Utah Genealogy Research

Historical Overview

A group of Shoshone people near Hoytsville, Utah.

People living what is now Utah in the 1700's when trappers and explorers entered the area included the four Numic- (or Shoshonean) speaking peoples: The Northern Shoshone, Goshute or Western Shoshone, Southern Paiute, and Ute peoples.
The Goshute (Kusiutta) inhabited the inhospitable western deserts of Utah. They were adaptive hunter-gatherers living in small nomadic family bands. They constructed wickiups or brush shelters.
The Southern Paiute (Nuwuvi) combined hunting-gathering with some flood-plain gardening. They were not war-like and suffered at the hands of their aggressive Ute neighbors.
The "Utah Utes" inhabited the central and eastern two-thirds of the state. They traveled in extended family units with seasonal band congregations. These hunter-gatherers quickly adopted the horse and buffalo culture of the Plains Indians. They traded horses between the Spanish Southwest and the northern plains. They actively participated in Spanish campaigns against Navajo and Apache raiders, and conducted their own slave trade with the Spanish against the Southern Paiute and Navajo.
In the 1700's, Navajos moved into the San Juan River drainage area of Utah in search of pasture for their herds of Spanish sheep and goats. Highly adaptive hunter-gatherers, they incorporated domestic livestock and agriculture into their culture. They lived in dispersed extended family units, dwelling in hogans.
Between 1776 and 1847, explorers and trappers--Rivera, Dominguez and Escalante, Provost, Rubidoux, Ashley, Ogden, Smith, Carson, Bridger, and Goodyear--ventured through Utah, making contact and trading with the Native American peoples. They established economic relations but exerted little if any political control over the native peoples. Some Spanish explorers and Mexican traders documented Utah's terrain, its indigenous peoples, and its plants and animals in their journals. By 1847, over 20,000 native peoples lived in Utah.
In July 1847, Latter-day saint pioneers began moving into the Salt Lake valley. At the time, the valley was a buffer zone between the Shoshone and Ute peoples.
In 1850, the U.S. government organized the Territory of Utah, an area of about 225,000 miles. Between 1847 and 1877, as more latter-day saint converts migrated to the Salt Lake valley, Brigham Young asked older settlers to move and set up colonies throughout the great basin. Settlements extended as far north as the Salmon River in what is now Idaho, south to current New Mexico and Arizona, and west into current Nevada and California. These pioneers introduced irrigation, transforming the arid land into ground capable of growing food, fruit orchards, and flowering trees and plants.
Conflict between Latter-day saints and Indians became severe when Latter-day saints extended their settlements south into Utah Valley. This was a major trade crossroads and subsistence area for the Ute people. The Walker War (1853-54) and the Black Hawk War (1863-68) resulted from Indian subsistence raiding.

Historical Overview continued

In 1861 President Abraham Lincoln set aside the Uintah Valley Indian Reservation for the Ute people. In this year the U.S. government also organized the territories of Nevada on the west and Colorado on the east, reducing the size of Utah Territory. Further reductions occurred in when Congress extended the size of Nevada eastward and gave part of northern Utah to Idaho and to Wyoming.

As more converts to the LDS church moved into Utah Territory, the burgeoning population induced businessmen to build the transcontinental telegraph line in 1861.

Discovery of minerals caused businessmen to open mining operations, and immigrants from Italy and Greece came to work in the mines.

In a series of treaties with the Shoshone, Bannock, and Goshute in 1863 and with the Ute and Southern Paiute in 1865, the U.S. government took steps to eliminate Indian land claims and to confine all Indians on reservations. The Goshutes and Southern Paiute refused to leave their lands. They lived on in the hills and desert areas until they were finally granted reservations in the 1910s.

The small number of Navajo living in Utah increased dramatically between 1862 and 1868 after the conquest and imprisonment of the Navajo at the Bosque Redondo in New Mexico. Many moved to the San Juan and Monument Valley areas; these became part of the Navajo Reservation in 1884.

