Genealogy Research in Alabama

The name "Alabama" is a Muskogean Indian word that meant "campsite" or "clearing."
Native American Tribes who lived in the area that is now called Alabama included: **Alabama – Biloxi –Koasati – Mobile –** and **Muskogee (Creek), Cherokee, Chickasaw,** and **Choctaw** (called the Civilized Tribes by Europeans)
Most of these people were forcibly moved to reservations in Oklahoma and Texas during the Indian Removals of the 1800's. The tribes are not extinct, but except for the descendants of Alabama Indians who escaped from Removal, they do not live in Alabama anymore.

Spanish Explorers

- **1519:** Spanish explorers are believed to have arrived at Mobile Bay.
- **1540**: The explorer Hernando De Soto visited the area.

French Settlement

- **1702:** The first permanent settlement, Fort Louis de la Mobile, was founded by the French north of the present site of Mobile.
- **1710–1763:** The Alabama area was governed by France. English, French, and Spanish settlers as well as settlers from South Carolina and Georgia established trading posts.
- **1711:** Mobile was the capital of the Louisiana Territory
- 1720: Biloxi became the capital of the Louisiana Territory
- **1722:** New Orleans became the territory capital.

British Influence

1763: The British gained control of the area through the Treaty of Paris, calling it British West Florida.

U. S. Government

1783: Britain ceded the southern region, around Mobile, to Spain. It became known as Spanish West Florida.
Spain and the fledgling United States disagreed over the boundary between the southern and northern areas.

1795: In the Treaty of San Lorenzo, Spain and the U.S. set the boundary between the southern and the northern areas at the 31st parallel, a few miles north of Mobile.

1798: Georgia abandoned claims to the area. The area north of the 31st parallel became part of the Mississippi Territory.

1800: A census was taken of part of what is now Alabama (Washington County in Mississippi territory). 494 African Americans were listed in that census.

1800 - 1820: Settlers migrated from Virginia and the Carolinas to the central and southern part of what is now Alabama, bringing their slaves with them.

1800-1810: More settlers moved from Tennessee into the northern part of what is now Alabama.

1802: The Choctaw Indians ceded land.

1802: Georgia abandoned claims to the area. Spain controlled the Mobile area until the War of 1812.

1805 - 1806: The Choctaw and Cherokee Indians ceded more land to the U. S. government.

1812–1814: During the War of 1812, on 15 April 1813, U.S. forces captured Mobile from the Spanish. General Andrew Jackson defeated the Creek Indians in several battles. 900 to 1000 Native Americans were killed. Some Creeks and other Indian tribes were removed to the West. More European settlers began flooding into the region, bringing their slaves with them.

1814 - 1819: The Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw and Cherokee Indians again ceded land to the U. S.

1817: In Marengo County (Demopolis), the Frenchman Parmentier obtained a grant for 150 French refugees who came from Philadelphia. They settled at St. Stephens on the Tombigbee River.

March 3, 1817: Mississippi Territory was divided into the state of Mississippi and the Alabama Territory.

December 14, 1819: Alabama became the 22nd state.
1820: The first Federal census was conducted in Alabama; all results were reported missing.
1830: In the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, the Choctaw Indians gave up 10 million acres of land in Alabama and Mississippi. They were given land in what is now Oklahoma.
The second Federal Census was conducted in Alabama; the results were incomplete.
1832: The Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians ceded more land.
1835: The treaty of New Echota was signed. The Cherokees ceded land. This led to the removal of most Indian tribes from Alabama. A few Creeks and Cherokees remained.
1839: The slave ship Clothilde, with Guineau Africans on board, arrived at Mobile. Because they were unable to be sold, the slaves were freed. These African Americans formed a community called African Town in the suburb near Mobile called Plateau.

1800's: The economy in Alabama was primarily agricultural. European settlers owned farms or plantations. Work was done primarily by slave labor.
I860: The slave population was 435,080.
1861–1868: The American Civil War and Reconstruction changed the culture of Alabama society.
1865: Thirty-five black schools were set up by the Freedmen's Bureau and the American Missionary Association.
1893: Congress established a commission to exchange remaining Indian tribal lands in the southeastern United States for land allotments to individuals in Oklahoma. More than 250,000 people applied to the commission for enrollment and land. Just over 100,000 were approved.
Dawes Commission records include Applications for enrollment, Enrollment cards, and Letter logs. Indexes and images of Dawes Commission records are online at:
Fold3 - http://www.fold3.com/
National Archives - http://www.archives.gov/
1902: The Eastern Cherokee sued the United States to get the funds due them under the treaties of 1835, 1836, and 1845. In 1906, the court awarded more than $1 million to be split among the Eastern Cherokees. There were 45,847 applications filed, representing some 90,000 individuals.
Indexes and images of these applications (Guion Miller Rolls) are online at:
Fold3 - http://www.fold3.com/
National Archives - http://www.archives.gov/

