

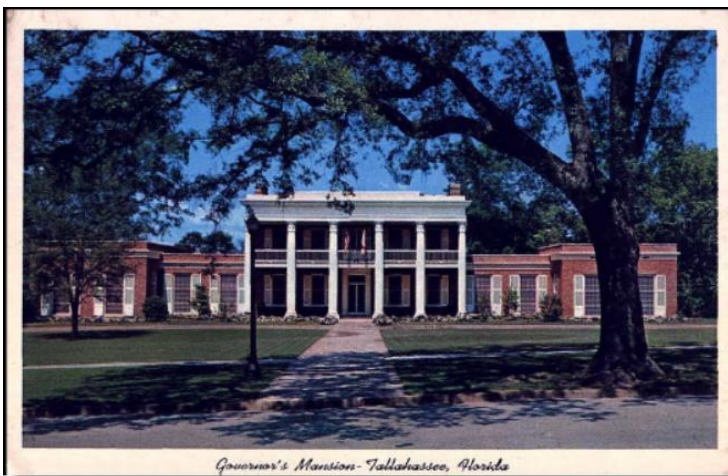


Florida Resources

Family History Sources in The Sunshine State

Florida History

Florida was first explored by the Spanish in the early 1500s. It has been under the control of the Spanish, French, British and the United States before becoming the 27th state in 1845. St. Augustine, Florida, is the oldest permanent European settlement in North America, established in 1564.



Governor's Mansion - Tallahassee, Florida

In 1776, Floridians decided to remain loyal to England and did not join the 13 colonies in the American Revolution. Many loyalists fled the 13 colonies and settled in Florida. Florida became a United States territory in 1821 with Andrew Jackson serving as its first governor.

The first half of the 19th century saw three wars referred to as the Seminole Wars. The Seminoles were not a tribe native to Florida, but instead a group of various people including Creek Indians forced out of Georgia and Alabama and blacks who had first come to Florida in the 1700s. The last Seminole War was fought between 1855 and 1858 and many of the Seminole were relocated west of the Mississippi in 1859.

Florida was one of the original Confederate States, seceding from the Union in 1861. Its capital Tallahassee was the only Confederate Capital not conquered by Union Troops. Florida was admitted back into the Union in 1868.

Florida has long been known for its citrus produce, producing over 6 million boxes of fruit a year by the early 1890s. A Great Freeze in late 1894 and early 1895, devastated the states citrus trees and production dropped to about 100,000 boxes of fruit a year. It took about 5 years for the state to start producing over a million boxes a year.

Hurricanes have long besieged the state. Multiple storms in the 1920s hit the state throwing Florida's economy into a depression.

Because of its temperate climate, Florida became a training and staging ground for soldiers and aviators in preparation for both World War I and II. Cape Canaveral became a space and rocket center in 1950 and launched the United States first satellite in 1958. Many manned space and moon missions have been launched from Cape Canaveral.

Lake Okeechobee is the largest lake in the southeastern United States, but despite the surface area of 730 square miles, its average depth is only nine feet.



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Significant Dates (through 1958)

1513 – Juan Ponce de León first arrived on the peninsula on April 2, 1513 naming it *La Florida* or “flowery land.”

1540 – Disease brought by European explorers decimated the native Florida population. Over the next 100 years, 90% of that population died.

1562 – Jean Ribault explored Florida for the French.

1564 – St. Augustine, Florida, the oldest permanent European settlement in North America, was established by French Protestant Huguenots; the settlement was known originally as Fort Caroline.

1586 – The British, under the direction of Sir Francis Drake, burned St. Augustine.

1738 – Fort Mose, a free black settlement was established.

1760s – Native people, many of them Creeks, from Alabama and Georgia were forced into Florida. They were called Seminoles which came for the Spanish word Cimarron meaning outsiders.

1763 – When Great Britain defeated France in the Seven Years’ War it gained diplomatic control of Florida through the Peace of Paris; Britain divided the territory into East and West Florida; Spain gave up its portion of Florida at the end of the French and Indian War.

1776 – Florida did not join the 13 colonies in the American Revolution, remaining loyal to England. Many Tories moved from the 13 colonies to Florida.

1783 – The final naval battle of the American Revolution was fought off the coast of Cape Canaveral on March 10, 1783; the Treaty of Versailles transferred control of Florida from the British to the Spanish. The Spanish offered land grants to new settlers and many Americans moved to Florida.