The growing population in Utah Territory also prompted the Central Pacific and Union Pacific to build their transcontinental railroad line. It was officially completed with a ceremony on Promontory Summit in 1869.

After Latter-day saint church leaders ended the practice of polygamy in 1890, the U.S. government gradually became less hostile to the residents of Utah Territory. In January 1896, Utah became a state.

In the early 1900's, copper was discovered and mining began in the Bingham Canyon. More people came to work in the mines.

During the depression years, over 116 CCC camps were set up in Utah.

The U.S. government created several national parks in Utah in the 1900's. These parks and Temple Square in Salt Lake City draw millions of tourists to Utah each year.

Utah Vital Records

Online Indexes

Utah Birth Certificate Index 1905 - 1911: index of birth records held at state archives: https://archives.utah.gov/research/indexes/81443.htm

Utah Death Certificate Index 1905 - 1967 : index of death records held at State Archives - https://archives.utah.gov/research/indexes/20842.htm

Selected county birth and death registers, dates vary - https://archives.utah.gov/research/indexes/

Births, marriages, and deaths, various years, county and state records: *Familysearch.org*

Births, marriages, and deaths, various years: *Ancestry.com*

Obtain Copies of Vital Records

The state of Utah stores records of births, stillbirths, and deaths dated 1905 to the present. State records of marriages and divorces cover the years 1978 to 2010.

Obtain copies of state vital records from the Office of Vital Records and Statistics, Utah Department of Health.

Obtain a copy of a marriage record dated before 1978 and after 2010 from the County Clerk's Office where the marriage occurred.
Obtain a copy of a divorce record dated before 1978 and after 2010 from the District Court which issued the divorce decree.

Genealogical Archives, Libraries and Societies
Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley - Western Americana and Latin Americana
BYU Family History Library
Family History Library, Salt Lake City
National Archives at Denver
Pioneer Memorial Museum, Daughters of Utah Pioneers
Research Center for Utah State Archives - state, county and local vital and court records
Utah State Historical Society
Utah State Library

Utah Church Records
In 1847, most settlers in Utah were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. By 1900, other church denominations in Utah included Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Methodists, and Presbyterians.
When searching for church records of an ancestor, determine the denomination they attended.

- Contact a current church of that denomination in the area they lived, and ask current staff where the old church records are stored. E.g., each Episcopal parish maintains their own records
- If local churches don't have old records, consult finding aids, such as "Inventory of the church Archives of Utah". This book series contains an inventory of Utah church records and a history of religion in Utah.
- Contact genealogical/historical societies - some churches have given records to societies
- Look for church record collections in government archives and libraries. Check their websites for digitized online records.
- Repositories of Utah church records:
    - Utah State Historical Society - Histories and membership records of different denominations in various towns of Utah
    - *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* - Family History Library, Salt Lake City, UT - copies of ward, branch, stake and mission records dated until 1948
    - Marriott Library, University of Utah - *Episcopal* parish registers and more
    - *Episcopal Diocese of Utah*- records of discontinued parishes - also has "Episcopal Register of the Bishop of Utah 1899-1946, 1951-1967", including baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials throughout Utah
    - *Methodist*: Ira J. Taylor Library Archives, Iliff School of Theology, Denver, CO - records of discontinued Methodist congregations in Utah.
    - *Presbyterian* - Presbytery of Utah - help us locate current congregations which maintain their own records and find records of discontinued congregations
    - *Roman Catholic* - Diocese of Salt Lake City - Archives - records from early 1870's to the present, all of Utah - but records are incomplete

Utah Land Records

1847-1850 — The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints allotted land in Utah Territory to individuals based on need. Individuals did not purchase the land.

1850 - 1869 — Land titles were obtained either from the County Recorder or the Church. County Recorders or Probate Clerks recorded most land sales to subsequent owners.

1869 — **Federal Land purchases**:

U.S. General Land Offices opened in Salt Lake City, Beaver, and Vernal Utah. Individuals paid a down payment (cash entry) to buy tracts of land or homesteaders paid a small entry fee. The Land Offices kept separate case files for each purchaser. They described each land entry in tract books and entered land purchases in township plats. After an applicant completed all requirements, their case file was sent to the General Land Office in Washington, D.C. This office then issued a patent (official land title) to the individual.

Storage of Utah Federal Land Records:

- Bureau of Land Management, Utah State Office has copies of patents and tract books dated from 1869 to the present, survey plats and notes beginning in the 1850s, and township plats.
- The National Archives, Rocky Mountain Region stores correspondence, surveys, homestead and cash entry registers, receipts, and final certificates.

Online Federal Land Patent Search:

- The *BLMGLO* (Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office) website - https://glorecords.blm.gov/ - offers a searchable index of federal land sales with descriptions of the property and images of all patents issued by the federal government. Search the patent records by name or by land description.

Because land in Utah had been settled for over 20 years when the federal land offices opened, it was often difficult to make the government land packages fit the existing town and farm lots. In many cases a "trustee" received a patent and then distributed the land among others. Records of these secondary trustee land transfers should be listed in County Recorders offices.

1869 - present — **County Private Property Records**:

- After the federal government transferred land to individual owners, it became private property. Private property sales, inheritances, and foreclosures are stored in County Recorders offices. Sales are usually indexed by grantor and grantee.

1896 to present - **State Land Records:**

At the time of statehood, the federal government granted the state of Utah four sections of land in each township. The state has sold or leased some of this land.

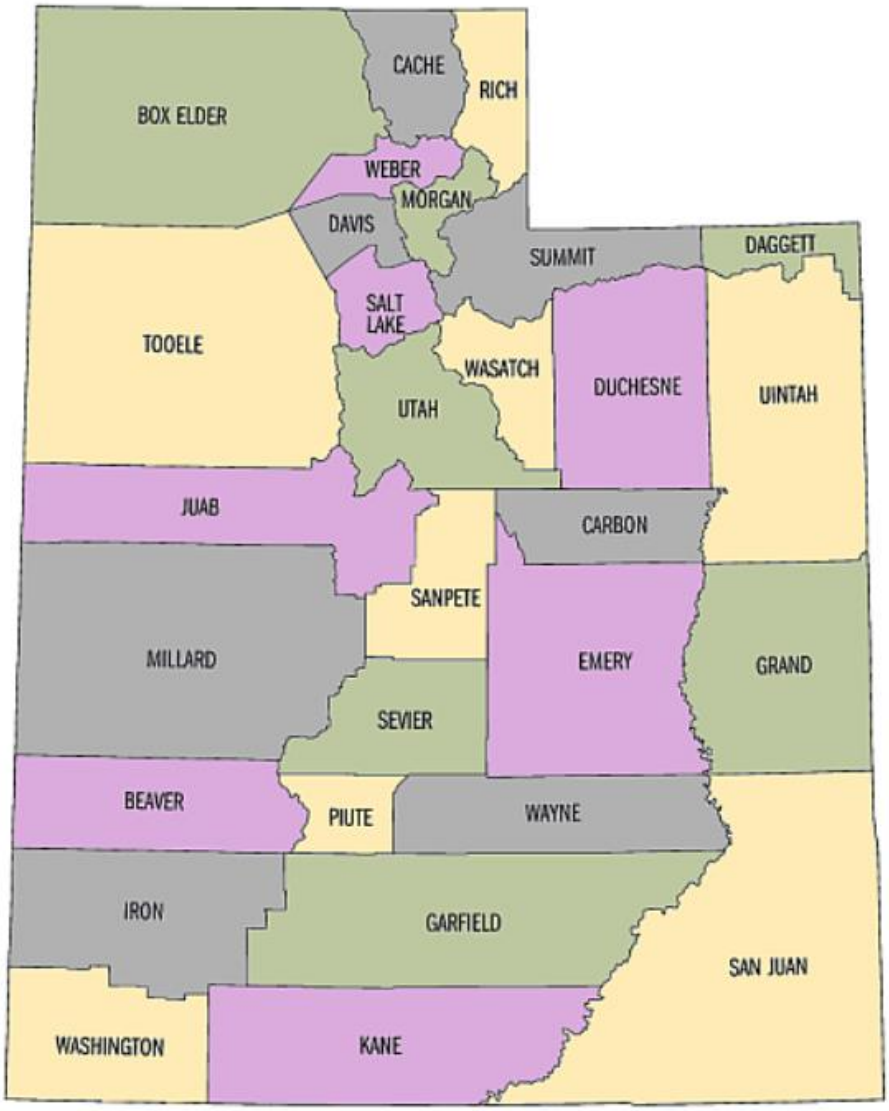
State land is managed by the Utah State Government Forestry, Fire and State Lands Office. This office stores files of leases and sales, patents, and certificates of sale. Records of agreements and applications to purchase state land have been sent to the Utah State Archives.