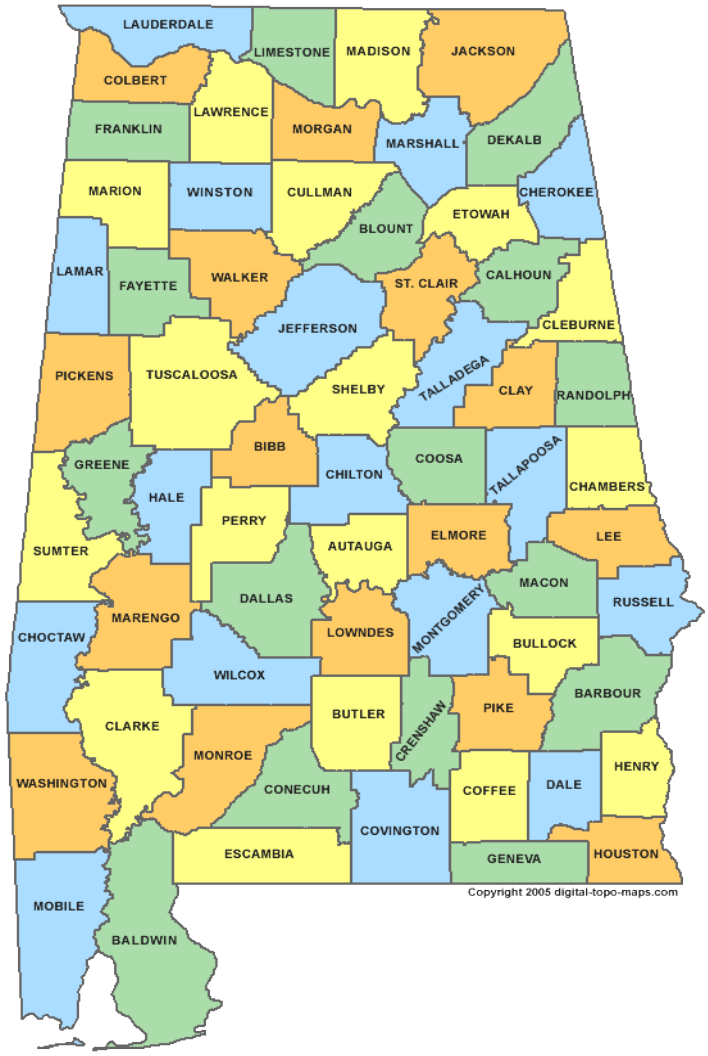
Alabama Migration Routes

Alabama-Chickasaw Trail · Alabama, Choctaw and Natchez Trail · Alabama and Mobile Road · Chattanooga-Willstown Road · Coosa-Tugaloo Indian Warpath · Fall Line Road (or Southern Road) · Federal Horse Path · Gaine's Trace · Georgia Road · Great Indian Warpath · Great South Trail · Jackson's Military Road · Lower Creek Trading Path · Macon and Montgomery Trail · Memphis, Pontotoc and Mobile Trail · Middle Creek Trading Path · Mobile and Natchez Trail · Natchez-Lower Creeks Trail · Natchez Trace (or Chickasaw Trail) · Okfuskee Trail · Tallapoosa-Birmingham Road · Upper Creeks-Pensacola Trail

Many **Indian Trail Maps** are described in the book, *Indian Trails of the Southeast: Extract from the 42nd Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* by William E. Meyers, originally published in 1925.

The Atlas of Historical County Boundaries – Interactive maps and text covering the historical boundaries, names, organization, and attachments of every county, extinct county and unsuccessful county proposal from the creation of the first county through December 31, 2000. - http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/index.html

Alabama Counties



Alabama Birth Records
Online Indexes
FamilySearch.org

Birth Records 1881 to 1908:
Counties began registering the births of children in 1881. Many records from this time period are missing or were destroyed. Birth registers from this time period usually did *not* list the child's name.
Obtain copies of birth records from 1881 to 1908 from the **County Court** where the birth occurred.
Birth Records 1908 to Present:
A new state law required counties to register births beginning 1 January 1908. Early registration was sketchy. By 1927, most births were recorded and included the child's name.
Obtain copies of *original state birth records* from the **Alabama Department of Public Health.**
Certified copies of birth certificates may be requested from **Alabama Vital Records.**

Alabama Marriage Records
Online Indexes
FamilySearch.org - Ancestry.com

1799 - March 3, 1817 - Mississippi Territory Marriage Records:

In 1799, a law passed in the Mississippi Territory (including present day Alabama) required marriage licenses and bonds to be registered at the Orphans Court (now the Probate Court) in the county of the bride's residence.

Obtain copies of Mississippi Territory marriage records from the respective county **Probate Court**.

1818 – 1957 - Alabama Territory/Alabama State Marriage Records:

After the Alabama Territory was established and after Alabama became a state, marriage licenses continued to be registered in the Orphan's Court in the county of the bride's residence.

Starting in 1888, bonds were required if the groom was under age 21 or the bride was under age 18.

Obtain copies of Alabama Territory or State marriage records from the **Probate Court** in the county where the license was issued or from the **Alabama Department of Archives and History.**

Alabama Death Records

Online Indexes

FamilySearch.org and *Ancestry.com*

Deaths 1881 to 1907

The state of Alabama began requiring counties to record deaths in 1881. Only some were recorded. Some early records are missing or were destroyed. Only a few early death records have survived.

Obtain a copy of a death record dated 1881 - 1907 from the respective county **Probate Court**.

Deaths 1908 to the Present

A new state law required counties to register deaths beginning 1 January 1908. Counties gradually complied.

Copies:

An *original Death Record* is obtained from the **Alabama Department of Public Health** or the **County Department of Health.**

A *certified Death Certificate* is obtained from **Alabama Vital Records**.

Other Sources of Birth, Marriage, and Death Information

Church records - Family papers - Military Records - Newspaper articles - Guardianship records/ Probate records /Wills - Funeral Home/Cemetery Records

Major Repositories of Historical/Genealogical Information

Alabama Department of Archives and History • Alabama Historical Association • Birmingham Public Library • University of Alabama Libraries • Mobile Public Library • Florence-Lauderdale Public Library • Samford University Library • Wallace State College • National Archives Southeast Region (Atlanta)

Alabama Church Records

In the 1800s, the largest religious groups in Alabama were the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian. Roman Catholic Church records for Mobile date from about 1700.

"Inventory of the Church Archives of Alabama: Protestant Episcopal Church" can be read online in the Books section of *familysearch.org*.

Houghton Memorial Library of Huntingdon College, Montgomery, AL, has Methodist Church records.

Samford University Library in Birmingham, AL, has records of **U.S. Southern Baptist Churches** and of other denominations.

Alabama State Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL, has some **Roman Catholic Church** records, church newspapers, family histories, etc.

Always contact the current local churches to find the location of their historical records.

Alabama Genealogy Websites

NOTE: Look online for the *GenWeb* or *Genealogy Trai*ls of any county in which your ancestors lived.

Alabama Department of Archives and History – civil war service records, 1867 voter registrations, WW1 soldiers, digital collection of letters, diaries, WWI service records, etc. – https://archives.alabama.gov/searchcoll.html
Alabama GenWeb – links to county genealogical websites, cemetery project, etc. - http://www.algw.org/
Alabama History Online – search military and church records, city directories, and more - http://www.archives.alabama.gov/searchcoll.html
Alabama Mosaic – oral histories, naturalization records, school years, Civil War diaries and letters from archives and libraries across Alabama – www.alabamamosaic.org
Huntsville-Madison County Library – search index of obituaries from 33 local newspapers from 1819 to 1998, link to cemetery information and other burials – index is growing - http://obits.hmcpl.org/
Lawrence County Archives – indexed marriage books 1818 to 1947 – name indexes of deed books 1818 to 1850 – name indexes of Orphans Court Minute Books 1825 to 1850 – name index of some probate records and wills 1829 to 1850 – index of soldiers of Rev War to WWII – index of tax assessments – abstracts of newspaper obits 1855 to 1905 - http://www.lawrencecoarchives.com/pages/archive.html
Madison County, AL, Records Center – search index of marriage records, probate records, Chancery Court records, naturalizations, child labor records, etc. - http://mcrc.madisoncountyal.gov/mcrc/
Online County Histories - http://www.learnwebskills.com/family/countyhistories1.htm#il

Alabama African American Research

AfricaMap – track the slave trade with historical overlays and geographical data - http://worldmap.harvard.edu/africamap/
Afrigeneas – search a large variety of records, get research help and information, forums, etc. - http://www.afrigeneas.com/
Alabama Civil War Service Database – search by name and/or unit #, includes slaves and free people of color who served in the confederate army - http://www.archives.alabama.gov/civilwar/index.cfm
Black Confederate Soldiers Website - free genealogy records by state about 19th Century slaves and freedmen who served in various capacities with the Confederate States Army and Navy during the American Civil War - http://blackconfederatesoldiers.com/home.html
Digital Library on American Slavery – search database of slave petitions, runaway slave advertisements, bills of sale, transatlantic slave trade database; this compilation of various online collections started with a focus on records in North Carolina but the information includes people in all 15 slave states and Washington D.C.; more records are currently being digitized - http://library.uncg.edu/slavery/
International African American Museum - African American funeral programs, obituaries, marriage records, photos, historical documents and family histories – military records of the U.S. Colored Troops are currently being digitized - https://cfh.iaamuseum.org/records/
Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery - search thousands of "Information Wanted" advertisements taken out by former slaves in all states searching for family members lost by sale, flight, or enlistment – the collection currently includes newspapers from 1853 to 1911 - http://www.informationwanted.org/
Slave Confederate Payrolls - digitized payrolls list names of slaves of 10 southern states who worked for the Confederate Army and whose pay went to their masters - https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=719477
Slave Voyages - the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* documents vessels along the Atlantic slave routes from 1514 to 1866; *Intra-American Slave Trade Database* documents vessels traveling between the Atlantic and Pacific ports ranging from the United States to Brazil; the *African Names Database* gives names, ages, possible origins of slaves liberated from captured slave ships between 1808 and 1862 - https://www.slavevoyages.org/

Alabama Cemetery Research

Davis Cemetery – *Dora, Walker County, AL:* list of burials with birth and death dates when known and photos of some tombstones - http://daviscemetery.com/index.htm
Lawrence County Archives – index of burials in the county cemeteries - http://www.lawrencecoarchives.com/database/burials.php
Tennessee Valley Authority Cemeteries – index of over 30,000 graves originally in TN, **AL,** MS, KY, GA, NC, and VA that were flooded or relocated when the dams were built - https://www.tva.gov/Environment/Environmental-Stewardship/Land-Management/Cultural-%252B-Historic-Preservation/Relocated-Cemeteries

Alabama Military Research

Alabama Department of Archives and History – browse civil war and World War 1 military records - http://www.archives.alabama.gov/searchcoll.html
Grand Army of the Republic Records Project – developing database - histories of posts, reports of officers and members if available, search by state - http://suvcw.org/garrecords/
Thomas M. Owen's Revolutionary Soldiers in Alabama – alphabetical list of AL soldiers in the Revolutionary War - http://www.archives.state.al.us/al_sldrs/first_pg.html

Alabama Native American Research

Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center – student records, cemetery information, info about Lakota, Ojibwe, Seneca, Oneida, Cherokee, Apache, Cheyenne, and Alaska Native tribes - http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/
Dawes Commission Indexes and images are online at:
Fold3 - http://www.fold3.com/
National Archives - http://www.archives.gov/
First People - Links to State Recognized Tribes, sorted by state - http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Links/state-recognized-tribes-in-usa-by-state.html
Guion Miller Roll is Indexes and Images of the Cherokee applications for funds due them under the treaties of 1835, 1836, and 1845. Find them online at:
Fold 3 - http://www.fold3.com/
National Archives (Index) - http://www.archives.gov/
Access Genealogy (Index) - http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/

Native American Tribes of Alabama - http://www.native-languages.org/alabama.htm

Alabama Newspaper Research

Alabama Online Historical Newspapers – list and links to websites of newspaper digitizations - https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite/Home/usa/al
CALHOUN COUNTY, AL: ***Jacksonville Herald*** **Newspaper Database** – search a name index of people and entities mentioned in the *Jacksonville Herald* from 1837 through 1904 - browse a digitization of the newspaper from 1837 through 1895 - http://www.jsu.edu/library/collections/jacksonville_republican.html

Information on these pages is compiled from information in:

- *FamilySearch.org* Wiki - *Ancestry.com* Wiki
- Family Tree Magazine
- *The Weekly Genealogist, NEHGS; Dick Eastman Genealogy Newsletter; The Genealogy Newsline*
- *Native American Tribes of Alabama* - http://www.native-languages.org/alabama.htm
- *Online Military Indexes and Records* - http://www.militaryindexes.com/index.html