Genealogy Research in Florida

Florida History:
The written records of early Europeans and archeological evidence are not conclusive about the names and locations of the indigenous peoples in what is now the state of Florida.

Early 1500's explorers gave indigenous peoples the following names and rough locations:
Timucuans in the northeast;
Abalachee (Apalachee) and *Pensacola* in the northwest;
Tocobaga in the west-central;
Calusa in the southwest;
Tequesta (Tekesta) in the southeast;
Jeaga, Jobe and *Ais* (pronounced 'ice') in the east-central

1565: Spanish explorers built a fort and city called St. Augustine in La Florida, their name for this area in North America.
1698: Pensacola was founded by the Spanish, but there was little significant European settlement in Florida until the late eighteenth century.

The native tribes of southern Florida were conquered and shipped to Cuba by the Spanish. Then the Seminole people came into that area. The Seminole were an alliance of Northern Florida and Southern Georgia natives that banded together in the 1700's to fight the European invaders and the Creek, Miccosukee, Hitchiti and Oconee tribes.
1763: Britain gained control of Florida at the close of the Seven Years' War (French and Indian War)**.** Settlers from Europe and the American colonies to the north began to move into the area. The provinces of *East Florida and West Florida* were formed.
1783: Spain regained the Floridas and most of the British settlers left.
1790: Spain offered land grants and freedom to escaped slaves.
Early 1800's: Creek tribes from south Alabama and South Georgia migrated into West Florida.
The Creek/Seminole people, more connected to the Georgia Creeks, centered near Perry, FL. Walton County was a center of action in the Creek wars of 1836-37.
The Uchees favored the Uchee Valley and down to Ft. Walton Beach, FL.
1812: The U. S. annexed portions of West Florida to Louisiana and to the Mississippi Territory.
1812, 1816 and 1817: Seminole Indian Wars - Seminoles lived generally from Apalachicola to the East and South. Osceola was a leading Seminole Chief 1804-1838. The wars ended in defeat for the Seminole.
1819: Spain ceded the remainder of West Florida and all of East Florida to the United States for $5,000,000.
1821: the United States officially began occupation.
30 March 1822: Florida Territory organized.
1822: A board of land commissioners for West Florida was established to process claims to lands previously granted by other nations. These claims are stored at the Florida State Archives.
18 September 1822: Treaty of Fort Moultrie between the United States and the Seminole Indians.
1823: A board of land commissioners for East Florida was established to process claims to land previously granted by other nations.

1835-1842: The Second Seminole War erupted because of the Treaty of Payne's Landing in 1832 and the attempts by the U.S. to remove Seminoles from Florida. At the close of the Seminole War, most of the Seminole were removed west to present-day Oklahoma; a few hundred escaped into the swamps.
3 March 1845: Florida became a state.
21 January 1850: U. S. government forced the remaining Florida Native Americans to migrate west. This removed most Indians from the Atlantic seaboard. A few remained on isolated reservations. Today some Seminole Indians live in the Lake Okeechobee area of Southern Florida.
1861: Florida seceded from the Union.
1868: Florida was readmitted to the Union.
1870-1900: The post-Civil War boom brought many settlers to Florida; developers built railroads and resorts.
1911: The Hollywood Indian Reservation was established for the Seminole people.
1921-1925 The last 13 of the state's 67 counties were organized as the Florida land boom attracted new settlers from the north.
1938: Big Cypress and Brighton Indian reservations were established.

Florida Birth Records

Online Indexes
FamilySearch.org

County Records
Some counties began recording births in the 1800's.
Obtain a copy of a birth record from the **County Clerk's office** in the county where the person was born.

State Records 1899 to the Present
A new state law required counties to begin recording births in 1899.
Order a copy of a **birth certificate 1899 to the present** from the **Florida Department of Health.**

Florida Marriage Records

Online Indexes
FamilySearch.org, Ancestry.com and *MyHeritage.com*

County Records
Marriages were recorded in each county, usually from the date the county was created.
Obtain a copy of a **marriage application and/or marriage record** from the **County Clerk** where the marriage license was issued.

State Records 1927 to the Present
The state of Florida began requiring marriage registration in June 1927. **Obtain a copy** of a **marriage application/certificate 1927 to the present** from the **Florida Department of Health.**

Florida Death Records

Indexes
Family Search.org and *Ancestry.com*

County Death Records
A few deaths were recorded by County Clerks before 1877. **Obtain a copy** of a **death record** from the **County Clerk** where the death occurred.

State Death Records
A new Florida state law required counties to records all deaths beginning in 1877.

Obtain a copy of a **death record from 1877 to the present** from the **Florida Department of Health.**
Death records are public 50 years after creation, copies include the cause of death.
Public copies of death records created less than 50 years ago do not contain the cause of death.
Only the following may obtain a *complete* death record that was created less than 50 years old:

- The decedent's spouse, parent, child, grandchild or sibling
- Any person who provides a will, insurance policy or other document demonstrating their interest in the estate of the decedent
- A legal representative of the family

Early Florida Churches

Before 1900 the largest religious groups in Florida were the Baptist, Methodist-Episcopal (now United Methodist) and **Roman Catholic**.

Central repositories of old Florida church records:
Baptist:
Florida Baptist Historical Society
Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives
Methodist:
Florida United Methodist Archives
United Methodist Archives Center
Roman Catholic:
Archdiocese of Miami
Diocese of Orlando
Diocese of Palm Beach
Diocese of Pensacola/Tallahassee
Diocese of St. Augustine, Archives
Diocese of St. Petersburg
Diocese of Venice - Phone

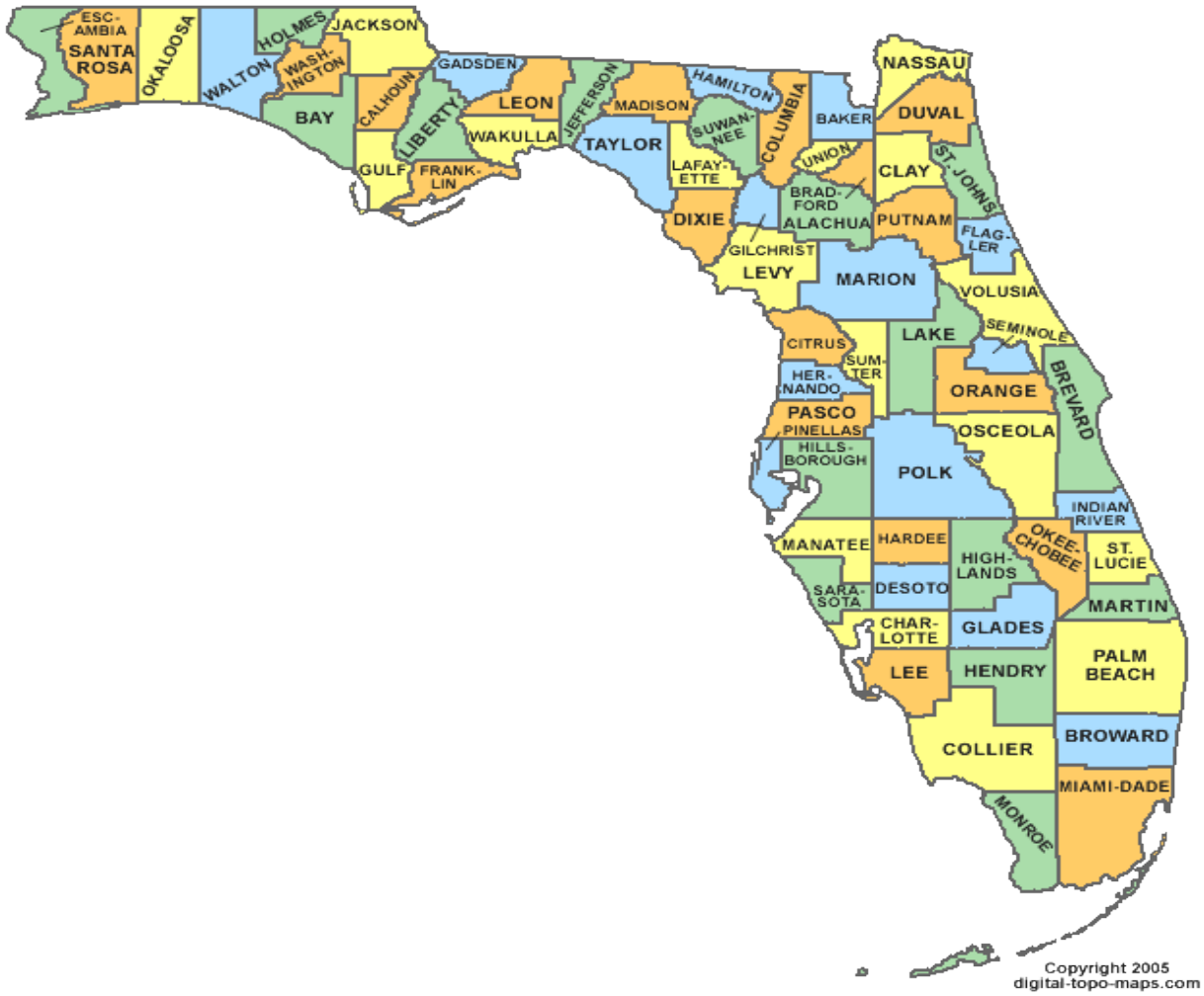
Florida Migration Routes

Apalachicola River · Atlantic Coast Ports · St. John's River · Suwannee River · Alachua-Tampa Bay Trail · Augusta-St. Augustine Trail · Jacksonville-Apalachee Bay Trail · Jacksonville-St. Augustine Trail · Old Trading Path · St. Augustine-Apalachee Trail · St. Augustine-Flint River Trail · St. Augustine-Savannah Road · Savannah-Jacksonville Trail · Tugaloo-Apalachee Bay Trail · Upper Creeks-Pensacola Trail

Florida Land Records

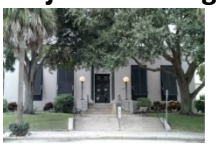
Spanish Land Grants
Spanish East Florida land grants, land ancestries, and homestead records are stored at the **Florida State Archives.**
Spanish West Florida land grant records have been lost.
View an index of Spanish East Florida land grants 1763 – 1821 on *FamilySearch.org*; results send you to https://www.floridamemory.com/ to view the images.
Land Patents
Search a database of U.S. Florida Land Patents 1820 to the present on the website of the Bureau of Land Management – www.glorecords.blm.gov
The original Patents are stored in the **BLM Eastern States Land Office** in Springfield, VA. Order copies from the National Archives website.
Deeds
Land purchases between private citizens are recorded in the **County Court offices**.

Florida Counties



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

Major Genealogical/Historical Repositories



Baker Block Museum – Okaloosa County history
Central Florida Genealogical Society
Florida Historical Library - Alma Clyde Library of Florida History
Florida Historical Society
Florida State Genealogical Society
Florida State Library and Archives
Orange County Library System
Pensacola Historical Society
State Library of Florida
St. Augustine Historical Society
University of Florida - Smathers Library - P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History
University of Miami - Otto G. Richter Library
University of South Florida
University of West Florida - John C. Pace Library

Florida Genealogy Research Websites

Note: Look for the *GenWeb* and *Genealogy Trails* of the county in which your ancestor lived.

Colonial East Florida Papers – search this index of local government archives of Spanish East Florida from 1784 to 1821- historical/personal records -http://digital.uflib.ufl.edu/collections/EFP/index.htm
Cuba GenWeb – research Cuban ancestors, many of whom came to Florida – www.cubagenweb.org
Enrique Hurtado de Mendoza Collections – browse or search by name or subject - books from the 1600's and later, handwritten and typed letters, photos, church records, unpublished family genealogies and manuscripts relating to *Cuban genealogy,* families in *North, Central and South America*, as well as *Spain, France, Italy and other European countries* – the collection is now housed at Florida International University - https://dloc.com/ifiuhurtado
Florida GenWeb Project - https://sites.google.com/a/flgenweb.net/official/
Florida Heritage Collection - statewide library and archive materials about Florida minorities - Florida soldiers - exploration and development - biographies - gravestone transcriptions - photographs - http://palmm.digital.flvc.org/islandora/search?type=edismax&collection=palmm:fhp
Florida Memory - 1825 territorial census, Spanish colonial land grants, Confederate pension applications, Florida Militia Muster Rolls, 1826-1900, WWI service cards, WPA-compiled church records, and early automobile registrants - http://www.floridamemory.com/
Maps of Florida - interactive Map of Florida County Formation, etc. - http://www.mapofus.org/florida/
Orlando Memory Project - community-based, digital collection of local photographs, videos, memories and traditions - http://www.orlandomemory.info/
University of Florida Digital Collections - manuscripts, oral histories, old newspapers - https://ufdc.ufl.edu/

Florida 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/
African American Cemeteries Online – links to burial listings - http://africanamericancemeteries.com/fl/
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/
Low Country Africana - SC slaveholders, 1868 voter records, records of African Americans in the rice-growing areas of SC, GA, and northeastern FL, etc. - http://www.lowcountryafricana.com/
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/

Florida Cemetery Research

African American Cemeteries Online - http://africanamericancemeteries.com/fl/

Florida 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/

Florida Native American Research

Florida of the Indians - http://floridahistory.org/indians.htm
Historic Florida Indians - http://www.keyshistory.org/histindians.html
Native American Tribes of Florida - http://www.native-languages.org/florida.htm
Walking with the Alligators – early history - http://www.gator-woman.com/indigenous.html

Florida Newspaper Research

Chronicling America – read pages of 36 Florida newspapers - http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers/
Florida Digital Newspaper Library – keyword search 3 collections: **1**) current Florida newspapers 2005 to present - **2**) historic Florida newspapers -**3**) the *Historic News Accounts of Florida* from 1762 to 1885 published in newspapers outside of Florida - http://ufdc.ufl.edu/newspapers

Information on these pages is compiled from:

- *Family Search.org,* Wiki – *AncestryLibraryEdition,* Learning Center
- Family Tree Magazine
- *The Weekly Genealogist, NEHGS; Dick Eastman Genealogy Newsletter; Genealogy Gems*