



Louisiana Resources

Family History Sources in
the Bayou State



Louisiana History

Louisiana was first explored by the Spanish in the 1500s. The French followed in the 1600s, led by brothers Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville and Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville who established Louisiana as a colony. The colony of Louisiana included part of at least ten states: Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma and Tennessee.



For over 300 years, the Spanish, French, and British fought for control of Louisiana and its many resources. It was finally purchased by United States in 1803 as part of the Louisiana Purchase.

The last battle of the War of 1812, the Battle of New Orleans, was won by Major General Andrew Jackson troops two weeks after the Treaty of Ghent ended the war (24 December 1814). The American troops had been outnumbered, but with help from the French pirate Jean Lafitte, a group of former Haitian slaves, and frontier riflemen from Kentucky and Tennessee, they helped restore the confidence of the American people.

In 1755-56, when the Acadians were deported from Acadia (French colony in southeastern Canada and Maine) where they had settled in the early 17th century, many made their way to Louisiana where they eventually became known as Cajuns.

In April 1862, the city of New Orleans surrendered to Union forces and it remained under Union control for the remainder of the Civil War. There were more than twenty major battles and engagements in Louisiana during the war.

Louisiana is the only state in the nation that is made up of parishes rather than counties. The entity parish is from the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, although counties and parishes function the same way in the modern day U.S. Another influence from the French is that Louisiana state law is based more on the Napoleonic Code and Spanish code while all other states are based on English law.



Politicians such as Huey Long have added much to the history of Louisiana. Long, nicknamed The Kingfish, was a populist politician who served as both Governor and Senator in the early 1900s and was assassinated on the steps of Louisiana capitol in 1935.

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Significant Dates (through 1958)

- 1541** – Hernando de Soto first explored Louisiana for Spain.
- 1682** – Robert Cavalier claimed the Mississippi watershed for France and named the area for King Louis XIV.
- 1699** – The French, led by brothers Pierre Le Moyne d' Iberville and Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville established Louisiana as a colony.
- 1718** – New Orleans was founded.
- 1722** – A hurricane almost destroyed New Orleans.
- 1723** – New Orleans became the capital of Louisiana.
- 1729** – At Fort Rosalie, 250 settlers were massacred by Natchez Indians.
- 1762** – Louisiana is under Spanish rule when Frances gives Spain the land west of the Mississippi.
- 1788** – Most of New Orleans was destroyed by fire.
- 1800** – