Genealogy Research in Kansas

In 1803, The United States acquired Kansas from France as part of the Louisiana Purchase. From 1804 to 1820, United States government expeditions explored the Kansas region, reporting it to be an arid wasteland. As a result, white settlers avoided the area for many years.

The Santa Fe Trail across Kansas opened in 1821. It served as a wagon road from Missouri to the Southwest until 1880, when the railroad was completed. KS was often a staging area for the Santa Fe, Oregon, Mormon, and California trails. From 1827 to 1853, the United States Army built forts and roads in Kansas for frontier defense and to protect trade along the Santa Fe Trail.

From 1830-1854, Kansas was part of Indian Territory, where 20 tribes from the east were relocated.

In May of 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act created two territories extending from the Missouri border westward to the tops of the Rocky Mountains. This opened the area to white settlement. Migration to Kansas was stimulated by rivalry between the North and the South over the slavery issue and over the choice of a railroad route to the Pacific.

On 29 January 1861, Kansas, with its present boundaries, was admitted to the Union as a free state. During the Civil War, over 20,000 Kansas men fought as Union Soldiers. After the war, many more settlers came to Kansas, claiming land under the Homestead Act. Some began breaking the sod of the plains, sowing wheat and other grains. Other settlers helped build the railroad through the state.

In 1867, U.S. Government officials met with leaders of the Indian tribes and signed the Medicine Lodge Peace Treaty. Members of some tribes then moved into Oklahoma.

The ***Kansas Historical Society*** Library houses printed materials and the ***Department of Archives*** maintains original records of Kansas government jurisdictions, newspapers, and other historical documents. Indexes on the Society website cover state censuses, biographies, vital records, military records, newspaper and more – http://www.kshs.org/p/genealogy-indexes/18943
The Manuscript Department has unpublished papers, maps, and photographs. The Society has now placed online ***Kansas Memory*** at http://www.kansasmemory.org/. This website features photographs and manuscripts from Kansas history organized by topic and by county.

Early Kansas Churches

Before 1900 the largest religious groups in Kansas were the **Methodist-Episcopal, Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian,** and **Disciples of Christ.** Methodists came to the Indian Territory in the 1830's, and the Baptists and Presbyterians came in 1837.
Various Christian churches established missions among the Native American tribes:

- Osage Mission (Catholic) 1837
- Shawnee Mission (Methodist)
- Ottawa Mission
- Sugar Creek Mission (near Osawatomie, Linn County)
- Osage Mission
- Potawatomie Mission
- Kickapoo Mission

FamilySearch.org Wiki, *"Kansas Church Records,"* has addresses of the records archives of early Kansas churches. On the *FamilySearch.org* Wiki, search for "Kansas Church Records."

Kansas Birth and Death Records

Births/Deaths before 1861:
Few vital statistics were kept in the Kansas Territory. Early Mission records may mention births and deaths.

The Kansas Historical Society has a few early birth and death records on microfilm as well as information about early Mission records.

Kansas Births/Deaths before 1861:
Ancestry.com has abstracts of Kansas births, marriages, deaths, etc. from 1854 – 2009.
FamilySearch.org has an index of Kansas births and christenings from 1818 to 1936.
Confirm early Kansas births by viewing families in the Kansas state and federal censuses, which were taken every five years between 1855 and 1930.

Births/Deaths between about 1885 and 1911:
Some births, deaths and marriages may have been recorded at the County Clerk's office or a City Clerk's office in register volumes. Not all of these registers have survived.
The Kansas Historical Society has microfilm of some early city and county birth and death registers.
Ancestry.com has abstracts of Kansas births, marriages, deaths, etc. from 1854 – 2009. Ancestry.com also has an index of Kansas birth records between 1885 and 1911.
Family Search has indexes of birth and christenings in Kansas from 1818 – 1936.
Family Search also has an index of Kansas deaths from 1885 – 1930.
Obtain a birth or death record from 1885 – 1911 from the City Clerk or from the County Clerk's office of the county where the birth or death occurred.

Births from 1910 – 1940:
Some cities in the state kept birth records in these years. Contact the **City Clerk** for information about their records.

Births/Deaths from 1911 to the present:
Kansas began statewide registration of births and deaths in 1911.
Family Search has indexes of birth and christenings in Kansas from 1818 – 1936. Family Search also has an index of Kansas deaths from 1885 – 1930.
Ancestry.com has abstracts of Kansas births, marriages, deaths, etc. from 1854 – 2009.
Obtain a copy of a birth or death record from 1911 to the present from the County Clerk where the event occurred or from the Kansas State Office of Vital Statistics. Read information for ordering records from the State Office at http://www.kdheks.gov/vital/index.html.

