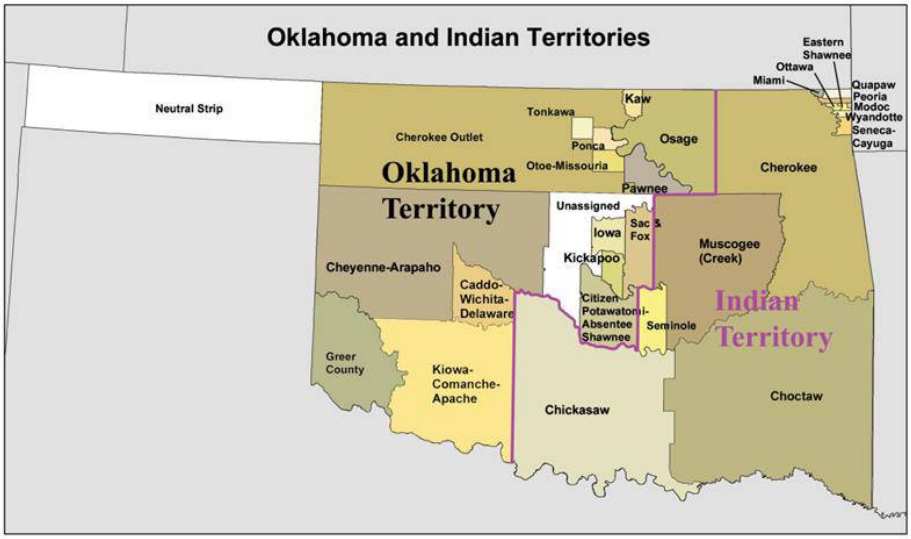
Oklahoma Genealogy Research

Indigenous Inhabitants

1700's: The Caddoe, Pawnee, and Wichita tribes were living in the area now called Oklahoma in the 1700s.
Early 1800's: About the time the United States acquired the area through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, other tribes such as the Quapaw, Oto, and Osage migrated to eastern Oklahoma.
1820's: The U.S. Government began moving all tribes east of the Mississippi River to the "Indian Territory" in western Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma. A series of treaties provided for the removal of almost all principal eastern tribes. The Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole (known as the Five Civilized Tribes) were among the many southeastern tribes who were removed by treaty to Indian Territory.



1838: the Cherokees who had not already moved voluntarily were forced to move to Indian Territory. This migration became known as the "Trail of Tears." Large parcels of land were distributed to these five tribes who became self-governing "Nations." White settlers who moved west after the Civil War pressured the government to extinguish Indian title to lands and relocate the Indians. The alliance between the Five Civilized Tribes and the Confederacy during the Civil War also provided Congress with an excuse to realign tribal boundaries. Treaties in 1866 and later reduced the land of the Five Civilized Tribes by almost half. These created the "Unassigned Lands" in central Oklahoma that were eventually opened for land runs.

Some of the western land forfeited by the Five Civilized Tribes was reserved for other tribes through later treaties. These lands in the Indian Territory were assigned to tribes such as the Kiowa, Comanche, Wichita, and Cheyenne. Other tribes were later brought in at various periods from Texas, Nebraska, California, Oregon, Idaho, Arizona, and other states. As many as 65 tribes were eventually relocated to the state.
The **Oklahoma Historical Society** lists the last location of tribes before they were removed to Indian Territory at http://www.okhistory.org/research/oktribes. The Society gives more detail of their history and culture at http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/a/am010.html.

European Settlement

1803: The United States acquired most of the area that is now Oklahoma as part of the Louisiana Purchase. The panhandle remained under Spanish control. The Quapaw, Osage, Oto, and other Indian tribes arrived about this time.
1812: Most of present-day Oklahoma became part of the Missouri Territory. The same area became Arkansas Territory in 1819.
1821: Mexico declared its independence from Spain and the panhandle came under Mexican control.
1838-1850: The Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole) were removed to Oklahoma-Indian territory.
1845: The United States annexed the Republic of Texas, including the present-day Oklahoma panhandle.
1850: The United States government purchased the panhandle lands from Texas. The panhandle became "No Man's Land," and was unattached to any state or territory.
1854: The Indian Territory was limited to the area of what is now Oklahoma.
1860: Greer County was created by Texas in present-day Oklahoma. This sparsely-settled area was added to Oklahoma in 1896.

