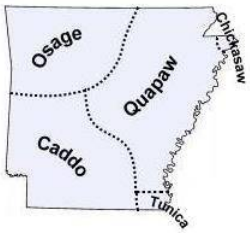
Arkansas Genealogy Research

Native Americans of Arkansas



People living in the land that is now Arkansas when Europeans came include:

- **Caddo**
- **Chickasaw**
- **Osage**
- **Quapaw**
- **Tunica**

Members of the above tribes were moved to Indian reservations in Oklahoma. Some members of these tribes escaped the removal. Their descendants live in Arkansas today.

The Cherokee were driven into Arkansas by the U. S. government. Descendants of those who escaped that removal have organized:

Western Cherokee Nation of Arkansas and Missouri
PO Box 606
Mansfield Missouri 65704
Website: http://www.westerncherokee.co

Read more information at *Native American Tribes of Arkansas*: http://www.native-languages.org/arkansas.htm

European Settlement

1539 - 1542: Hernando DeSoto assembled and financed a party of some 620 men, 500 beef cattle, 250 horses and 200 pigs. King Charles I of Spain ordered him to find gold, the Pacific Ocean and a direct passage to China. He embarked from Havana and landed on Florida's West Coast. They traveled on land past Tampa Bay and then further north to present-day Georgia. After battles with the Creeks of present day Georgia, DeSoto had lost nearly half of his men and his horses. He determined to press on towards the Mississippi River. They were the first Europeans to travel inland into present-day Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas.
At a point near present-day Memphis, he built rafts and became the first European to cross the Mississippi River.
1673: Floating down the Mississippi River from the Great Lakes, Father Jacques Marquette and trader Louis Juliet reached the Quapaw villages of Arkansae and Kappa.
1682: French explorer Ren□-Robert Cavelier (Sieur de la Salle) erected a cross near the confluence of the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico, after floating down rivers from the Great Lakes area. He claimed the entire Mississippi Basin for Louis XIV of France.
1686: The French established Arkansas Post, the first white settlement. It failed as a French agricultural settlement, but it became the administrative center for the French, Spanish, and United States government until 1821.
1700: French missionaries arrived in the Osage and Quapaw villages. Their goal: convert the natives to Catholicism.
1721-1762: By 1721, several hundred French colonists abandoned Arkansas Post. The trading fort at Arkansas Post remained to protect French fur traders. It continued to be the focal point for trade with the Quapaw and Osage Indians.
1763: France lost most of its North American land at the end of the French and Indian War. It ceded the region to Spain.
1800: Spain officially returned the land to France, although Spanish occupancy continued until 1802. However, the French did not have troops to establish and protect a French government.
1803: The United States government acquired the area that is now Arkansas as part of the Louisiana Purchase. The area became part of the Louisiana Territory.
1810: Osage and Quapaw ceded land.
1812: The Louisiana Territory was renamed Missouri Territory, including present day Arkansas in its boundaries.
Post - War of 1812: The Indian population decreased, and white settlers arrived to claim bounty land.
1813: The territorial legislature established Arkansas County.
1818: Quapaw Indians gave up lands between the Arkansas and Red Rivers. This opened the area to white settlement.
1819: Arkansas Territory was created, taken from the Missouri Territory.

1820: First Federal Census, all reported missing
1825-1826: Quapaw and Caddo removed to Red River Agency on Red River west of Arkansas.
1835: Most remaining Indian tribes were removed to Oklahoma.

Statehood

15 June 1836: Arkansas became a state.
1837: Settlers began arriving from southern states.
1861: Arkansas seceded from the Union.
1868: The state was **readmitted** to the Union**.**

Arkansas Birth Records

Indexes

FamilySearch.org has an index of Arkansas births from 1812 to 1965, based on church and civil records.

Births from 1881 to 1913

In 1881, some Arkansas counties and cities, such as Little Rock and Fort Smith, began recording births.
Obtain a copy of a birth record from 1881 to 1913 from the County Clerk where the birth occurred.

Births 1914 to the Present

Statewide registration of births began in 1914 in Arkansas with general compliance by the mid-1930s.
Obtain a copy of a birth record of a person born from 1914 to the present from the Arkansas Department of Health.

The person obtaining a copy of a birth record of a person born within 100 years must be:

- The person on the certificate - Specific relatives - A person with a legal interest in the certificate

Other records that may mention or refer to births:

- Church records
- Military records
- Bible records
- Censuses
- Marriage records
- Obituaries
- Cemetery records

Arkansas Marriage Records

Indexes of Arkansas marriages

Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org have indexes of Arkansas marriages for various years, from the late 1700's into the 1900's.

Marriages before 1917

Early marriage records were recorded by the county clerks, beginning with the creation of the county. Some were recorded as early as 1820.
Obtain a copy of an early marriage record from the Clerk of the County where the marriage occurred.

