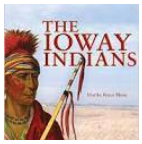
Iowa Genealogy Research

History



The indigenous residents of the land now called Iowa included the Dakota Sioux, the Illini, the Ioway, the Missouria, and the Otoe tribes.
Iowa's rivers provided transportation routes bringing European traders, trappers and explorers like the Frenchmen Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet in 1673.
The Sac and Fox tribe (Mesquakie) were driven into the area after Europeans arrived.
In 1788, Europeans began settling the area where Dubuque is today.
France and Spain alternately owned the land until the United States acquired it in the Louisiana Purchase.
Most settlers came after the Black Hawk War ended in 1833 and the Saux and Fox people were forced to move west of the Mississippi.
Records of the Saux and Fox tribes can be found at the National Archives, Great Lakes Region office in Chicago.
Iowa was populated with settlers from Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.
In the 1830's, the Iowa area became part of Michigan Territory, then of Wisconsin Territory. In 1838 it became Iowa Territory.
Iowa became a State in 1846. Immigrants from Germany, Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia and Holland came to farm the fertile land. The large influx of settlers in the western part of the state prompted state legislators to make Des Moines the new state capital in 1857, when the current state borders were drawn.

Iowa Vital Records

Online indexes of some Iowa birth, marriage, and death records:

- Iowa Births and Christening, 1830-1950 – FamilySearch.org
- Iowa County Births, 1880-1935 – FamilySearch.org
- Iowa Marriages, 1809-1992 – FamilySearch.org
- Iowa, County Marriages, 1838-1934 — index and images, FamilySearch.org
- Iowa Marriages to 1850 - Ancestry.com
- Iowa Marriages, 1851-1900 - Ancestry.com
- Iowa Deaths and Burials, 1850-1990 – FamilySearch.org

Counties in Iowa recorded vital records sporadically before 1880.

The *Iowa GenWeb* offers a chart of each Iowa county, and the dates that they began keeping birth, marriage and death records. Transcriptions of some of these records are available by clicking on the name of the county.

Iowa Birth Records

Births before 1880

Some Iowa counties began sporadically recording births in the 1870's, but most county records began in 1880.
Early birth records contain only minimal data—name, date, place, and names of parents. Later records contain more information.
With an exact date, you can order a copy of a birth record for a fee from the Office of the Recorder in the county where the person was born.

Births 1880 to the Present

Statewide registration of births, deaths, and marriages began July 1, 1880.

It is estimated that between 1880 and 1921 only about fifty percent of the births and deaths were registered. However, because of a provision for delayed birth registration, almost 470,000 delayed birth records have been filed with the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

All original records that have been registered are on file with the Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics. Copies are available to immediate family members and legal representatives only.
Order an official birth certificate from the Iowa Department of Public Health Office of Vital Records. If you don't know the exact date of birth, the IDPH will search a range of years.

Iowa Marriage Records
Marriages were recorded in the counties prior to 1880, typically beginning when the county started keeping other records as well. These records may provide names, ages, races, residences, occupations, birthplaces, maiden name of wife, marriage date and place, parents' names, and the name of person who performed the marriage.
Obtain copies of the original records by contacting the Clerk of the District Court in the county where the license was issued.
Some of the county records are abbreviated versions of the records. They may not include names of parents and places of birth of the bride and groom.

The Iowa Department of Public Health Office of Vital Records also provides copies of marriage certificates.
State law restricts access to the registrant and family members, genealogists representing the family, or legal representatives.

NOTE: Many eloping couples went to Keokuk, Lee County, Iowa to be married. In Lee County they did not have to wait after they got their marriage license to be married. Keokuk is located on the Mississippi; it was accessible to those traveling the river.

Iowa Death Records
Some Iowa counties began sporadically recording deaths in the 1870's, but most county records began in 1880 when state law required registration of all deaths.
Death records prior to 1904 do not include parents' names.
Order a copy of a death record from the Office of the Recorder in the county where the person died.
Order a certified copy of a death record from the Iowa Dept. of Public Health Office of Vital Records.
State law restricts access to death records to the registrant and family members, genealogists, or legal representatives.

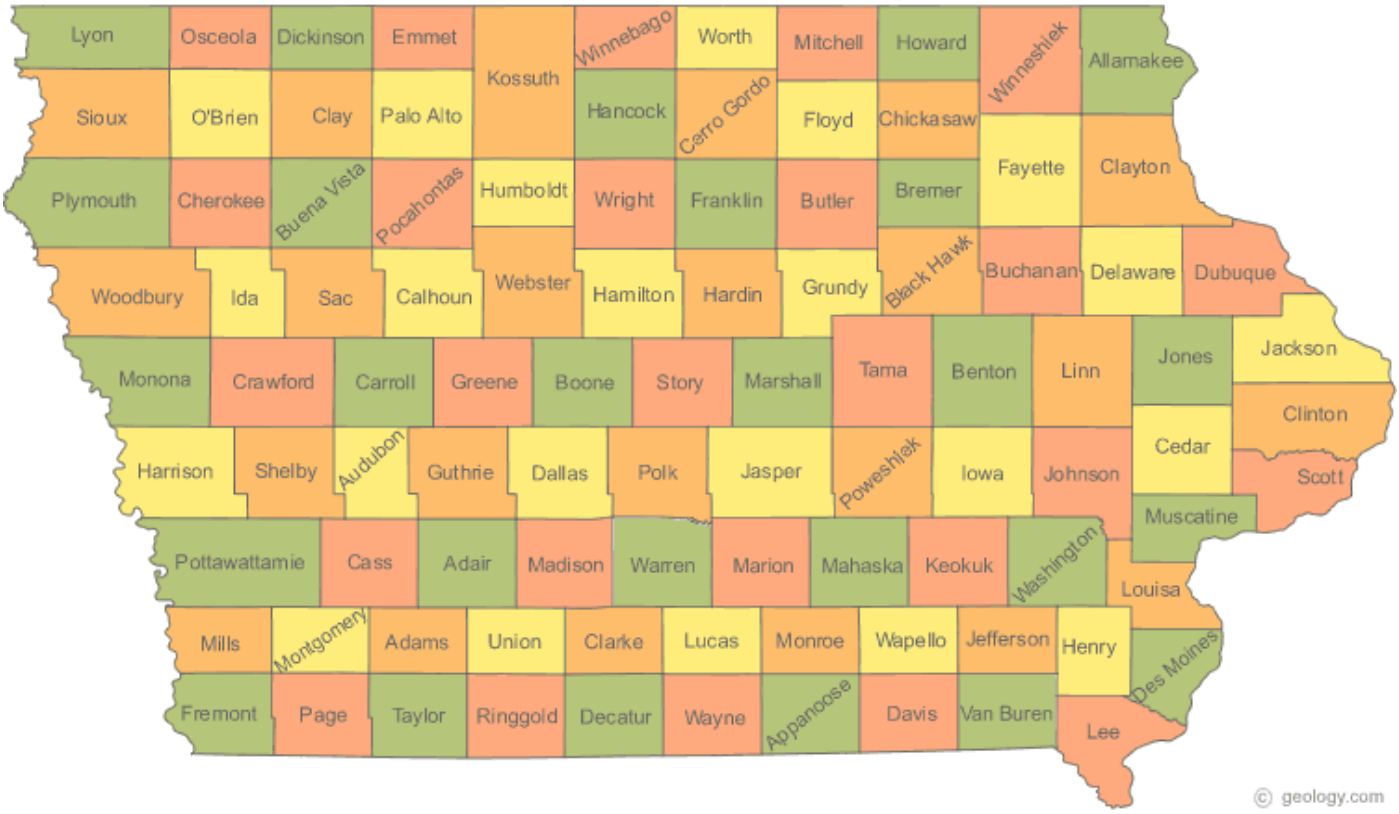
Iowa Land Records
Land claims made while the area was under French and Spanish rule are recorded in the American State Papers. Search these records are on the *Library of Congress* website.
Sales of public domain land to private citizens by the United States Government began in the first Iowa Land Office in 1838. Records of U.S. land patents are on the Bureau of Land Management General Land Office website – *glorecords.blm.gov*
View microfilms of the GLO Tract Books which list the patents that were issued at the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI). The SHSI has offices in Iowa City and in Des Moines. Call them to determine which office has the records you seek.