1861: The Five Civilized Tribes sided primarily with the Confederacy. Some Indians enlisted in Union regiments early in the war.
1866: New treaties with the Five Civilized Tribes realigned boundaries and allowed the federal government to move other tribes there. Almost two million acres were designated as "Unassigned Lands" in central Oklahoma.

1872: Railroads now crossed the territory.
1889: The federal government purchased the "Unassigned Lands" from the Indians and opened them for white settlement. The first "Land Rush" on April 22, 1889 attracted about 50,000 people.
1890: The Organic Act of 1890 established the Oklahoma Territory. This act organized seven counties in the "Unassigned Lands" and the Oklahoma panhandle ("No Man's Land") and provided for the organization of additional counties as Indian governments were discontinued and surplus land was opened to settlers. During this time, the Oklahoma Territory expanded to fill western Oklahoma by gradually absorbing land owned by Cheyenne, Arapaho, Cherokee, Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache tribes.
1891: The U.S. government opened 900,000 acres of Sauk, Fox and Potawatomi land for general settlement.
1893: The "Cherokee Strip" between Kansas and Oklahoma (6,000,000 acres purchased from the Cherokees) was opened for "Land Rush," attracting 100,000 immigrants.
1897: Thousands of new settlers came when oil was discovered at Bartlesville.
Nov. 16, 1907: The Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory, known as the "twin territories," were combined to become the state of Oklahoma.

Oklahoma Birth Records

Indexes:
Oklahoma State Vital Records Index of county birth and death records - https://ok2explore.health.ok.gov/
Early Oklahoma Birth Records – partial list of births 1905 – 1914 -written by Dr. Jesse Bird - complete list in the *Oklahoma Genealogical Society Quarterly*

Births 1891 – 1907:
Some counties in Oklahoma kept some birth records of settlers beginning in 1891. **Contact the County Clerk's Office in the county where the person was born for a birth certificate.**

Births 1908 to the Present:
Beginning in 1908, state law required registration of births. By 1928, the counties were registering most births.
Obtain a birth certificate from 1908 to the present from the Oklahoma State Department of Health
To obtain a copy of the birth certificate, you must be:

- A genealogist
- The person on the certificate
- The parent, step-parent, grandparent, legal guardian, spouse, adult child or grandchild of the person
- Anyone with legal interest in the certificate

Oklahoma Marriage Records

Indexes:
FamilySearch.org – 3 databases of civil and church marriage records covering 1850 - 1995
Ancestry.com - database of some county marriage records between 1890 and 1959
Oklahoma GenWeb - index of marriages between 1855 and 1955

Marriages before 1890:
The area now called Oklahoma was Indian Territory from the 1830's to 1890. Non-Indians wanting to marry traveled to another state, went back home to marry or were married by a minister or ranking officer at a nearby fort. There were no county governments to record marriages.

Marriages 1890 to the Present:
In 1890 Oklahoma was divided into Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory. Three Judicial Districts were established in the Indian Territory where marriages could be performed and recorded:

- First District: at Muskogee included Cherokee and Creek Nations
- Second District: at South McAlester included Choctaw Nation
- Third District: at Ardmore included Seminole and Chickasaw Nations

Some of these records do survive.
In Oklahoma Territory, marriages were recorded at the County Clerk's offices of the county where the marriage occurred.
In November of 1907, the two territories were combined into the State of Oklahoma. Marriages in the state were also recorded in the County Clerks' offices.
Obtain a copy of a marriage record from the Clerk of the county where the marriage occurred.

Oklahoma Death Records

Index:
Oklahoma State Vital Records Index of county birth and death records - https://ok2explore.health.ok.gov/

Deaths before 1908:
Before 1908, no deaths of white settlers were recorded by the state. A few earlier death records exist as part of the *Chickasaw Nation, Creek Nation, and Cherokee Outlet records*. **Some of these records may be available through the current County Clerks.**

Deaths 1908 to the Present:
Statewide registration of deaths began in Oklahoma in 1908 and was generally complied with by 1930. Records before 1940 were placed on file inconsistently. **Although County Clerks record deaths and provide information on request, certificates are available only from the Vital Records Section, State Department of Health.**

The following can order an Oklahoma Death Certificate:

- A surviving spouse, parent, child, grandparent, sibling, legal guardian or anyone who can establish a familial relationship to the deceased person
- Legal representative of the estate of the deceased or person with a court order
- Funeral director of record
- A person listed in a will of the decedent if the will is in probate
- Genealogist (must demonstrate familial relationship)

Other Sources of Birth, Marriage, and Death Information

- Church records
- Family Bibles or Papers
- Military Records
- Census Records
- Newspaper Birth, Marriage, Death announcements
- Funeral Home/Cemetery Records/Wills/Probate Records

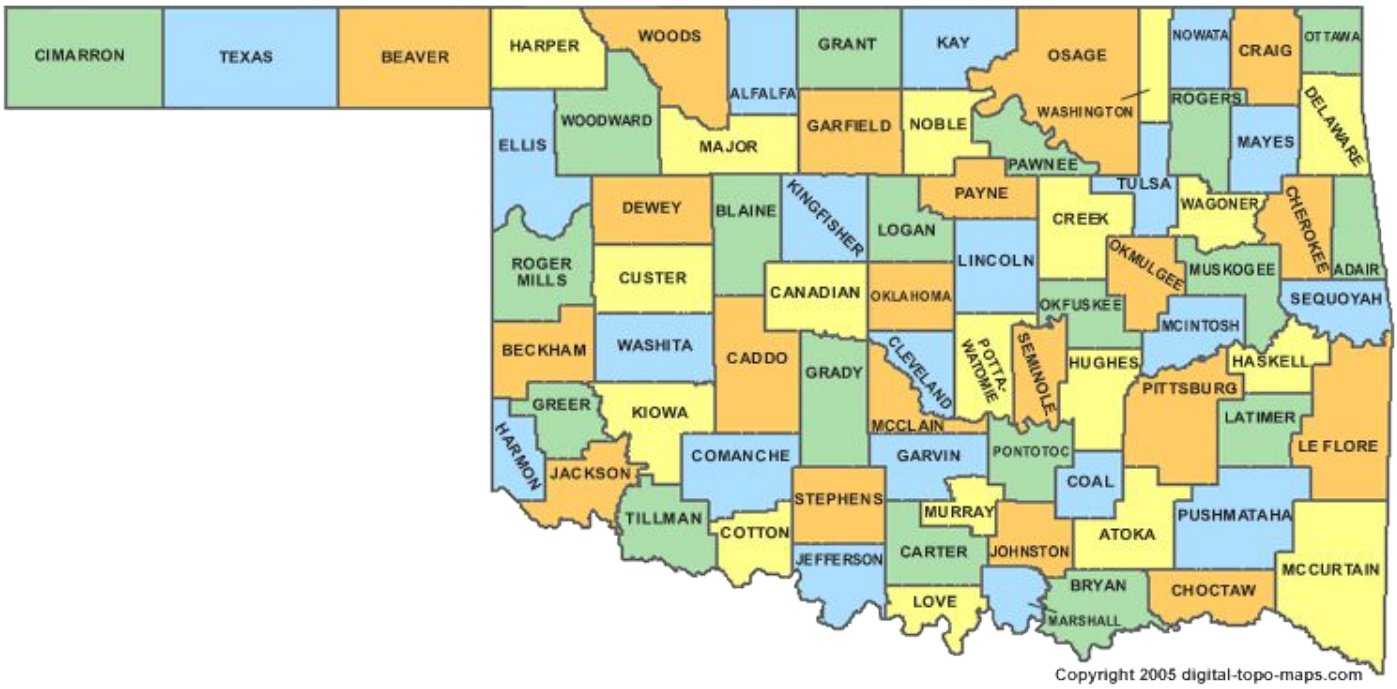
Oklahoma Church Records

Before 1900 the largest religious groups in Oklahoma were the Baptist, Roman Catholic, Disciples of Christ, and Methodist churches.
Search local churches for church membership records first. If there are no historical records at the local church, look for church histories, indexes of church baptisms, marriages, or funeral at a local genealogy library or society.

Migration Routes

Arkansas River Butterfield Overland Mail Canadian River Cimmeron River Red River Chisholm Trail Santa Fe Trail Atlantic and Pacific Railroad St. Louis –San Francisco Railway Texas and Pacific Railway

Oklahoma 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 Genealogical/Historical Repositories

Oklahoma Historical Society Oklahoma Department of Libraries Oklahoma State Archives and Records Administration Lawton Public Library University of Oklahoma Libraries Hughes County Historical Society Oklahoma Territorial Museum Carnegie Library Oklahoma State Genealogical Society Tulsa Genealogical Society Library Museum of the Western Prairie Library Miami Public Library National Ar chives Southwest Region (Ft. Worth, TX) Bancroft Library, Univ. of California, Berkeley Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research Dallas Public Central Library Tulsa City-County Library Genealogy Center

Oklahoma Genealogy Research Websites

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

Digital Prairie - Confederate Pension applications - https://digitalprairieok.net/
Early Oklahoma Birth Records – partial list of births 1905 – 1914 -written by Dr. Jesse Bird - complete list in the *Oklahoma Genealogical Society Quarterly* - http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~okgs/early_ok_birth_records.htm .
Greer County, OK, Death Index, 1912 – 1918 - http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~okgcghs/archive/greerdth.html
My Genealogy Hound –over 400 vintage county maps from Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma (including Indian Nations), and Tennessee - http://www.mygenealogyhound.com/
Muskogee County Genealogical Society – indexes of obituaries, cemeteries, funeral home records, marriages, and of probates and guardianships - http://www.muskogeecountygenealogicalsociety.org/
Oklahoma Digital Prairie – books, newspapers, photos, Confederate pensions records – http://digitalprairie.ok.gov/

Oklahoma Historical Society – Research Center: Records: 1890 Territorial Census, Smith's First Directory of Oklahoma Territory – Genealogy: indexes of marriages, obituaries, yearbooks – http://www.okhistory.org/research/genealogy
Oklahoma Land Openings, 1889 – 1907 – details of the land runs http://okgenweb.net/%7Eland/
Oklahoma State Vital Records Index – births occurring >20 years ago, deaths >5 years ago – order copy of record to get all the information on it - View the Oklahoma State Vital Records Index of county birth and death records - https://ok2explore.health.ok.gov/
Oklahoma Genealogy Trails – links to genealogy websites by state and county – www.genealogytrails.com
Oklahoma GenWeb – links to genealogy information by project, by state and county – http://okgenweb.net/
Online County Histories - http://www.learnwebskills.com/family/countyhistories1.htm#il
Tulsa City-County Library Death Index - a database listing the dates of death notices that have appeared in the Tulsa World and Tulsa Tribune 1963 – 1990 – http://www.tulsalibrary.org/deathnotice/
Western History Collections – narratives of Civil War soldiers, interviews of Oklahomans from the 1930's, tribal histories and cultures – https://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/

Oklahoma 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/

Oklahoma Cemetery Records

African American Cemeteries Online – http://africanamericancemeteries.com/ok/
BARTLESVILLE, OK: **White Rose Cemetery** – previously called City Cemetery, then Union Cemetery – list includes name, birth year, death date, burial date, and cemetery or mausoleum – cemetery map - click the *name link* to view the detailed record - http://bartlesville.ok.govern.com/
GUTHRIE, LOGAN COUNTY, OK: **Summit View Cemetery** – click *Summit View Cemetery Burial Records* to search the list of burials - http://www.cityofguthrie.com/index.aspx?nid=113
SEQUOYAH COUNTY, OK: **Sallisaw Memorial Cemetery** – click on *Cemetery Register* to view a list of burials including name, birth and burial dates, birth and death locations if known, and location of grave - http://www.sallisawok.org/116/Cemetery

Oklahoma Military Records

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/
Oklahoma Military Deaths, WWI – Vietnam War – search by name - http://okgenweb.net/

Oklahoma Native American Research

Access Genealogy - search the Dawes rolls by surname - https://www.accessgenealogy.com/native-american
African-Native American Genealogy Homepage – sources of research information - http://www.african-nativeamerican.com/
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/
Cherokee-White Intermarriages: Citizenship by Intermarriage in the Cherokee Nation – applicants for Cherokee citizenship had to prove that they were married to Cherokee citizens **-** https://www.genealogymagazine.com/cherokee-white-intermarriages-citizenship-by-intermarriage-in-the-cherokee-nation/
Indian Pioneer Paper Collection - Interviews in the 1930's with Native American descendants in Oklahoma. Family stories cover the years 1861 – 1936. This is part of the University of Oklahoma Western History Collection. http://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/pioneer/
Native American Tribes of Oklahoma - http://www.native-languages.org/oklahoma.htm
Oklahoma Historical Society – Research Center: Plats of the Creek Nation, Seminole Rolls, Dawes Final Rolls, Smith's First Directory of Oklahoma Territory, and more – http://www.okhistory.org/research/genealogy
Western History Collections – oral interviews reveal tribal histories and cultures – https://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/

Oklahoma Newspaper Research

Gateway to Oklahoma History – search or browse newspaper pages from the 1840's to the 1920's - http://gateway.okhistory.org/about/gateway/

Information on these pages is compiled from information in:

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