



New Mexico Resources

Family History Sources in The Land of Enchantment

New Mexico History

New Mexico has been the home of many different people for centuries. The Spanish began exploring in 1540, when Francisco Vázquez de Coronado arrived in New Mexico. New Mexico subsequently became part of the New Spain, Mexico, and a United States Territory before becoming the 47th state on January 6, 1912.

The Palace of the Governors, constructed in 1610, is the oldest continuously used public building in the U.S. The Fray Angélico Chávez History Library is part of the Palace of the Governors and is home to a rich collection of historical materials relating to the region.

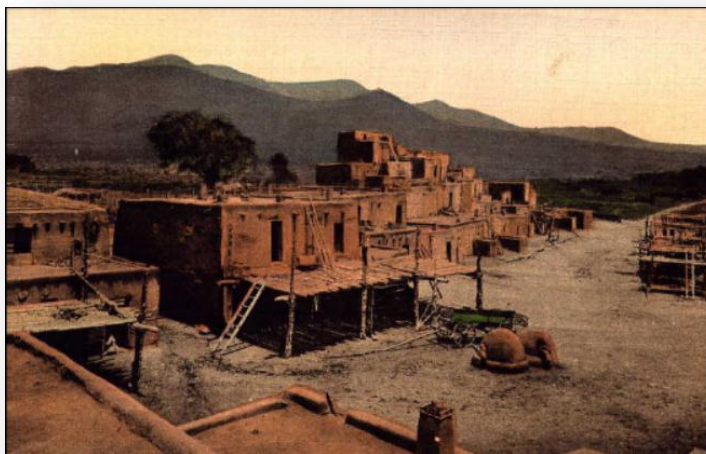
The oldest church, the San Miguel Chapel was built in Santa Fe in 1610 and is the oldest church structure in the United States today.

Santa Fe, established in the early seventeenth century boasted an estimated Spanish population of 2,500 by 1680. In its history, the city has been capital of the Spanish Kingdom of New Mexico, the Mexican province of Nuevo México, the American territory of New Mexico (present-day Arizona and New Mexico), and the state of New Mexico.

New Mexico has the second largest percentage of Native Americans of any state; the tribes are mostly Navajo, Pueblo and Apache. New Mexico also has the largest percentage of Hispanics in the United States. This gives the state a unique culture which reflects its diverse population.

Navajo soldiers were trained as "[Code Talkers](#)" during World War II. The Navajo language is extremely complex and is almost impossible for anyone to understand without training and extended exposure. It has not written alphabet or symbols and is only spoken by the Navajo in southwestern portion of the United States. The code itself was made up of unrelated Navajo words which were then translated to English. Then the first letter of the English word was used to compose words. The code remained unbroken through the war.

During World War II, the first atomic bombs were designed and manufactured at Los Alamos and the first was tested at Trinity site in the desert on the White Sands Proving Grounds between Socorro and Alamogordo.



Taos Pueblo, North House, Taos New Mexico, date unknown



New Mexico Resources

Family History Sources in The Land of Enchantment



Significant Dates (through 1945)

- 1540** – Francisco Vázquez de Coronado explored New Mexico.
- 1563** – Francisco de Ibarra explored parts of the area and identified it as “New Mexico.”
- 1609** – Santa Fe was first settled at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.
- 1610** – The San Miguel Chapel was built in Santa Fe and is the oldest church structure in the United States today.
- 1706** – Albuquerque was founded from surrounding communities.
- 1821** – New Mexico passed from Spanish to Mexican control after the Mexican War of Independence.
- 1836** – When Texas seceded from Mexico it claimed part of New Mexico, specifically the area east of the Rio Grande, but they never were able to control the area.
- 1846 – 1849** – The United States negotiated multiple treaties with Navajo Indians.
- 1848** – Following the Mexican-American War, Mexico gave what is now known as the American Southwest and California to the United States.
- 1850** – Texas gave up the area east of the Rio Grande in exchange for ten million dollars.
- 1850** – The United States established the New Mexico Territory on September 9, 1850 which included most of Arizona and New Mexico and parts of Colorado.
- 1853** – With the Gadsen Purchase the United States acquired the boot heel of New Mexico and the southern part of Arizona.
- 1857** – Free blacks and mulattos were prohibited by law from being residents.
- 1861** – The Confederacy claimed the southern tract of the New Mexico Territory as its own Arizona Territory.
- 1862** – In the Battle of Glorieta Pass, the Confederate hold was broken on the area.
- 1863** – Navajos defeated in Canyon de Chelly by Union forces led by Kit Carson.
- 1866** – The New Mexico Territory was split into the Arizona and New Mexico Territories.
- 1878** – The first operational railroad, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway entered the area through the Raton Pass.
- 1880** – The Southern Pacific Railroad entered New Mexico through the Arizona Territory; the Denver & Rio Grande Railway entered the territory through Colorado.
- 1881** – The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway reaches El Paso, Texas.
- 1886** – The Apache Wars ended when Geronimo surrendered to Brigadier General Nelson Miles.
- 1912** – New Mexico became the 47th state.
- 1913** – Stag Canyon Mine No. 2 in Dawson suffered from an explosion that killed 263 men.
- 1923** – Another mine explosion in Dawson killed 123 men, many of whom were children of the men killed in the 1913 explosion.
- 1942** – Forty-two Navajo recruits are sent to boot camp to be the initial Code Talkers to assist in the war effort.
- 1945** – The first atom bomb was detonated in Southern New Mexico.
- 1947** – The [crash of a unidentified flying object](#) in Roswell, New Mexico created a variety of conspiracy theories that still exist today.