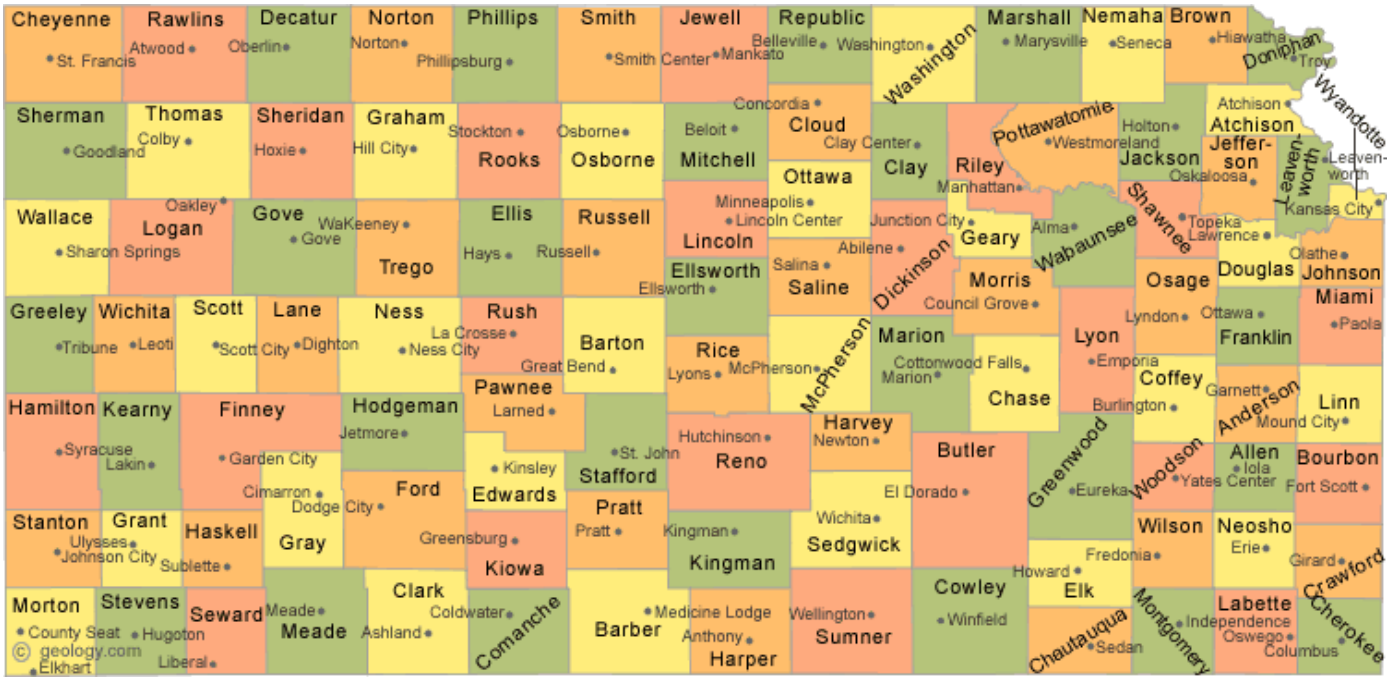
Kansas Marriage Records

The Kansas State Historical Society is indexing Kansas marriage records from 1854 – 1861. Search the current index by name at http://www.kshs.org/p/kansas-marriage-index-1854-1861/11315.
The Kansas State Historical Society has copies of some county and city vital records on microfilm. Check their website for what is available for each county - http://www.kshs.org/index.htm.
Ancestry.com has abstracts of Kansas births, marriages, deaths, etc. from 1854 – 2009
FamilySearch.org has an index of Kansas marriages from 1840 – 1935 and images of Kansas county marriage records from 1855 to 1911 – http://familysearch.org.

Marriages from the 1850's to 1913:
County clerks and clerks of probate courts have been keeping records of marriages since the creation of each county in the state. Some date from the mid-1850s.
Order a copy of a marriage record from the 1850's to 1913 from the County Clerk of the County where the marriage license was issued.

Marriages from 1913 to the present:
Beginning in 1913, the State of Kansas began keeping copies of marriage records.
Order a copy of a marriage record from 1913 to the present **from the County Clerk** or from **the Kansas Office of Vital Statistics -** http://www.kdheks.gov/vital/marriage.html.

