

# Missouri State Research Guide



## Family History Sources in the Show Me State

### Missouri History

Missouri became the 24th state when it was admitted to the Union on 10 August 1821. Its central location, navigable waterways, and variable terrain attracted settlers from every part of the country as well as from abroad. Missouri was settled by people from New England, the Ohio Valley, the Appalachian region, and the upper South, as well as from Germany and other European nations.



*Library of Congress, "[Watercolor at the Thomas F. Eagleton, U.S. Courthouse, St. Louis, Missouri](#)," original digital file.*

Four major migrations influenced Missouri's settlement. The first began during Spanish and French control when each encouraged American settlement due to their fear of British encroachment. This group settled in 1798 in what is now the area of St. Charles County. That same year a group of German-Swiss from North Carolina settled near the Whitewater Creek bottoms in present-day Cape Girardeau and Bollinger counties.

The second wave of settlers came with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. The population grew from 10,000 in 1804 to more than 65,680 by 1821 when the state was admitted to the Union.

The third major wave was from 1820 through 1860 when the Ohio-Mississippi-Missouri river system and the extension of the Cumberland Road to the Mississippi River brought thousands of immigrants from the upper South and lower Midwest into Missouri. Kentucky contributed the largest number of settlers during this period, followed by Tennessee, Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. The mountaineers from middle or east Tennessee and North Carolina were especially attracted to the Ozarks. Many of the Missouri and Mississippi river settlements were established by Southerners who settled along the Mississippi River well north of St. Louis and across the Missouri Valley. Kentucky contributed a large proportion of settlers to the middle prairie regions, while the people from Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois concentrated along the northern border and the Mississippi River. During this period, Germany also contributed a large number of settlers who settled in St. Louis and along the river counties to the west.

Counties rapidly changed boundaries and names in this time. Much of the land purchased during this period was through the federal land offices located in strategic positions throughout the state. The first federal land offices were established in 1818 at Jackson, Franklin, and St. Louis.

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

# Missouri State Research Guide

## Family History Sources in the Show Me State



### Missouri Census Records

Federal censuses are available for Missouri as early as 1830. Pre-statehood territorial censuses taken in 1810 and 1820 were lost or destroyed, though the 1820 has been reconstructed from census fragments, tax lists, petitioner's lists, and other records. Other censuses were taken in 1814, 1817, and 1819, but only statistical summaries remain. Fragmented Spanish censuses exist for select towns or settlements.

Although Missouri conducted a number of state censuses, most of the individual schedules are lost, with only statistical abstracts remaining. The state compiled a census corresponding to the 1840 U.S. census, for which nine counties survive: New Madrid, Newton, Pike, Randolph, Ray, Shelby, Stoddard, Warren, and Rives (now Henry).

A few listings remain for the state censuses of 1844, 1852, 1856, and 1868, but most are statistical abstracts only. The state census of 1876 exists for Benton, Butler, Callaway, Cape Girardeau, Christian, Franklin, Greene, Holt, Howard, Iron, McDonald, Montgomery, Osage, Phelps, Reynolds, St. Francois, and Texas counties. The originals remain in the county, but microfilmed copies have been made by the Missouri State Archives and are also available at the Family History Library.

Related Censuses Available on Ancestry.com:

- [Missouri, State Census Collection, 1844-1881](#)
- [U.S. Census Reconstructed Records, 1660-1820](#)
- [Missouri, Jackson County Voter Registration Records, 1928-1956](#)
- [Missouri, Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1830-1870](#)
- [Missouri Mortality Records, 1850 and 1860](#)

| <i>Population</i> |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| <b>1810</b>       | <b>19,783</b>    |
| <b>1820</b>       | <b>66,586</b>    |
| <b>1830</b>       | <b>140,455</b>   |
| <b>1840</b>       | <b>383,702</b>   |
| <b>1850</b>       | <b>682,044</b>   |
| <b>1860</b>       | <b>1,182,012</b> |
| <b>1870</b>       | <b>1,721,295</b> |
| <b>1880</b>       | <b>2,168,380</b> |
| <b>1890</b>       | <b>2,679,185</b> |
| <b>1900</b>       | <b>3,106,665</b> |
| <b>1910</b>       | <b>3,293,335</b> |
| <b>1920</b>       | <b>3,404,055</b> |
| <b>1930</b>       | <b>3,629,367</b> |
| <b>1940</b>       | <b>3,784,664</b> |
| <b>1950</b>       | <b>3,954,653</b> |
| <b>1960</b>       | <b>4,319,813</b> |
| <b>1970</b>       | <b>4,676,501</b> |
| <b>1980</b>       | <b>4,916,686</b> |
| <b>1990</b>       | <b>5,117,073</b> |

### Missouri Vital Records

Missouri began recording vital records at the statewide level August 1909. The city of St. Louis, however, began recording deaths in 1850 and births in 1870. It is estimated that about 60 percent compliance was met in these earlier recordings by the city.

- [Missouri State Archives: The Digital Heritage project](#) includes a searchable index to [Missouri pre-1910 birth and death records](#) and a digitized collection of [Missouri death](#)

## Family History Sources in the Show Me State

[certificates](#). See the useful [FAQ page](#) for information about vital records at the state archive.

- [Missouri Bureau of Vital Records](#): Holds records of births from January 1, 1910, and records of death that are less than 50 years old. Older death records have been transferred to the Missouri State Archives.

Marriage records must be requested from the Recorder of Deeds for the county where the license was issued. Divorce decrees are held by the Circuit Clerk for the county where the divorce was granted.

