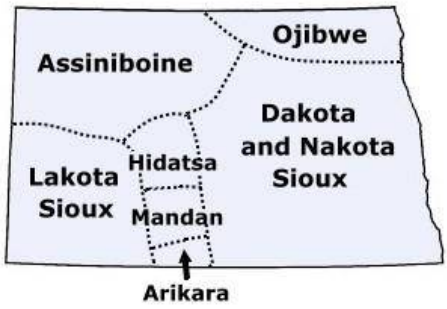
North Dakota Genealogy Research

History



The peoples living in the Dakotas when Europeans came were the Mandans, the Hidatsas and Arikaras. Eastern tribes that were forced into the area included Crow, Cheyenne, Creek, Assiniboine, Yanktonai Dakota, Teton Dakota, and Chippewa.
In 1610 Henry Hudson claimed part of eastern North Dakota for the English.
In 1682 LaSalle claimed parts of North Dakota for France.
In the 1700's, Dakota Territory extended north into what is now Canada. European claims of the land passed between the French, Spanish, and English. Fur traders arrived in the last part of the 1700's, hunting the rich river lands for furs. They were employed by the Missouri Fur Company.
The smallpox epidemics in 1782 and 1786 wiped out three-fourths of the Mandans and half of the Hidatsas.
In 1800, Alexander Henry Jr. established a post at Park River which soon became the site of the first white settlement in North Dakota.
Europeans settled two areas in 1812. Selkirk Colony developed at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers in what is now downtown Winnipeg. South of Selkirk, Pembina was established by Scottish pioneers from Canada. However, conditions were so difficult that by 1823 Pembina had been abandoned.
In 1822, Selkirk became Fort Garry, a Hudson's Bay Company trading post. It served as the center of the fur trade in the Red River colony. Many of the residents were 'half-breeds' (called m©tis) , the offspring of European fathers (French, Canadian, Scottish, and English) and Native American mothers (Chippewa, Creek, Assiniboine).
The epidemic of 1837, probably introduced by white fur traders, devastated the native population.
In 1849, the southeastern Dakota area became part of the Minnesota Territory. A few Europeans settled in the region.
In 1861 Dakota Territory was created from parts of Nebraska and Minnesota Territories. Forts were established to protect settlers and travelers who were going west.
When railroads reached the Red River from St. Paul and Duluth, more settlers immigrated into the area.
In 1870, after much contention between the native residents and white settlers, the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation was established. Treaties between the Sioux and Chippewa nations and the U.S. government ceded most of eastern North Dakota land to the Federal government.
European settlement boomed from 1879 to 1886. The population increased from 16,000 people to 191,000.

Settlers purchased land either from the Northern Pacific Railroad or from the U.S. government under the Homestead and Timber Culture acts.
The Pembina Land Office was opened by the federal government in 1871.
By 1890, 19,500 settlers had purchased three million acres.
However, many settlers eventually moved out of North Dakota to areas where they could make a better living. North Dakota land was far from

centers of commerce. The dry climate often caused drought. Farming income was low and there was little manufacturing.
In 1889, the Dakota Territory was divided. North and South Dakota became states and were admitted to the Union.
Statehood created a second population boom. The land was heavily promoted. Between 1898 and World War 1, e 250,000 immigrants moved to the state. People settled along the Great Northern Railroad, the Missouri River Plateau, and the Drift Prairie.
The peak year for new homesteads was 1906. However, again difficult circumstances caused some of the new settlers to eventually move to other areas.

North Dakota Vital Records
Indexes
FamilySearch.org – County Marriages 1872 – 1958
Ancestry.com - Marriage Records, 1872-2017
NDSU – Cass County marriage licenses 1872 – 1944 - https://library.ndsu.edu/db/marriage/
North Dakota Public Death index beginning 1881 -
https://apps.nd.gov/doh/certificates/deathCertSearch.htm

Birth and Death Records

Few births were recorded before 1893, when North Dakota became a state and required counties to record births and deaths. Compliance was low at first. In 1895, the state repealed the birth registration law, but in 1899 it reenacted the law!
In 1923, the North Dakota Department of Vital Records was formed. Counties were required to send all birth and death records to the state.
The Division of Vital Records birth records begin in 1870 and death records begin in 1881.
Some counties also have copies of their birth and death records.
Contact the **County Clerk of Court** (or **County Recorder**) to determine what years of birth and death records you can order from that county.
Order **certified or non-certified copies** of birth or death records from the **North Dakota Division of Vital Statistics**.

Marriage and Divorce Records
Counties began recording marriages when they were formed. Records of marriages and divorces are not sent to the state.
Obtain copies of marriage or divorce records from the **County Clerk** (or **County Recorder**).

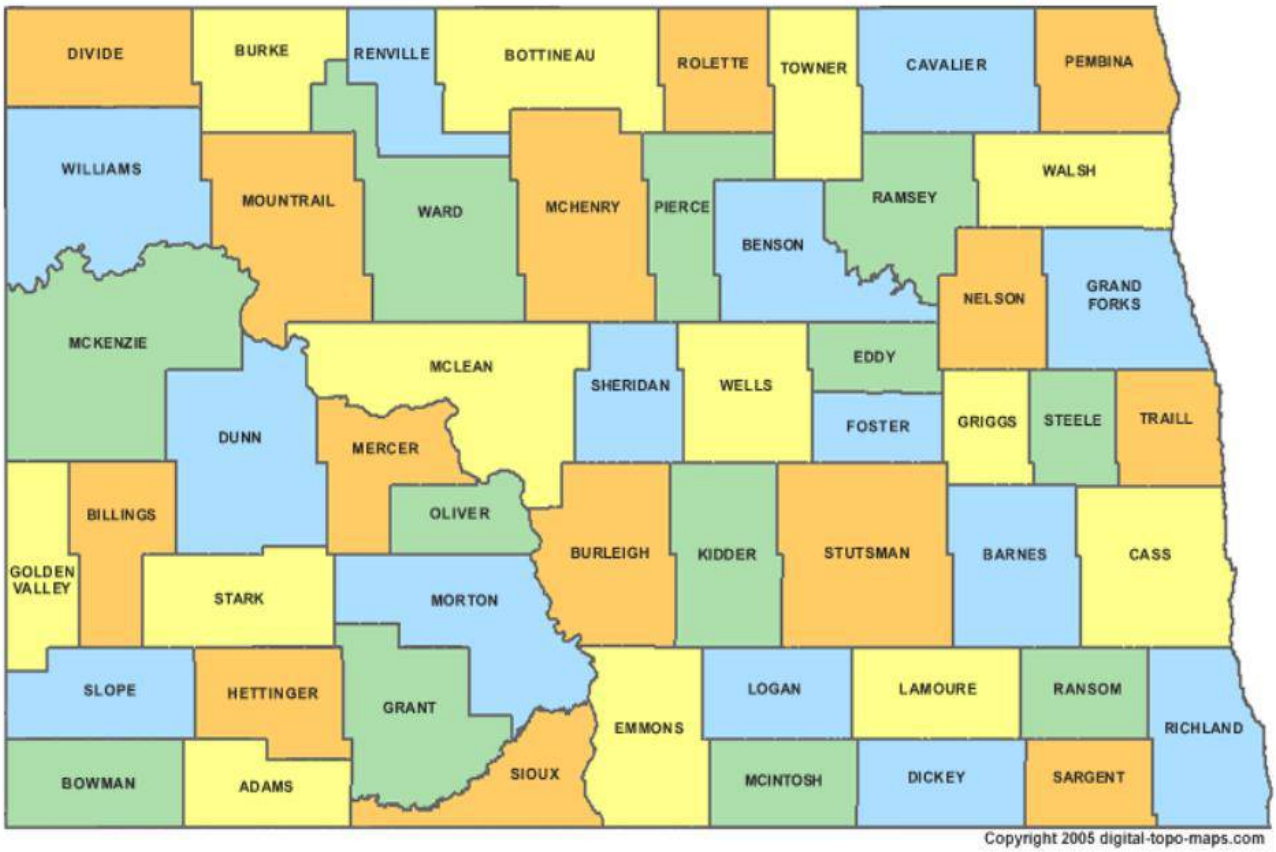
Native American Vital Records
Records of Native Americans were not kept by the counties or the state.
The **Standing Rock Indian Agency** (Bureau of Indian Affairs, North Dakota) has records of the Blackfeet Sioux, Hunkpapa Sioux, and Yanktonai Sioux who lived in the North Dakota area.
These can include birth, marriage and death records, censuses, military records, school records, allotment records, and parish records
Records are available to tribal members through **tribal headquarters**.
Some of the agency records have been microfilmed and are available at the **National Archives** and at the **Family History Library in Salt Lake City**.

Censuses of U.S. Indian tribes were taken in various years between 1885 and 1940. They are stored at the National Archives. A searchable database of the *Indian Census Rolls* is on *Ancestry.com*. Databases of specific state Indian censuses can be searched on *FamilySearch.org.*

North Dakota Historical/Genealogical Societies and Repositories
North Dakota State Genealogical Society
North Dakota State Library
North Dakota State University Libraries
Red River Valley Genealogical Society
State Historical Society of North Dakota – state archives – genealogy research
The National Archives at Denver

North Dakota Migration Routes
Missouri River - Red River of the North - Great Northern Railway (U.S.) - Northern Pacific Railroad
Migration Routes in the Plains States -
http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~tqpeiffer/Documents/Ancestral%20Migration%20Archives/Migration%20Webpage%20Folder/Central%20Plains%20States%20Routes.htm

North Dakota 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

North Dakota Land Records
Early settlers purchased land patents from the U.S. government. Patents and copies of tract books and plats are located at the Bureau of Land Management office in Billings, Montana.
Search federal land patents on the **BLMGLO website** - www.glorecords.blm.gov.
After initial purchase of land from the U.S. Government, purchases and sales of privately-owned land were recorded by county offices from the time that the counties were organized.
Request copies of land deeds from the **County Register of Deeds**.
The North Dakota Water Commission maintains original township plats.

North Dakota Genealogy Websites

NOTE: Check online for the *GenWeb* or *Genealogy Trails* of any county in which your ancestor lived.

Dakota Territory Map Northern Half – map of the northern half of Dakota Territory in 1888 - http://www.usgwarchives.net/nd/state/historical/maps/1888nd1.htm
Department of Public Health Public Death Index – search death certificates from 1881 on by name and in a date range - https://apps.nd.gov/doh/certificates/deathCertSearch.htm
Digital Horizons - town and county histories, photos of homesteaders and oral interviews of Germans from Russia - life on the northern plains from late 1800's to today – photos, videos, and documents - http://digitalhorizonsonline.org/digital/
Fargo Forum Obituaries – search an index of obits in the Fargo Forum newspapers from 1892 – 1909 and from 1982 – 1995 – plus more - https://library.ndsu.edu/db/obituary/
North Dakota Biography Index - access to biographical sketches found in a wide variety of North Dakota publications – ongoing project - https://library.ndsu.edu/db/biography/
North Dakota Death Records and Indexes – indexes of death records, cemetery burials, obits, coroner certificates, etc. - https://www.deathindexes.com/northdakota/index.html
North Dakota Map 1895 - towns, villages, cities and railroads of 1895 North Dakota - http://www.usgwarchives.net/nd/state/historical/maps/nd_1895a.htm
North Dakota Public Death index – search death certificates from 1881 to 1 year ago by name - results include name, gender and age, dates of birth and death, counties of death and residence – purchase copy of certificate - https://apps.nd.gov/doh/certificates/deathCertSearch.htm
North Dakota State University Indexes – indexes of marriage licenses, probate records, divorce proceedings and other civil court cases - https://library.ndsu.edu/research/databases?page=1
State University Institute for Regional Studies – biography index, naturalization records, 1885 Dakota Territory census, obituaries from the Fargo Forum, indexes of Cass County marriages, divorces and probate records – http://library.ndsu.edu/ndsuarchives/genealogy-and-biography

North Dakota Cemetery Research

Dickinson Cemeteries - STARK COUNTY, ND: database of burials in Dickinson Cemetery, St. Joseph's Cemetery, St. Patrick's Cemetery, and St. Wenceslaus Cemetery – also view individual cemetery maps - https://dickinsongov.com/departments/buildings-and-grounds/dickinson-cemetery-burial-database/
Fairview Cemetery and Memorial Gardens – WAHPETON, ND – alphabetical list of burials with name, date of death or burial, and grave location with cemetery map – photo may be included - http://fairview-wahpeton.org/directory/
Sunset Memorial Gardens - BISMARK, ND - search the database of burials by name - date of interment and section/lot/quadrant/burial space are given - http://sunsetmemorialgardensofbismarck.com/Burial-Locator.php

E-Books

Compendium of History and Biography of North Dakota – published 1900 - https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89072939572;view=1up;seq=9

Illustrated Album of Biography of the Famous Valley of the Red River of the North and the Park Regions of Minnesota and North Dakota – surname index in the beginning - https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.c2858766;view=1up;seq=10

History of North Dakota . . . including the biographies of the Builders of the Commonwealth – index of biographies - https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89067920363;view=1up;seq=11

North Dakota 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/

North Dakota 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/

For Eagles to be Crows – oral histories collected by KDSU radio in the 1970's for a series about Native Americans in the Dakotas region - http://digitalhorizonsonline.org/digital/collection/ndsu-eagles

North Dakota Newspaper Research

Divide County Newspapers – search or browse issues of the *Journal* 1968 – 2013, of the *Divide County Journal* 1916 – 1968, of the *Columbus Reporter* 1908 – 1957, of the *Noonan Miner* 1913 – 1957, of the *Wildrose Mixer* 1917 – 1970, and of the *Divide County Farmers Press* 1919 – 1941 - http://dcl.advantage-preservation.com/

Flasher Hustler and Flasher Tribune – *MORTON COUNTY, ND* - search or browse issues of the Hustler 1905 – 1919 – of the Tribune 1921 – 1932 - http://flasher.advantage-preservation.com/

Hillsboro Banner – TRAIL COUNTY, ND – search or browse issues from 1882 to 1958 - http://hillsboro.advantage-preservation.com/

North Dakota Online Historical Newspapers – links to websites that publish online views of newspaper and magazine pages - http://www.theancestorhunt.com/blog/north-dakota-online-historical-newspapers-summary#.XMxZN45KiUm

Above information courtesy of:
AncestryLIbrary.com – Learning Center
FamilySearch.org – Wiki
Google.com
Family Tree Magazine