Information about requesting copies of records is on the *Utah Division of Wildlife Resources* website - https://wildlife.utah.gov/index.php/grama-general-request.html.

Utah Migration Trails

California Trail - Central Overland Trail - Central Pacific - Emigration Road - Hensley or Salt Lake Cutoff - Mormon Pioneer Trail - Mormon Trail to Southern California - Old Spanish Trail - Overland Route - Pony Express - Salt Desert Route - Southern Route

Utah 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

Utah Genealogy Websites

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

Daughters of Utah Pioneers - index of pioneers who crossed the plains to the State of Deseret/Utah Territory, those who died crossing the plains (GRAVES), or a pioneer who was born in the State of Deseret/Utah Territory after July 24, 1847 and before May 10, 1869 (NATIVE) - lists names, birth and death information - request forms for more information - http://www.isdup.org/pioneer_index.php
Utah Division of Archives and Records Service Indexes – search images of county vital records, probate and naturalization records and more – http://archives.utah.gov/research/indexes

Western States Marriage Index – over 900,000 pre-1900 marriage records from Arizona, Idaho and Nevada counties – a significant number of marriages from selected counties in California, western Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Utah, eastern Washington, and Wyoming - http://abish.byui.edu/specialCollections/westernStates/aboutWesternStates.cfm

Utah Cemetery Websites

Ogden City Cemetery – search burials list by name of deceased, date of birth, names of deceased's parents – results include link to map with location of grave marked in red - https://cemeterymap.ogdencity.com/

Uintah County Cemetery Index – indexes of cemeteries and private burial places in the Uinta Basin, including gravestone information, map of burials and surrounding burials, some obituaries and photos – http://www.namesinstone.com/Default.aspx

Utah State Cemeteries and Burials Database – digitized sexton records and tombstone information from some cemeteries, burial data continually being added - https://history.utah.gov/cemeteries/

Utah 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 Americans in Utah - history from 10,000 B.C. through the 1700's, 1800's, and 1900's - https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/n/NATIVE_AMERICANS.shtml

Native Languages of the Americas: Native American Cultures: type the name of a state in the search bar for information about indigenous peoples living in that area – http://www.native-languages.org/home.htm

Utah Newspaper Research

Utah Digital Newspapers - newspapers ranging from 1850 to 2010 – links to digital maps, photos, documents, etc. - http://digitalnewspapers.org/

Above information is courtesy of:

Utah History Encyclopedia - NATIVE AMERICANS IN UTAH by David Rich Lewis - https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/n/NATIVE_AMERICANS.shtml

Utah State Research Guide - https://www.ancestrycdn.com/aainstcommons/2003/pdf/libStateGuides/Utah.pdf

Early Utah History - https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Early_Utah_History

Utah, United States Genealogy - Utah Land and Property - Utah Church Records - https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/

"International Vital Records Handbook, 7th Edition" by Thomas Jay Kemp