### Missouri Vital Records on Ancestry.com

- [Missouri Marriage Records, 1805-2002](#)
- [Missouri, Death Records, 1834-1910](#)
- [Missouri Birth Records, 1851-1910](#)
- [Missouri Still Birth & Miscellaneous Records, 1805-2002](#)
- [Missouri Marriages to 1850](#)

### Missouri Land Records

- [Missouri State Archives — Land Records](#): This page provides an overview of holdings at the archives and includes a link to a searchable collection of land patents issued by the state of Missouri for 1831-1969.
- [Bureau of Land Management \(BLM\) General Land Office Records](#): The BLM administers federal land for public land states, including Missouri, 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 website. See the FAQ for more information on how to locate and use land patents.

### Missouri Military Records

- [U.S., Confederate Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865](#)
- [U.S., Union Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865](#)
- [Missouri, Confederate Pension Applications and Soldiers Home Applications](#)
- [Missouri State Offices Political and Military Records, 1919-1920](#)
- [Missouri National Guard, the Mexican Border, 1916](#)

### Other Collections

- [Missouri, Western District Naturalization Index, 1848-1990](#)
- [Missouri Cemetery Inscription Sources](#)
- [U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989](#) (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 Missouri Resources

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

- [Missouri State Archives](#): The [Research Room page](#) describes the holdings, which include census, land, military, and judicial records and more than 1,000 family histories. Several important collections have been indexed and made available on the [Missouri Digital Heritage website](#). The growing collection of online resources includes indexes to birth and death records, coroner's inquests, court proceedings, land transactions, and military records. The useful [FAQ page](#) describes the process to request research.
- [The State Historical Society of Missouri](#): Among the highlights of the society's extensive holdings are large collections of newspapers, photographs, oral histories, census records, and Western States manuscripts. Researchers can visit the research room located on the University of Missouri – Columbia campus or request limited research via a web-based form.
- [Missouri History Museum](#): The Library and Research Center in St. Louis holds many resources of interest to genealogists. See the Catalogs and Indexes section to search the holdings. Some names, businesses, and streets are indexed in the searchable [Genealogy and Local History Index](#).
- [Missouri State Genealogical Association](#)
- [Missouri GenWeb](#): This extensive website provides links to maps, historical information, county-level genealogy pages, Missouri research resources, special projects, and information on the Civil War. Some vital records information is also available, including "Missouri Marriages, 1820-1850" and the Missouri Tombstone project.
- [The National Archives at Kansas City, Missouri](#): This facility maintains records from federal agencies and courts in Missouri, including census, military, court, naturalization, and immigration records.

### Help and Advice

- [Missouri Family History Research](#)
- [Counties of Missouri](#)

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

### Significant Dates (through 1920)

**1764** – The city of Saint Louis was organized.

**1803** – The land that became the state of Missouri was acquired by the United States via the Louisiana Purchase; residents of Missouri became United States citizens by legislation, except for Native Americans, who remained part of a separate nation until 1924.

**1805** – Missouri was part of the Louisiana Territory.

**1811** – In 1811 and 1812, three earthquakes, estimated at around 8.0 on the Richter scale, jolted the New Madrid, Missouri, area and much of the Midwest. The quakes permanently altered the landscape, creating new lakes and even appearing to reverse the flow of the Mississippi River for a time.

**1812** – Missouri is created as a separate territory.

**1819** – The Missouri Territory sought statehood in 1819. There were 11 free states and 11 slave states, and the prospect of new states drew heated debate. The Missouri Compromise was reached, and as part of the agreement, Maine, previously part of Massachusetts, became the 23<sup>rd</sup> state on 15 March 1820, while Missouri was admitted as a slave state, thereby maintaining the balance.

**1820** – Missouri Compromise allowed slavery to be legal in the state.

**1821** – Missouri was admitted to the United States as the 24<sup>th</sup> state on August 21, 1821.

**1826** – Jefferson City became the permanent capital and home for all state records.

**1829** – The Missouri State Library was established.

**1839** – Missouri public schools were established with the Geyer Act.

**1847** – St. Louis was connected to the East Coast via telegraph.

**1849** – As the gold rush began in California, towns in Missouri such as St. Louis, Independence, and St. Joseph became points of departure for those heading west; a cholera epidemic struck St. Louis, killing more than 4,000 people.

**1860** – The Pony Express began running from St. Joseph to Sacramento.

**1865** – Slavery was abolished in Missouri, making it the first slave state to emancipate slaves before the adoption of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**1866** – The Missouri Historical Society was organized in St. Louis.

**1867** – The Missouri Woman's Suffrage Club, the first organization of its type, whose sole purpose was the political enfranchisement of women, was established.

**1873** – Susan Blow opened the first public kindergarten in St. Louis.

**1874** – The Eads Bridge, which spanned the Mississippi River, was opened in St. Louis; the first train robbery by the James Gang took place at Gads Hill.

**1875** – A grasshopper plague caused an estimated \$15 million in damage.

**1889** – Anyone who performed a marriage was required to keep a record of the marriage and file it with the county recorder.

**1898** – Volunteers for the Spanish-American War began arriving in St. Louis.

**1911** – The Missouri State Capitol was destroyed by fire after being struck by lightning.

**1913** – Direct election of senators was authorized instead of being elected by the General Assembly.

**1919** – Women in Missouri became eligible to vote in presidential elections.

**1920** – Missouri women received complete suffrage by passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution.