Minnesota Genealogy Research

Minnesota is known as the "Land of 10,000 Lakes," or “Star of the North.

Indigenous Peoples

The word "Minnesota" is a Sioux Indian word. It means "cloudy water," or “sky-tinted water.” For thousands of years native peoples had used Minnesota waterways for transportation, food, and to develop an extensive trade relationship with other tribes. In addition to fishing and hunting, they grew wild rice in the lands near the many lakes. Minnesota is centered within Dakota creation stories and is an important place in traditional Ojibwe history. The Oto, Ho-Chunk, Cheyenne, Iowa, and the Sac & Fox tribes also acknowledge Minnesota as important to their tribal histories. A general overview of Dakota and Ojibwe histories, beliefs and cultures is found in the *Native American* section of the *Historic Fort Snelling* website - http://www.mnhs.org/fortsnelling/learn/native-americans

By the end of the 1600s, Europeans had arrived in Minnesota to stay. Their attempts to settle created a difficult relationship with the native peoples. Groups from other tribes came or were forced into the area: Arapaho – Cheyenne – Fox - Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska – Missouri - Omaha - Oto – Ottawa - Ponca – Sauk - Winnebago – Wyandot. Conflict arose between the tribes and between the native tribes and the Europeans.

The St. Peters Indian Agency worked to maintain the peace between 1820 and 1853.

Bit by bit, U.S. treaties with Native Americans forced them off their lands and onto reservations. Seven Ojibwa reservations are now located in northern Minnesota and four Dakota communities occupy lands in the southern part. Other Native Americans live in urban areas.

Tribal headquarters may have some records of Native Americans who lived there years ago. When the U S government began confining native tribes to reservations, the Bureau of Indian Affairs set up agencies on or near each reservation.

The majority of records of individual Native Americans were created by BIA agencies.

Bureau records can include:

- Allotment records - Annuity rolls
- Census records – Correspondence
- Health records – Reports
- School census and records - Vital records

BIA records are stored at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

European Exploration and Settlement

The French were the first Europeans to settle in the northern parts of what is now the state of Minnesota. They were fur traders who traded with the Native Americans.

Other early immigrants came from Germany, Scandinavia, and parts of Western Europe.

At the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, the French ceded their lands to the British. After the Revolutionary War, Britain ceded the land to the U.S. government.

The Louisiana Purchase gave the U. S. government ownership of the southwestern area of what is now Minnesota.

Through the years, Minnesota was part of the Northwest Territory, the District of Louisiana, the Louisiana Territory, the Indiana Territory, the Illinois Territory, the Michigan Territory, the Wisconsin Territory, the Iowa Territory, and the Minnesota Territory.
In the 1820s the U.S. government began establishing agencies to control the fur trade.
When the Transcontinental Railroad reached the Mississippi River in 1854, travel to Minnesota became easier for immigrants.

Statehood
On May 11, 1858, Minnesota became the 32nd State in the Union.
Minnesota was the first state to offer soldiers to fight in the Civil War. Eventually, 24,000 Minnesotans fought for the Union.
In 1865, small specks of gold were discovered in quartz stone on Lake Vermillion. Gold seekers flocked to the area. However, the gold rush died out by 1866; very little gold could be found.
In 1868, a granite quarry opened in the St. Cloud area.
As railways expanded the railroad companies actively recruited immigrants to settle in the state. Between 1870 and the 1890's, many immigrants came from Scandinavia and Germany.
By the 1870's, sale of lumber was a booming business in Minnesota. The St. Croix region drew loggers. Towns and cities such as Duluth grew up around saw mills on Lake Superior.
The expansion of railways and the use of steam power enabled residents to export large quantities of white pine to distant markets. The lumber industry reached a peak between the 1890's and 1910.

Iron ore was discovered on three iron ranges at different times. Mining iron ore became a profitable industry. Many immigrants came to work in the mines. The first ore was shipped from the Vermilion Range in 1884, from the Mesabi Range in 1892, and from the Cuyuna Range in 1911.

Minnesota Birth and Death Records
Online Indexes
Minnesota People Records Search - Index of births 1900 – 1934 plus a few pre-1900 records
- Index of deaths 1908 - 2001
Ancestry.com and *FamilySearch.org* – county and church birth records for varying years

Birth and Death Records
Counties began reporting births and deaths after their formation; many counties were formed in the 1870's. Not all births and deaths were reported in the 1800's.
The Minnesota Historical Society has some local and county birth registers in the original format that can be viewed in-person only.
The Minnesota State Archives stores original birth registers from a number of Minnesota townships and cities, dating from 1870-1953.

Obtain Copies
Obtain a copy of a **county birth or death record** from the **County Vital Records Office** in the county where the event occurred.

Obtain a copy of a **non-certified birth or death record** from the **Minnesota Historical Society** through their website page *Minnesota People Records Search.* Birth records are from the years 1900 – 1934 with a few before 1900. Death records are from the years 1908 – 2001.
The **Minnesota Department of Health Office of Vital Records** offers **certified or non-certified birth or death certificates**. State birth certificates begin in 1900; death certificates begin 1908.

NOTE: Counties process requests faster than the state.

Minnesota Marriage Records
Online Indexes
Minnesota Official Marriage System – index of Minnesota county marriage records
FamilySearch.org and *Ancestry.com* – indexes of marriage records for varying years

County Marriage Records
In 1849, the state passed a law requiring counties to record all marriages. Compliance was sporadic at first. According to Minnesota law, marriage records are public information.
The Minnesota Historical Society has microfilms of original county marriage applications, licenses, and certificates. View them in-person.

Obtain Copies
Obtain a copy of a marriage record from the **County Vital Records Office** in the county which issued the marriage license.
NOTE: The state offices do not store Minnesota marriage records.

Minnesota Divorces
The Minnesota Historical Society has microfilms of county District Court divorce proceedings.
Obtain a copy of a divorce record from the **County Recorder's Office**.

Historical/Genealogical Societies and Repositories
Central Minnesota Historical Center
Immigration History Research Center
Iron Range Research Center
Minnesota Discovery Center
Minnesota Genealogical Society
Minnesota Historical Society
Northeast Minnesota Historical Center
Northwest Minnesota Historical Center
Stearns History Museum Research Center
University of Minnesota Wilson Library
West Central Minnesota Historical Center

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

Minnesota Counties

Minnesota Land Records

Early settlers began living on unclaimed land and developing it in the early 1800's. The U.S. government eventually divided all unclaimed land into units and defined them as land patents. The government then sold the land to the settlers in Federal and State Land Offices.

U.S. government land patents can be searched by the name of the purchaser on the website of the U. S. Bureau of Land Management (*BLMGLO*)

Purchase copies of **deeds of private land sales** in the **County Recorders' offices**.

Minnesota Genealogy Research Websites

NOTE: Look for the *GenWeb* or *Genealogy Trails* of any county in which your ancestors lived.

Hennepin County Library – Minneapolis City Directories 1859 – 1922 and other property resources, Minneapolis city photos 1840 – present, yearbooks, trade catalogs, maps, plat books - http://www.hclib.org/programs/genealogy-local-history

Index of Wagon Train Emigrants from Minnesota to Montana – names of travelers on the Fisk Wagon Trains and the Holmes Wagon Trains 1862 – 1866 and the Davy Wagon Train in 1867 - http://files.usgwarchives.net/mt/statewide/misc/fisktran.txt
Iron Range Research Center – search birth, marriage and cemetery records of Iron Range area, alien registrations, naturalizations records, and obituaries from all of MN – order a copy of a record for a fee
Migration through the Plains States - http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~tqpeiffer/Documents/Ancestral%20Migration%20Archives/Migration%20Webpage%20Folder/Central%20Plains%20States%20Routes.htm
Minnesota Historical Society - click People Records Search to find indexes of death records dated 1904 to 2001, of birth records 1900 to 1934 (plus selected earlier records), of state census records (1865, 1875, 1885, 1895 and 1905), and of veterans' graves - view a guide to place names, building and house histories, Swedish newspapers - www.mnhs.org
Minnesota Official Marriage System - index of many county marriage certificates includes names of bride and groom, date and county of marriage and certificate # - request copy of certificate – https://www.moms.mn.gov/
Minnesota Reflections - photos, letters, books, diaries - https://reflections.mndigital.org/
Online Minnesota Death Records & Indexes – links to websites with indexes of vital records, wills and probate information, obituaries, newspaper articles

Minnesota African American Research

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/

Minnesota Cemetery Research

Lakewood Cemetery - MINNEAPOLIS, HENNEPIN COUNTY – search burials information and some obituaries and photos
Maple Grove Cemetery - KASSON, DODGE COUNTY - database of burials and map of cemetery - http://www.cityofkasson.com/index.asp?SEC=80790E9E-E2EC-48B5-AF36-9CEDDA6F2367&Type=B_BASIC
Roselawn Cemetery - ROSEVILLE, RAMSEY COUNTY – search the burials database by name, locate grave on the map - http://www.map.ramaker.com/roselawn/
Union Cemetery - MAPLEWOOD, RAMSEY COUNTY – search burials database by name, located grave on the map

E-Books

Central and Northern Minnesota; Containing a History of the State of Minnesota – table of contents and name index included at beginning - https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.c2858767;view=1up;seq=7
Encyclopedia of Biography of Minnesota; History of Minnesota – table of contents and index of biographies included at beginning - https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t52f82c40;view=1up;seq=17

Memorial Record of Southwestern Minnesota – name index included in the beginning of this history - https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951001961791g;view=1up;seq=12
Who's Who Among Minnesota Women, compiled and published by Mary Dillon Foster in 1924 – "a history of woman's work in Minnesota from pioneer days to date" - index begins page 375 - https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015027811010

Minnesota 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/

Minnesota Native American Research

Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center – student records, cemetery information, info related to Lakota, Ojibwe, Seneca, Oneida, Cherokee, Apache, Cheyenne, and Alaska Native tribes

Minnesota Newspaper Research

Chronicling America, Minnesota Newspapers – search Minnesota newspapers by name, year -
Minnesota Online Newspaper Research – links to websites with free or subscription access to Minnesota newspaper pages -
https://sites.google.com/site/onlinenewspapersite/Home/usa/mn
Minnesota Reflections – newspapers, photos, diaries, maps, plat books, oral interviews, and more from various cultural heritage organizations in MN - http://reflections.mndigital.org/

The above information is courtesy of:
Native American Tribes of Minnesota - http://www.native-languages.org/minnesota.htm
Minnesota Historical Society; Fort Snelling, Native Americans -
http://www.mnhs.org/fortsnelling/learn/native-americans
FamilySearch.org – Wiki: topics: *Minnesota, United States Genealogy* and *Indians of Minnesota*
AncestryLibrary.com – Learning Center: *Minnesota Research Guide*
RootsWeb Wiki - https://wiki.rootsweb.com/wiki/index.php?title=Minnesota_Land_Records
Genealogy Gems from the Allen County Public Library
Family Tree Magazine