Migration Trails

- Burlington – St. Francisville Stagecoach Route
- Dubuque – Iowa City Military Road
- Ioway Road
- Lane's Trail
- Trail of the Sac and Fox

Routes in the Central Plains States- migration routes through Iowa
http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~tqpeiffer/Documents/Ancestral%20Migration%20Archives/Migration%20Webpage%20Folder/Central%20Plains%20States%20Routes.htm

Iowa 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

Iowa Genealogical/Historical Repositories

Iowa Genealogical Society
Iowa Women's Archives
State Historical Society of Iowa Archives and Library
National Archives in Kansas City or in Chicago
Nodaway Valley Historical Museum (Page County information)
University of Iowa Library

Iowa Genealogy Research Websites

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

Hamilton County Newspaper Archive – search people, places, or events in 6 newspapers, various years, and more papers are being digitized by Kendall Young library – http://hamiltoncounty.advantage-preservation.com/
Iowa Biographies Project – indexes to biographies of over 16,000 Iowa citizens - http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~iabiog/
Iowa Digital Library – diaries, letters, and photos from Civil War, WW1 and WW2 - county atlases and school yearbooks - https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/
Iowa GenWeb Special Projects – gravestone photos, family group sheets, state census transcriptions, etc. - http://iagenweb.org/state/archives.php
Iowa Heritage Digital Collections – atlases, Civil War diaries, biographies, high school yearbooks and more - from Iowa libraries, museums and historical societies - http://www.iowaheritage.org/
Iowa State GenWeb Project – gravestone photos, family group sheets, census - www.iagenweb.org
My Genealogy Hound – vintage county maps from Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma (including Indian Nations), and Tennessee - http://www.mygenealogyhound.com/
Online County Histories - http://www.learnwebskills.com/family/countyhistories1.htm#il

Iowa 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/

Iowa Cemetery Research

CHEROKEE, IA: **Oak Hill Cemetery** – click on Cemetery Directory for a list of burials as of August 2013 - http://cherokeeiowa.net/cemetery
DICKINSON COUNTY, IA: **Cemetery Records** - indexes to burials in **seventeen Dickinson County cemeteries**, military burials, cemetery maps - http://slpublib.weebly.com/cemetery-records.html
IOWA CITY, JOHNSON COUNTY, IA: **Oakland Cemetery** – search burials by name - http://www.icgov.org/?id=1054
Iowa Gravestone Photo Project - photos of tombstones, all counties of Iowa – http://iowagravestones.org
Iowa Heritage – civil war diaries, county atlases, biographies, school yearbooks – www.iowaheritage.org
Iowa Graves Survey, WPA – transcriptions of graves in some Iowa counties - http://iowawpagraves.org/
Newton Union Cemetery – burial listing, cemetery map, cemetery history on the Newton city website - http://www.newtongov.org/index.aspx?NID=210
*Spencer, Clay County Iowa***:** information about people buried in **Riverside Cemetery** and in **North Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery** - http://spenceriowacity.com/residents/cemetery/

Scott County, IA, Cemeteries – index of 39 cemeteries – name, birth and death dates - tombstone transcriptions - some photos, obits and death certificate information - cemetery locations, maps – search all cemeteries (*Search the Index*) or search a specific cemetery - https://www.scottcountyiowa.gov/library/local-history-resources/cemetery-search

Iowa 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/

Iowa Native American Research

Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center – student records, cemetery information, much related to one of the Sioux tribes - http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/

Native American Tribes of Iowa - http://www.native-languages.org/iowa.htm

Iowa Newspaper Research

Anamosa Library and Learning Center - JONES COUNTY, IA - newspaper archive of thirteen Jones County newspapers, various years 1856 through 2011 - http://www.anamosalibrary.org/#!newspaper-archive/c200y

Fort Dodge Public Library Digital Archives – *WEBSTER COUNTY, IA* - search a database of over 50 area newspapers from 1856 to 1934 - http://fortdodge.advantage-preservation.com/

Iowa Online Historical Newspapers – links to websites of some readable Iowa newspapers - https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite/Home/usa/ia

Mount Vernon/Lisbon Historical Newspaper Archive – *LINN COUNTY, IA* - keyword search or search by date a database of 17 newspapers covering 1860 to 2012 - http://mountvernon.advantage-preservation.com/

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; Genealogy Gems*
- *Vital Records, Iowa Department of Public Health* - https://idph.iowa.gov/health-statistics/vital-records