New Mexico Resources

Family History Sources in The Land of Enchantment

New Mexico Censuses

The first federal census for New Mexico was in 1850.

There are Spanish and Mexican colonial censuses which can be found at the New Mexico Records Center and Archives. The originals are in Spanish, but the New Mexico Genealogical Society has published *Spanish and Mexican Censuses of New Mexico, 1750–1830*, translated by Virginia L. Olmsted. Copies are available at the Albuquerque Public Library, Special Collections; University of New Mexico, The Center for Southwest Research, Special Collections; and the FHL family history center in Albuquerque, as well as many other libraries.

The New Mexico State Records Center and Archives also houses the 1885 state census, a federally-sponsored census which includes all members of the household. However, some schedules are missing. It is also available through the Albuquerque Public Library, Special Collections; University of New Mexico, Special Collections; the National Archives; and the FHL.

- [New Mexico, Territorial Census, 1885](#)
- [Arizona and New Mexico Territories Census, Late 1800s](#)

New Mexico Vital Records

Statewide vital records registration officially began in 1920, although there are some records as early as 1889.

- [Web: Western States Marriage Index, 1809-2011](#)
- [Web: New Mexico, Find A Grave Index, 1850-2012](#)
- [New Mexico Marriages, 1727-1900](#)
- [New Mexico and Texas, Select United Methodist Church Records, 1870-1970](#)

New Mexico Military Resources on Ancestry.com

- [U.S., Union Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865](#)

Other State Resources

- [New Mexico Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics](#): Holds records of births and deaths from 1919 and scattered earlier records. Marriage and divorce records are held by the Clerk of the county where the event was filed.

Population	
1850	61,547
1860	93,516
1870	91,874
1880	119,565
1890	160,282
1900	195,310
1910	327,301
1920	360,350
1930	423,317
1940	531,818
1950	681,187
1960	951,023
1970	1,017,055
1980	1,303,302
1990	1,515,069
2000	1,819,046
2010	2,059,179



New Mexico Resources

Family History Sources in The Land of Enchantment

- [New Mexico Statewide Death index](#): Transcription of the State's death indexes for 1899-1940 and 1941-1949.
- [Western States marriage index \(BYU Idaho\) special collections](#): a searchable index to marriages in several western states, including New Mexico. See the web site for specific counties and years included in the index.

Special Collections

- [New Mexico State Records Center and Archives](#): The collection includes a wide range of resources, including census, court, land, military, wills, church, and family records.
- [New Mexico State Library](#)
- [Historical Society of New Mexico](#)
- [New Mexico Genealogical Society](#)
- [New Mexico GenWeb](#)
- [Rocky Mountain Online Archive](#): Includes New Mexico content.
- [Office of the New Mexico State Historian: Digital History Project](#)
- [The National Archives at Denver](#): This facility maintains records from Federal agencies and courts in New Mexico, 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 New Mexico, 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.

Specialty and Regional Research

- [Genealogy Collections at the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Libraries](#)
- [Center for Southwest Research at the University of New Mexico](#)

Help and Advice

- [New Mexico Family History Research](#)
- [Counties of New Mexico](#)
- [Research in the Southwest](#)
- [Hispanic Research at Documentary Relations of the Southwest](#)
- [What Do You Know About the 1885 Census?](#)
- [Track Down Your Western Trails Travelers](#)

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