed, 1885)	Bradley/Dallas/Jefferson/Lincoln		1880		1873	1873	1873
Columbia	1852	Layfayette/Hempstead/Ouachita/Union		1853		1853	1853	1860
Conway	1825	Pulaski		1858		1825	1837	1842
Craighead	1859	Mississippi/Greene/Poinsett		1878		1900	1878	1878
Crawford	1820	Pulaski		1877		1877	1877	1877
Crittenden	1825	Phillips		1837		1826	1839	1826
Cross	1862	Crittenden/Poinsett/St. Francis	1863	1863		1865	1863	1865
Dallas	1845	Clark/Bradley		1855		1845	1845	1845
Desha	1838	Arkansas		1865		1839	1852	1840
Drew	1846	Arkansas/Bradley		1847		1847	1847	1847
Faulkner	1873	Pulaski/Conway		1873		1873	1873	1873
Franklin	1837	Crawford		1850		1837	1838	1852



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Fulton	1842	Izard		1887		1870	1870	1870
Garland	1873	Montgomery/ Hot Spring/ Saline		1874		1873	1877	1874
Grant	1869	Jefferson/Hot Spring/ Saline		1877		1877	1877	1877
Greene	1833	Lawrence		1876		1858	1876	1871
Hempstead	1818	Arkansas		1823		1900	1826	1819
Hot Spring	1829	Clark		1825		1831	1834	1843
Howard	1873	Pike/Hempstead/Polk/Sevier		1873		1873	1873	1873
Independence	1820	Arkansas/Lawrence		1826		1820	1839	1821
Izard	1825	Independence/Fulton		1889		1889	1889	1889
Jackson	1829	Independence		1843		1845	1845	1845
Jefferson	1829	Arkansas/ Pulaski		1830		1830	1829	1837
Johnson	1833	Pope		1855		1836	1844	1841
Layfayette	1827	Hempstead		1828		1828	1828	1828
Lawrence	1815	New Madrid, Mo.		1821		1815	1817	1816
Lee	1873	Phillips/Monroe/Crittenden/Saint Francis		1873		1873	1873	1873
Lincoln	1871	Arkansas/Bradley/Desha/Drew/ Jefferson		1871		1871	1871	1871
Little River	1867	Hempstead/Sevier		1880		1867	1880	1868
Logan	1875	Franklin/Scott/Yell/Johnson		1877		1878	1873	1877
Lonoke	1873	Pulaski/Prairie		1873		1873	1873	1873
Lovely	Crawford/Lovely Purchase							
Madison	1836	Washington/Carroll		1896		1843	1901	1866
Marion	1835	Izard		1887		1887	1887	1887
Miller (old)	Hempstead							
Miller (present)	1874	Lafayette		1875		1874	1874	1874
Mississippi	1833	Crittenden		1850		1865	1865	1865
Monroe	1829	Crittenden		1850		1829	1839	1830



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Montgomery	1842	Hot Spring		1845		1845	1845	1845
Nevada	1871	Hempstead/Columbia/Ouachita		1871		1871	1871	1871
Newton	1842	Carroll		1866		1866	1880	1880
Ouachita	1842	Union		1842		1869	1876	1875
Perry	1840	Conway		1882		1882	1882	1882
Phillips	1820	Arkansas		1831		1820	1850	1820
Pike	1833	Clark/Hempstead		1895		1895	1895	1895
Poinsett	1838	Greene/St. Francis		1873		1873	1873	1871
Polk	1844	Sevier		1881		1885	1900	1885
Pope	1829	Crawford		1830	1965	1828	1844	1857
Prairie	1846	Pulaski		1854		1854	1854	1854
Pulaski	1818	Arkansas		1839		1819	1820	1839
Randolph	1835	Lawrence		1837		1836	1837	1836
St. Francis	1827	Philips		1875		1860	1910	1872
Saline	1835	Pulaski		1836		1871	1836	1836
Sarber								
Scott	1833	Crawford/Pope		1833		1882	1882	1882
Searcy	1838	Marion		1881		1866	1881	1881
Sebastian	1851	Scott/Polk/Crawford		1865		1861	1865	1851
Savier	1828	Hempstead/Miller (old)		1829		1830	1829	1830
Sharp	1868	Lawrence		1880		1880	1880	1880
Stone	1873	Izard/Independence/ Searcy/ Van Buren		1873		1873	1873	1873
Union	1829	Hempstead/Clark		1847		1830	1839	1830
Van Buren	1833	Independence/Conway/Izard		1859		1855	1859	1859
Washington	1828	Crawford/Lovely		1845		1834	1830	1835
White	1835	Pulaski/Jackson/Independence		1836		1837	1848	1836
Woodruff	1862	Jackson/St. Francis		1865		1851	1865	1865
Yell	1840	Pope/Scott		1865		1849	1858	1865