Genealogy Research in Louisiana

Tribes indigenous to the area now called Louisiana included the Atakapa, the Caddo, the Chitimacha, the Choctaw, the Houma, the Natchez, and the Tunica.
Members of other tribes driven into the area after European settlement included the Alabama, the Biloxi, the Koasati and the Ofo.
The following list of agencies that have operated or now exist in Louisiana has been compiled from Hill's Office of Indian Affairs, Hill's Guide to Records in the National Archives Relating to American Indians, and others.

- Caddo Agency
- Choctaw Agency, 421 Powell, Philadelphia, MS 39350
- Lower Louisiana Agency
- Natchitoches Agency
- Red River Agency

Records of these agencies may be archived at the NARA. Microfilms of some Indian agency records are located in the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. The Catalog on *FamilySearch.org* will show which microfilms are available to rent and read.

The earliest known white men in the area that includes what is now the State of Louisiana were **Spanish explorers** Alvárez Piñeda in 1519, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca in 1528, and Hernando de Soto in 1541. The Spanish built many of the early colonial structures still standing in New Orleans and other areas. They and the later French settlers created the basis of the legal system in Louisiana.

The French: In 1682 Sieur de la Salle reached the mouth of the Mississippi. He claimed all the land drained by the river and its tributaries for Louis XIV of France. This area included land from what is now New Orleans all the way north to what is now Quebec.

Some early censuses:

- In 1699 the French enumerated the names of the "Inhabitants of the First Settlement on the Gulf Coast, Fort Maurepas."
- In 1700 they recorded the names of "Officers, Petty Officers, Canadians, sailors, and freebooters at the Fort of Biloxi.
- In 1704 they listed the marriageable girls who arrived on board the Pelican!
- In succeeding years through 1732, they recorded the names of inhabitants in various forts or towns.

Ancestry.com has a searchable database of these early censuses titled *The Census Tables for the French Colony of Louisiana from 1699 Through 1732*

Between 1717 and 1722, **French and Germans arrived** and began to settle towns and farm. They also imported slaves.

In 1731, New France became a **French Crown Colony**.

1735 – 1763 French and Indian Wars:

In 1735, wars began between the French and the Chickasaw. The French fought, allied with various Indian tribes, to secure the safety of their travel on the Mississippi River. The British and other tribes allied with the Chickasaw. As the Chickasaw diminished in number, the British allied themselves with other tribes against the French. In order to keep the entire Louisiana territory from falling into the hands of the British, **in 1762** the French secretly ceded the area *west* of the Mississippi and the "Isle of Orleans" to Spain. By the Treaty of Paris **in 1763**, Great Britain gained control of all Louisiana *east* of the Mississippi except the "Isle of Orleans."

In 1769, **Spain took control of Louisiana** and began new record-keeping procedures. Although French colonists resisted the new Spanish rule, they were subdued and finally Spanish mercantilist monopoly of trade was instituted. Agriculture flourished with the cultivation of rice and sugarcane, and New Orleans grew as a major port and trading center.

Between 1755 and 1785, **French-speaking Acadians** who would not swear allegiance to Britain or give up their Roman Catholic faith were expelled from Nova Scotia. About 5000 Acadians moved to Louisiana and they settled what came to be known as the Cajun country.

Revolutionary War - New Orleans was a center for Spanish aid to the colonies. After Spain declared war on Great Britain in 1779, Louisiana's governor, Bernardo de Gálvez, became an active ally of the revolutionists, capturing Baton Rouge and Natchez (1779), Mobile (1780), and Pensacola (1781).

1803: Although Napoleon I forced the Louisiana territory to be ceded back to France after the war, Spain still administered it. President Jefferson attempted to purchase the "Isle of Orleans" from France. To everyone's surprise, **Napoleon decided to sell *all* of Louisiana to the United States in 1803.**

1804: The U.S. government took control of the Louisiana territory. The northern portion became the **District of Louisiana**, and the southern portion became the **Territory of Orleans**.

1805-1807: The Territory of Orleans was divided into counties, but the functions of the counties were soon taken over by **smaller civil divisions called *parishes***, which followed the boundaries of the old Spanish ecclesiastical parishes.

1810: Spanish West Florida became part of the Territory of Orleans. This was the area between the Mississippi and Pearl Rivers, including Baton Rouge.