1803 – The United States claimed West Florida and Pensacola as part of the Louisiana Purchase.

1817 – 1818 – The first of three Seminole Wars was fought between the Seminole people and the United States Army; the name Seminole referred to given to various groups of African and Native Americans.

1819 – Spain cedes Florida to the United States in exchange for \$5 million; America renounces all claims to Texas that they acquired from the Louisiana Purchase.

1820 – Many counties began keeping marriages records. Marriage records before 1927, if they exist, can be found at county court houses

1821 – Florida becomes a United States Territory; Andrew Jackson was Florida’s first governor.

1830 – The Indian Removal Act was passed in Congress on May 28, 1830 authorizing the president to negotiate with various tribes in the south for their removal to territory west of the Mississippi River.

1835 – 1842 – The United States Army engaged in the second Seminole War.

1838 – Florida’s first constitution was written as they prepared for statehood.

1845 – Florida was admitted to the Union as the 27th state on 3 March 1845.

1851 – The Florida legislature created the first two state colleges: West Florida Seminary which became Florida State University and East Florida Seminary which later became the University of Florida.

1855 – 1858 – The Third Seminole War was fought; in 1859, many of the remaining Seminoles were moved out west.

1861 – Florida seceded from the Union on January 10, 1861 becoming one of the founding members of the Confederate States on January 20, 1861.

1862 – Union forces occupy Fernandina, Jacksonville and St. Augustine.



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1868 – The United States mandated a new constitution for Florida as it readmitted the state back into the Union.

1876 – Florida played a decisive role in the presidential election between Rutherford Hayes and Samuel Tilden.

1885 – A new state constitution was adopted; the first Confederate pensions were authorized by the state.

1888 – A yellow fever epidemic hit Jacksonville killing over 400 people; nearly half the population left the city.

1894 – Much of Florida's citrus crops are destroyed in 2 subsequent freezes, first in December of 1894 and then in February 1895. Production of citrus dropped from 6 million boxes of fruit a year to as little as 100,000- boxes. It was 1901 before Florida produced over million boxes.

1898 – Embarkation camps for the Spanish American War were established in Tampa, Miami and Jacksonville. Many soldiers who left from these camps returned and settled in Florida.

1899 – The state passed a law mandating registration of deaths in 1899. Some records were kept as early as 1877. Although mandated by law, death records were spotty before 1917.

1901 – A program to drain parts of the Everglades begins to create more farmland.

1915 – The first woman to vote in Florida, Zena Dreier cast her vote in a local election on June 19th.

1917 – 1918 – Because of its year round favorable climate, Florida became a training ground for men, especially aviators, who were preparing for World War I.

1917 – Registration of births began in Florida. While some births were recorded between 1865 – 1916, they are sparse.

1918 – Prohibition officially begins in Florida when 18th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified.

1926 – Florida becomes economically depressed when a hurricane hits the Miami area; over 18 inches of rain fell in in 3 days.

1927 – Marriage, divorce and annulment records created after June 6, 1927 are stored with the state's Office of Vital Statistics.

1935 – 400 people were killed in the Florida Keys as a result of a hurricane.

1941 – After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Florida became a training ground for soldiers and aviators preparing for World War II.

1942 – German agents landed south of Jacksonville only to be discovered by fisherman and were then captured by the FBI.

1945 – At the end of World War II, returning service men settle in Florida helping to fuel the state's economy.

1946 – The Everglades National Park was established.

1950 – Cape Canaveral became a space and rocket center.

1958 – NASA began operations out of Cape Canaveral; the United States first satellite, Explorer 1, was launched.



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Florida Censuses

Federal censuses for Florida began in 1830 and continued every ten years thereafter.

The Spanish took a number of censuses during periods of their control (1565–1763 and 1784–1821). Most have been published, though some may be difficult to find. “The 1783 Spanish Census of Florida” was published in four consecutive issues of the Georgia Genealogical Magazine, beginning with no.39 (Winter 1971). William S. Coker and G. Douglas Inglis’s *The Spanish Census of Pensacola, 1784–1820: A Genealogical Guide to Spanish Pensacola* (Pensacola, Fla.: Perdido Bay Press, 1980) reproduces ten valuable censuses and population lists, one or another taken roughly every four years.