Marriages 1917 to the Present

Beginning in 1917, counties were required to send copies of their marriage records to the state.
Obtain a copy of a marriage record from 1917 to the present from the County Clerk or from the Arkansas State Department of Health.

Arkansas Death Records

Indexes

FamilySearch.org - Ancestry.com - Arkansas Department of Health

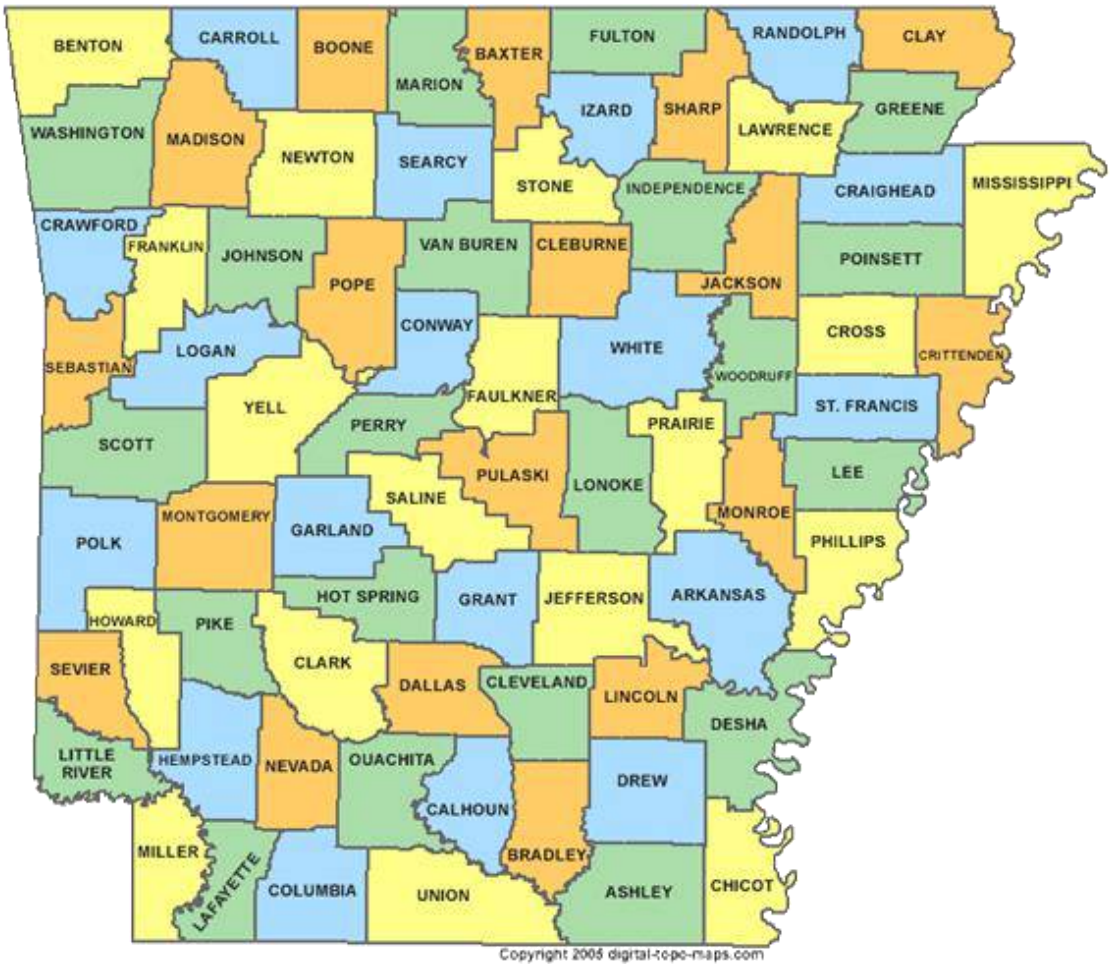
Deaths before 1914

Little Rock and Fort Smith began recording some deaths as early as 1881.
The state did not require death registration until 1914.

Deaths from 1914 to Present

Arkansas statewide registration of deaths began in 1914, but compliance was not complete until the 1940s.
Obtain a copy of an Arkansas Death Record dated from 1914 to the present from the County Clerk or from the Arkansas State Department of Health.

Arkansas Counties



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

Early Migration Routes

Arkansas River Mississippi River Ouachita River Red River St. Francis River White River Butterfield Overland Mail California Road Great Osage Indian Trail or Old Wire Road Natchitoches Trace Southwest Road Tombigbee and Arkansas River Trail Trail of Tears Frisco Railway Texas and Pacific Railway

Major Genealogical/Historical Repositories

Arkansas History Commission - Central Arkansas Library System – Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives - University of Arkansas - National Archives Southwest Region (Ft. Worth) - Dallas Public Central Library – Ouachita Baptist University, Riley-Hickingbotham Library (records of Clark County and southwestern Arkansas)

Early Arkansas Churches

Before 1900 the largest religious groups in Arkansas were the Baptist and the Methodist Episcopal (now United Methodist) churches.
Search for an ancestor's church membership, baptism, marriage or death records at current local churches.