1835: **The Caddo Indians ceded their land** and moved to the Brazos River area in Texas.

1861: Louisiana seceded from the United States.

1861 – 1865: Some enslaved people were moved by their owners from plantations in Louisiana to other states. **Some enslaved people walked off their plantations during the war**. They followed General Sherman's Army to the east coast and settled in other states after the war.

1868: **Louisiana was readmitted into the United States.**

1910 – 1920: **Many African Americans in Louisiana moved to the North.**

1930's: The Great Depression closed many factories and mills. Many small farms were abandoned, and many families moved to cities.

Louisiana Birth Records

View indexes of *Louisiana, Births and Christenings, 1811-1830; 1854-1934* on *FamilySearch.org*

- Orleans Parish began recording births in 1790.
- Other parishes began recording births in the 1800's.
- In 1911, Louisiana state law required that *all* births be recorded.

Obtain a copy of a birth record *created over 100 years ago* from the **Louisiana State Archives** or from the **Parish Clerk of Court** in the county where the birth occurred.

Get instructions to order from the state at
https://www.sos.la.gov/HistoricalResources/ResearchHistoricalRecords/Pages/OnlinePublicVitalRecordsIndex.aspx

Contact information for the Parish Clerks of Court:
http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/directory/category/279.

Birth Certificate Relationship Requirements: You may obtain a certified copy of a birth certificate if:

- you are the person named on the document or their spouse, parent, adult child, sibling, grandparent or adult grandchild

Louisiana Marriage Records

Ancestry.com has indexes of some Louisiana marriage records from 1718 to 1925.
FamilySearch.org has indexes and images of Parish marriage records in Louisiana from 1837 to 1857

- Colonial marriages were recorded by the Catholic Church.
- The parishes usually began recording marriages when the parishes were created.
- Beginning in 1957, duplicate copies of marriage records were required to be sent to the state.

Obtain a copy of a civil marriage record **from the Parish Clerk** where the marriage occurred for a fee.

Louisiana Death Records

Online indexes:

FamilySearch.org and *Ancestry.com* have indexes of deaths in a variety of parishes and in New Orleans.
The *Louisiana State Archives* has indexes: the website gives ordering information

- Orleans Parish deaths from 1804 to 1960
- deaths in other areas from 1911 to 1960

Earliest Death Records

A few Louisiana Parishes began recording births in the 1800's:

- Orleans Parish (beginning in 1804)
- Jefferson Parish (beginning in 1850)

1911 to the Present

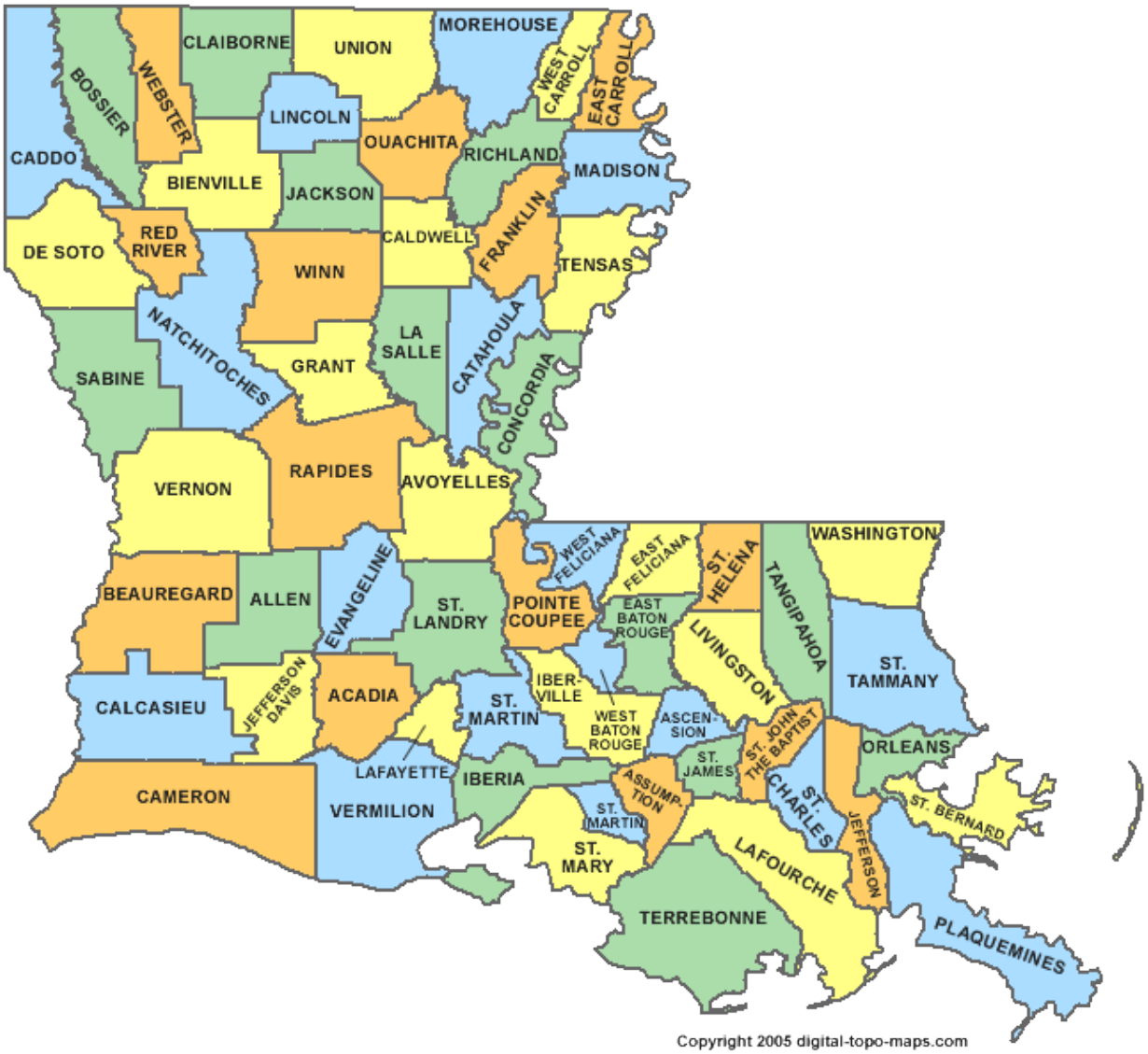
Obtain a copy of a death certificate **from the Parish Clerk** where the death occurred. Contact information for the Clerks of Parish Courts: http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/directory/category/279
A copy of a death record *created over 50 years ago* from the **Louisiana State Archives:**
https://www.sos.la.gov/HistoricalResources/ResearchHistoricalRecords/Pages/OnlinePublicVitalRecordsIndex.aspx
To obtain a copy of a death certificate of someone who died within the last 50 years, you must be the spouse, adult child, parent, sibling, grandparent or adult grandchild of the person on the certificate

Genealogical Repositories in Louisiana

Historic New Orleans Collection: William Research Center
Howard Tilton Library: Manuscripts & Rare Books Department, Tulane University
Le Comité des Archives
Linus A. Sims Memorial Library
Louisiana State Archives, Research Library
Louisiana Genealogical and Historical Society
Louisiana State Library
Louisiana Historical Association: University of Southwestern Louisiana
Louisiana State Museum: Louisiana Historical Center Library
Memorial Library: Louisiana State University
New Orleans Public Library

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

Current Louisiana Parishes



Louisiana Land Records

The earliest settlers in Louisiana received land from either Spain or France. When the U.S. took control, landowners already settled in the area had to file proof of their ownership with the government. Those applications are compiled into a book which has been microfilmed. Find the microfilm of "Bound Records of the General Land Office Relating to Private Land Claims in Louisiana, 1767 - 1892" at the National Archives and at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, UT.

The U. S. government sold any unclaimed land at Federal Land Offices. If your ancestor bought land from the government, find the purchase in the records on the website of the Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office (https://glorecords.blm.gov/)

Subsequent purchases of privately-owned land by individuals (conveyances) were recorded by Parish Clerks of Court. Some of the offices recorded them in Notarial Books. Look for the private land purchase records in Parish Clerk's Offices.