Kansas 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

Major Kansas Genealogical Repositories

Kansas Historical Society · Kansas Genealogical Society · Kansas Department of Health and Environment · Topeka Genealogical Society · Iola Public Library · American Historical Society of Germans from Russia · National Orphan Train Complex · Wichita State University Library · University of Kansas Library · National Archives Central Plains Region (Kansas City)

Kansas Migration Routes

Abilene Trail · California Trail · Cherokee Trail · Chisholm Trail · Great Western Cattle Trail · Jones and Plummer Trail · Leavenworth Pike's Peak Express · Mormon Trail · Oregon Trail · Santa Fe Trail · Smoky Hill Trail · Texas Road or Shawnee Trail · Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway
Find more information about migration through the Plains States at:
http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~tqpeiffer/Documents/Ancestral%20Migration%20Archives/Migration%20Webpage%20Folder/Central%20Plains%20States%20Routes.htm

Kansas Genealogy Websites

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

Harvey County Genealogical Society – links to databases of: obituaries, cemeteries, military records, churches, schools and teachers, township and town histories, census indexes - http://hcgsks.org/
Harvey County, Kansas, Marriage License Index – view alphabetical lists of brides and grooms 1872 – April 1913 – includes date of application - https://mla.bethelks.edu/holdings/indexes/other/harvey_marriages.php
Kansas Genealogical Society and Online Library – indexes of obituaries and other newspaper articles - http://www.kgs-genlibrary.com/
Kansas GenWeb - http://www.ksgenweb.org
Kansas Historical Society –1895 state census, biographies, marriages, death notices, etc. – index of soldiers from Civil War to present – purchase copies – http://www.kshs.org/p/genealogy-indexes/18943
Kansas Memory - letters, diaries, photos, manuscripts, church records, interviews of veterans - click on a county in the map to view photos of people, businesses, schools - http://www.kansasmemory.org/.
Kansas Online Death Records and Indexes – links to databases of Kansas information - http://www.deathindexes.com/kansas/
HARVEY COUNTY, KS: **Mennonite Library and Archives Indexes** - Registration of German Aliens, 1918; State Census Indexes; Harvey County Marriage License Index; Obituaries and Biographies of Mennonites nationwide - https://mla.bethelks.edu/holdings/indexes/
Miami County Births, Marriages, Deaths - online indexes of county birth, marriage, and death records 1885 to 1911 include names, dates, and page or license numbers – http://www.miamicountyks.org/260/Genealogy-Records
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/
Online County Histories - http://www.learnwebskills.com/family/countyhistories1.htm#il
RUSH COUNTY, KS: **Barnard Library Obituary Database** – index of obituaries in Rush County newspapers 1874 – 1938 -

Kansas African American Research

Access Genealogy – links by state to websites of African American genealogy, cemeteries, and censuses
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/

Kansas Cemetery Research

ARKANSAS, COWLEY COUNTY, KS: **Riverview Cemetery** - alphabetical lists of burials and map of the cemetery - http://www.arkcity.org/government/parks_and_facilities/facilities.php
CHANUTE, NEOSHO COUNTY, KS: **Elmwood** and **Memorial Park cemeteries** – search alphabetical indexes of people buried and year buried, also alpha indexes of lot owners, printable cemetery maps - http://www.chanute.org/69/Cemetery
Harvey County Genealogical Society – links to databases of cemeteries - http://hcgsks.org/
MCPHERSON, KS: **McPherson Cemetery** - search lists of burials by surname or location - http://burials.mcpcity.com/
Newton Cemetery Burials – search burials of Greenwood and Restlawn Cemeteries by name, year of interment, and veteran status - http://newton.harvey.ks.govern.com/
PHILLIPSBURG, PHILLIPS COUNTY, KS: **Fairview Cemetery** – search listing of burials by name - http://www.phillipsburgks.us/index.aspx?nid=114
Riley County Cemeteries – histories and burial lists of 35 cemeteries - https://rileycgs.com/cemeteryRecords.php
ROOK COUNTY, KS: **Plainville, KS, Obituary Index** - view an index of obituaries in the Plainville newspapers from 1884 to 2012 - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1P4U90FA64wrIMDJwoTFWCT-Q6x6SSBUFNLR55oiW1aA/edit
TOPEKA, SHAWNEE COUNTY, KS: **Mt. Auburn Cemetery** – spreadsheet listing of burials – click Mt. Auburn Cemetery Files - http://tscpl.org/history/mount-auburn-cemetery-files-now-available-online
WASHINGTON COUNTY, KS: **Washington City Cemetery** – alphabetical index of burials, cemetery map - http://www.washingtonks.net/Cemetery.html

Kansas 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/

Kansas 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/
Cherokee Heritage Center – preserves Cherokee history, research Cherokee family history - http://www.cherokeeheritage.org/cherokeeheritagegenealogy-html/cherokee-family-research/
Native American Tribes of Kansas - http://www.native-languages.org/kansas.htm

Kansas Newspaper Research

Chronicling America - http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers/
Kansas Online Historical Newspapers - https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite/Home/usa/ks
ROOK COUNTY, KS: **Plainville, KS Newspaper Archives and Obituary Index** – search or browse pages of 4 Plainville newspapers, various years - http://plainville.advantage-preservation.com/

Information on these pages is compiled from information in:

- *FamilySearch.org* Wiki
- Family Tree Magazine
- *The Weekly Genealogist, NEHGS; Dick Eastman Genealogy Newsletter; Genealogy Gems from the Allen County Public Library*