The state of Florida also conducted its own censuses in 1845, 1855, and every ten years from 1875 through 1945. Unfortunately, very few enumeration schedules have survived. Fortunately, Florida accepted partial funding from the federal government for a census taken as of 1 June 1885. Thirty-five of the thirty-nine counties of the state in 1885 are included and survive. The Florida State Archives has the original schedules of the state censuses of 1935 and 1945.

Florida Census Records on Ancestry.com

- [Florida, State Census, 1867-1945](#)
- [Florida, State Census, 1885](#)
- [Florida, Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1820-1890](#)
- [Census records and Cherokee muster rolls](#)

Florida Vital Records

The [Florida State Department of Health](#) holds records of births from 1917 to the present (with limited records from 1865-1916); marriages and divorces (from June 6, 1927 to the present); and deaths.

Birth and death records may also be available from local county health departments, while local county Clerks of courts may hold divorce and marriage records. See the “About Vital Records” page on the Florida State Department of Health website for local contact information.

Vital Records on Ancestry.com

- [Florida Marriage Collection, 1822-1875 and 1927-2001](#)
- [Florida, Divorce Index, 1927-2001](#)

<i>Population</i>	
1830	34,730
1840	54,477
1850	87,445
1860	140,424
1870	187,748
1880	269,493
1890	391,422
1900	528,542
1910	752,619
1920	968,470
1930	1,468,211
1940	1,897,414
1950	2,771,305
1960	4,951,560
1970	6,789,443
1980	9,746,324
1990	12,937,926



Florida Resources

Family History Sources in The Sunshine State

- [Florida Death Index, 1877-1998](#)
- [Web: Florida, Find A Grave Index, 1800-2012 \(Free\)](#)
- [Florida Marriages, 1822-1850](#)

Florida Military Records

- [U.S., Confederate Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865 \(Free\)](#)
- [U.S., Union Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865 \(Free\)](#)
- [Florida, Compiled Service Records, Florida Indian Wars, 1835-1858](#)
- [Florida War Death List, 1836-42](#)
- [Florida, Spanish American War Compiled Service Records, 1898 \(Free\)](#)

Florida Immigration & Travel

- [Florida Passenger Lists, 1898-1951](#)
- [Florida, Naturalization Records, 1847-1995](#)
- [Florida, Crew and Passenger Lists of Arriving Vessels and Airplanes, 1906-1954](#)
- [Index to Alien Arrivals by Airplane at Miami, Florida, 1930-1942](#)
- [Florida and South Carolina, Passenger Lists, 1907-1948](#)

Special 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

The organizations listed below provide information about Florida 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.

- [State Library of Florida Genealogy Resources page](#)
- [Florida State Archives](#)
- [Florida Historical Society](#)
- [Florida State Genealogical Society \(FSGS\)](#): FGS publishes a newsletter and The Florida Genealogist Journal, and sponsors an annual statewide conference.
- [Florida GenWeb](#): Contains links to Florida county-level genealogy pages; special projects; and collections and archives.



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Family History Sources in The Sunshine State



- [RootsWeb Resources](#): Contains links to Florida genealogy resources, including state and county-level websites; societies and organizations; and personal and miscellaneous web sites related to Florida research.
- [Florida Memory](#): This website is a joint project of the Florida State Library and Archives. Some highlights of this growing digital archive include Florida Confederate pension application files (images), WW1 Florida draft cards, a large photographic collection, and the Florida Folklife collection.
- [University of Florida Digital Collections](#): Some highlights of the many available collections include the Florida Collections, which contain oral history, newspapers, and photograph collections, and the History and Heritage collections, containing "Florida and the Civil War."
- [Florida Digital Newspaper Library](#): Contains searchable digital images for Florida current and historic newspapers.
- [Chronicling America](#): Online newspapers. Provides searchable online versions of selected Florida newspapers.
- [National Archives at Atlanta](#): Maintains records from Federal agencies and courts in Florida, including census, military, court, naturalization, and immigration records. See the Genealogy and Historical research link for more details.
- [Bureau of Land Management \(BLM\) General Land Office Records](#): The BLM administers Federal Land for public land states including Florida, 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

- [Florida Family History Research](#)
- [Counties of Florida](#)
- [Research in the Deep South](#)
- [Why Southern Research Is Different, Part I](#) and [Part II](#)
- [What Do You Know About the 1885 Census?](#)

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