Louisiana Genealogy Research Websites

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

Acadian/Cajun Records, Early French and Spanish Settlers - Hebert Publications – many books: compilations of Southwest and Southern Louisiana Catholic church records – exiled Acadians – immigration records - land records of The Attakapas – Acadians in Texas – early New Orleans marriages – colonial settlers in B Bayou Lafourche, 1770- 1798 – early 1800's Spanish settlers - http://www.acadian-cajun.com/hebpubl.htm
Colonial Louisiana History and Genealogy – links to websites about early European settlers, Acadians, African Americans, Creoles, archives in Louisiana, etc. - http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~lacoloni/
Jefferson Parish, LA: **Jefferson Parish Library newspaper databases** – view issues of "The New Orleans Bee" from Sept. 1827 till Dec. 1923 - http://www.jefferson.lib.la.us/genealogy/NewOrleansBeeMain.htm
Louisiana Biography and Obituary Index – index of obituaries and death notices published in New Orleans newspapers from 1804-1972 and biographical information published in older Louisiana collective biographies - http://neworleanspubliclibrary.org/obits/obits.htm
Louisiana Digital Library - family histories, city directories, photographs, oral histories, maps
Louisiana State Archives – search Louisiana vital records, passenger lists, Confederate pension applications - https://www.sos.la.gov/HistoricalResources/ResearchHistoricalRecords/LocateHistoricalRecords/Pages/default.aspx
New Orleans, Louisiana Biography and Obituary Index – index of obituaries and death notices published in New Orleans newspapers from 1804-1972 and biographical information published in older Louisiana collective biographies – order copies for small fee - http://nutrias.org/~nopl/obits/obits.htm
New Orleans Ship Passenger List Index – index of passengers arriving in New Orleans from January to July 1851 - http://www.sos.la.gov/HistoricalResources/PublishedDocuments/passenger.txt

Louisiana African American Research

Access Genealogy – links by state to websites of African American genealogy, cemeteries, and censuses
African American Cemeteries Online – burial transcriptions some cemeteries in some states – http://africanamericancemeteries.com/la/
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
Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy 1719 - 1820 – Search *database of 100,000 Louisiana slaves* by plantation - names, genders, ages, occupations, illnesses, family relationships, ethnicity, places of origin, prices paid by slave owners, and slaves' testimony and emancipation - http://www.ibiblio.org/laslave/
Colonial Louisiana History and Genealogy – African American section - http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~lacoloni/
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 in GA, IL, LA, MD, OH, PA, SC, TN, VA, Washington DC, and Canada - 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

Louisiana Cemetery Research

Louisiana Tombstone Transcription Project - Cemeteries and Photo Transcriptions are listed by Parish - http://www.usgwtombstones.org/louisiana/louisian.html

Louisiana Military Research

Fold3.com - many databases of War of 1812 records, soldiers and sailors,
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/
Louisiana Confederate Pension Applications Index – Index of pension applications for pensions that were granted to Louisiana veterans and widows beginning in 1898 - http://www.sos.la.gov/HistoricalResources/ResearchHistoricalRecords/LocateHistoricalRecords/Pages/ConfederatePensionDatabase.aspx
Louisiana Confederate Pensions 1898 - 1950 - database on *familysearch.org* - images of pension applications filled out by Confederate veterans and their widows - https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1838535
Louisiana, Soldiers in the War of 1812 and **Louisiana, War of 1812 Pension List -** databases on *Ancestry.com*
Soldiers and Sailors Database - service records of Confederate soldiers and sailors - regimental histories - https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm

Louisiana Native American Research

First People - Links to State Recognized Tribes, sorted by state - http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Links/state-recognized-tribes-in-usa-by-state.html
Native American Tribes of Louisiana - http://www.native-languages.org/louisiana.htm

Louisiana Newspaper Research

Louisiana Online Historical Newspapers – links to websites with digitizations of historical Louisiana newspapers
Rapides Parish Newspapers – search or browse digitizations of *the Daily Town Talk* (1883-1901), *Town Talk* (1885-1885), *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (1901-1960), *Weekly Town Talk* (1883-1952), *Louisiana Democrat* (1852-1918), *Alexandria Gazette* (1829-1829), *Alexandria News Leader* (1968-1973), *Rapides Gazette* (1871-1873), *Alexandria Times* (1938-1938), and *Alexandria Gazette* and *Planters Intelligencer* (1829-1833) – database published by the Rapides Public Library - http://rpl.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; Amy Johnson Crow Newsletter*
- *Genealogy Gems from the Allen County Public Library*