Baptist Church Historical Archives
Arkansas Baptist History, Genealogy and Local History – records of southwest Arkansas Baptist State Convention and Clark County Historical Association - https://www.obu.edu/archives/genealogy-and-local-history/

Arkansas United Methodist Historical Archives
Website: histories of various conferences, scanned newspapers, etc. - http://www.arkansasumcarchives.com/

Arkansas Genealogy Research Websites

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

Arkansas Digital Archives – private and business papers, include business and plantation records, diaries, etc., county records, state government records, newspapers, etc. - https://digitalheritage.arkansas.gov/
Arkansas History Commission – search indexes of wide variety of historical and genealogical records: vital, land, military, probate, newspapers, photos, etc. - http://www.ark-ives.com/documenting/default.aspx
Arkansas State Archives - D*igital Collections*: civil war diaries, Japanese-American internment camps; *Search Records*: county, military, land and church records, maps, newspapers, manuscripts - http://archives.arkansas.gov/
Arkansas Ties – Search the *Arkansas Gazette,* obituaries, gravestone photos - http://arkansasgravestones.org/
Ashley County Ledger - obituary database 1965 through 2014 – lists of burials in rural, abandoned, and inactive cemeteries of Ashley County - http://www.ashleycountyledger.com/obituaries/
My Genealogy Hound – *biographies* extracted from *pre-1900 county histories* of Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee – *vintage county maps* from Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma (including Indian Nations), and Tennessee - http://www.mygenealogyhound.com/
Nevada County Cemeteries – burial records in 101 cemeteries - http://www.depotmuseum.org/cemetery.php
Online County Histories - http://www.learnwebskills.com/family/countyhistories1.htm#il
Pine Bluff Jefferson County Library System – search index of obituaries from various newspapers beginning in the 1820's – obtain copy of obit from the library for a fee - http://pinebrufflibrary.org/genealogy
Saline County Arkansas Library – index of obituaries in Benton Courier 1930 – 2014 – read complete obits on microfilm at the library - http://www.salinecountylibrary.org/web/?genealogy-local-history/obituary-index
Yell County Obituary Databases – images, text, or transcriptions of obituaries from Danville Library 1899 - 2008; from Dardanelle Library 1890's – 2009, surnames A-G; the *Yell County Record* 1997 – 2010, and from website patrons, various years – http://www.yellcountyobits.org/index.html

Arkansas African American Genealogy Research

Access Genealogy – links by state to websites of African American genealogy, cemeteries, censuses and more
AfricaMap – track the slave trade with historical overlays and geographical data - http://worldmap.harvard.edu/africamap/
AfriGeneas – slave records, death and marriage records, censuses, surnames – chat or send messages to other researchers - http://afrigeneas.com/

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/

Arkansas Cemetery Research

Arkansas Gravestones – Search for a name in over 1 million gravestone photos – www.arkansasgravestones.org
Arkansas State Archives – search catalog of county, military, land and church records, obituaries, manuscripts and photographs – http://www.ark-ives.com/research/search-records.aspx
Arkansas Ties – Search the *Arkansas Gazette,* obituaries, gravestone photos - http://arkansasgravestones.org/
BENTON COUNTY: **Oak Hill Cemetery, Siloam Springs, AK:** click on *Burials Roster* for an alphabetical index of burials – click on *Map* to view a cemetery map - https://www.siloamsprings.com/152/Burial-Records
Cemeteries of Sebastian County, Arkansas – alphabetical lists of burials in over 100 cemeteries with some photos of graves - road maps and a clickable aerial map of cemetery locations - http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~arsebast/cemetery/Cemetery.html?cj=1&netid=cj&o_xid=0000584978&o_lid=0000584978&o_sch=Affiliate+External
CLAY COUNTY: **Woodland Heights Cemetery, Rector, AK:** burials of about 6,500 individuals are indexed, plot map included - http://www.rectorarkansas.com/graves-locations-and-information.html
Yell County Cemetery Burials – alpha list and links to 167 cemeteries, list of burials in each cemetery – over 29,000 burials - http://bethg.shutdown.com/yell/ycemeteries.html

Arkansas Military Research

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/

Arkansas Native American Research

Native American Tribes of Arkansas: http://www.native-languages.org/arkansas.htm

Arkansas Newspaper Research

Arkansas Online Historical Newspapers – names, publication dates, location of online databases of Arkansas newspapers -https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite/Home/usa/ar

Information on these pages is compiled from information in:

- *FamilySearch.org* Wiki
- Family Tree Magazine
- *Eastman Online Genealogy Newsletter; Genealogy Gems from the Allen County Public Library*