Genealogy Research in California

California Birth, Marriage and Death Records

Churches kept the earliest records of births, marriages, and deaths.
Counties began recording some vital records in the 1800's.
Statewide registration of births, marriages, and deaths began in 1905

View indexes of church and county vital records on *Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org*, and *Archives.com*.

Birth and Death Records

The County Recorder's office: Obtain a copy of a county birth or death record from this office.
California Department of Public Health Vital Records – Request "informational copies" of California birth and death records from 1905 to the present. Certified copies are restricted.

Marriage Records

County Recorder's Office – Obtain a copy of a "public" marriage record. The beginning year of records varies by county.
County Clerk – "Confidential" marriage records are kept in this county office. Access to these records is restricted.
County Superior Court's office stores copies of divorce records.
California Department of Public Health Vital Records – Request "informational copies" of California marriage records from 1905 to the present. Certified copies are restricted.

Some Californians got married in bordering states, especially Nevada.

Other Records giving Birth, Marriage or Death Information:

- Newspaper announcements
- Church records
- Military records
- Census records
- Family Bibles
- Funeral Home/Cemetery/ Probate records

California Churches

Spanish Mission Records list many of the earliest settlers.
View an index of Spanish mission censuses from 1796 to 1798 on *Ancestry.com*.

Major Repositories of California Genealogical Information

California State Archives California State Library Sutro Library California Historical Society California Genealogical Society Huntington Library UC Berkeley Bancroft Library Los Angeles Public Library Chinese Historical Society National Archives Pacific Region (Riverside) National Archives Pacific Region (San Francisco) Family History Library

California Migration Routes

Applegate Trail Butterfield Overland Mail California Trail Camino Real de California Central Overland Trail Morm on Trail to Southern California Old Spanish Trail Atlantic and Pacific Railroad Central Pacific Railroad Santa Fe Railwa y Southern Pacific Railroad Texas and Pacific Railway Union Pacific Railroad

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

California Counties

Land Records

Spain issued land grants until 1822. Mexico then granted land until 1846.

Disenos land grant maps were created from 1827-1846. They were used by the Spanish, Mexican and United States governments to demonstrate land grant boundaries for individuals. They have been digitized and can be viewed at https://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/collections/disenos-collection/.

View **colonial land grant records** at The **California State Archives** and at the **U of C Berkeley's Bancroft Library**.

In 1848, the U.S. government agreed to honor the colonial land grants. The 1852 Land Commission processed the claims to those land grants.

View copies of **U. S. government land grants** from 1852 – 1910 at the **National Archives** (NARA) and at the **Family History Library in Salt Lake City, UT.**

The U.S. government sold California Public Domain land beginning in 1853.

View Land Patents for these sales on the **Bureau of Land Management website** www.glorecords.blm.gov . Use the information from the patents to request the records from NARA at www.archives.gov/research/land

Deeds and private land sales were recorded by the **County Recorder** where the land was located.

View San Mateo and San Francisco County deeds on FamilySearch.org.

California Immigration Records

Many Latinos crossed the border from Mexico into California.
View Border Crossing records from 1903 to 1957 on FamilySearch.org and on Ancestry.com
The most used ports of entry for overseas arrivals were San Francisco, San Diego, and Los Angeles.
Various collections of passenger lists are located on FamilySearch.org and onAncestry.com.
From 1910 to 1940, Chinese immigrants were screened and many were detained at the Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco. Ancestry.com has an index of The Chinese Arrival Case Files. If you find your ancestors in this index, use the information to view copies of the case files at the National Archives branch in San Bruno, CA.

California Genealogy Websites

NOTE: Check online for the *GenWeb* and *Genealogy Trails* of the county in which your ancestor lived.

Berkeley, CA Public Library Obituary Index – index of death announcements and obituaries in the Berkeley Daily Gazette 1894 – 1979 – get copies of articles from the Library - http://bancroft.berkeley-public.org/databases/obituaries/
California Bound - Passenger list of those bound from NY to CA for the Gold Rush - http://www.sfgenealogy.com/californiabound/cb188.htm
California Death Index (1940-1997) – searchable index - http://cadi.mirrorz.com/
California Genealogical Society & Library – **free/$** - free search California Names Index – order a specific record for $10 – San Francisco church and newspaper records available to members - http://www.californiaancestors.org/
California GenWeb – links to variety of genealogical records organized by county - www.cagenweb.com
California State Archives – city censuses 1897 – 1938; military, prison and county records, Disenos land grant maps - www.sos.ca.gov/archives
California State Library – 1852 state census; county voter registers; pioneer card file; cemetery records; L A county baptisms; pioneer obits; early wills - www.library.ca.gov
Calisphere – digitized photos, documents, letters, diaries, oral histories - https://calisphere.org/
Chinese in California, 1850 - 1925 – links to digitized records about Chinese immigrants in California - http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/chineseinca/
DAR California Pioneers – index of names submitted to the California DAR, volume and page # of their record - http://cagenweb.com/cpl/dar1.htm
Early California Population Project – search, view images of baptism, marriage, and burial records in California's historic mission registers, encompassing the years 1769 – 1850 - http://www.huntington.org/Information/ECPPlogin.htm
Italian Americans in California – historical information about Italian immigrants in California - http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/italianamericans/index.html
Japanese American Relocation Digital Archives – photographs, paintings of the Japanese people placed in camps during WWII - http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/jarda/
Museum of City of San Francisco – read online biographies, articles, etc. of people and events in San Francisco history, links to other websites - http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist1/subjects.html
Norcal Genealogy, SF Genealogy – links to genealogy and history databases about northern California residents - http://www.sfgenealogy.com/norcal/caldata.htm#calvitals
Nevada County, CA: **Doris Foley Library for Historical Research** – index of baptisms in the Emmanuel Episcopal Church of Grass Valley from 1855 through 1871; 35 county maps 1869 – 1927; index to mining articles; archive of the Grass Valley Daily Union newspaper 1865 – 1884; link to the California Digital Newspaper Collection - http://www.mynevadacounty.com/nc/library/Pages/Doris-Foley-Library-for-Historical-Research.aspx
Online Archive of California – indexed lists, descriptions of collections of diaries, letters, photos, at over 200 organizations - http://www.oac.cdlib.org/
Online County Histories - http://www.learnwebskills.com/family/countyhistories1.htm#il
Roster of California Pioneers – index of names submitted to the *Native Daughters of the Golden West* – http://www.ndgw.org/PRosterIndex/rostermain.html#rosterindex
San Diego Genealogical Society – tax lists, early deed indexes, church, mortuary, newspaper and cemetery records of San Diego County – www.casdgs.org

San Francisco Genealogy – links to genealogical records of the San Francisco Bay area, northern California – statewide indexes of births 1905 – 1995 and deaths 1940 – 1997 - http://www.sfgenealogy.com/
Southern California Genealogical Society – search indexes of Los Angeles area naturalization, gold rush, voting, death and cemetery records - http://www.scgsgenealogy.com/
San Mateo County Genealogical Society, California - Death Records and Substitutes, Inventories, Court & Criminal, Marriage & Birth, Historical and Biographical, Naturalization and Electoral Records, and San Mateo County Recorder's Office Records - http://www.smcgs.org/research/databases
Spanish 1790 Census of California – online transcription of census - www.sfgenealogy.com/spanish/cen1790.htm

Western States Marriage Index – marriages in selected counties in California - http://abish.byui.edu/specialCollections/westernStates/aboutWesternStates.cfm

California African American Research

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/
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 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/

California Cemetery Research

Fair Oaks, CA: **Fair Oaks Cemetery -** http://www.fairoakscemetery.com/
Find a Grave – transcriptions of burial information, photos, some obits, etc. - www.findagrave.com
Redwood City, CA: **Union Cemetery** - http://www.historicunioncemetery.com/
Los Angeles County, CA: **Downey Cemetery** – birth and death information from burials – name search – http://www.downeyca.org/services/online/cdrecords.asp
Brawley, *Imperial County, CA* **Riverview Cemetery District**: search listing by name or browse entire listing of burials – name links viewer to whatever information is available, which can include birth, death, veteran status, cemetery map and photo of stone - http://riverviewcemeterydistrict.com/BurialsOnTheWeb
Santa Clara, CA: **Mission City Memorial Park** – index of burial information; cemetery map - http://www.scchgs.org/mission_cem/cemindex.htm
Ventura, CA: **St. Mary's Cemetery** – alpha list of burials - http://restorestmarys.org/fullrecordsheader.htm

California Military Research

California, Military Registers, 1858-1923 – name indexes for Independent Militia Units, 1851–1866, and Civil War Volunteers, 1861–1867; organization papers and muster rolls of California units in the Civil War, the Indian Wars, the Spanish–American War, and World War I – www.ancestry.com.
California State Archives – California Adjutant General's office records, 1849 - 1945 - www.sos.ca.gov/archives
California State Military Museum – links to records of California soldiers in various wars – www.militarymuseum.org
Fold3.com – indexes of U. S. military service and pension records, many records of California soldiers in the Civil War and the World Wars
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/

Roster of the Department of California, Grand Army of the Republic, 1885 – 1886 – images of lists of soldiers from pages in the book - http://www.scgsgenealogy.com/free/GAR%20Encampment%20Directory%20Title.html
Soldiers and Sailors Database – indexes of Union and Confederate soldiers, regiment histories – www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm
Note: Military draft registrations are located on the websites Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org and Fold3.

California Native American Research

Native American Tribes of California - http://www.native-languages.org/california.htm

California Newspaper Research

Amador County Local Newspapers 1855 – 2004 – search 9 newspapers, various years of publication - https://dr652b.bmiimaging.com/index/index?datasetName=Amador%20County%20Library
California Digital Newspaper Collection – search over 400,000 pages of California newspapers 1846 to the present - https://cdnc.ucr.edu/
California Online Historical Newspapers – location, years of publication, of digitized California newspapers, links to websites – https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite/Home/usa/ca
Chronicling America – www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov

Information on these pages is compiled from information in:

- *FamilySearch.org* Wiki
- Family Tree Magazine
- *The Weekly Genealogist, NEHGS; Dick Eastman Genealogy Newsletter; The Genealogy Newsline*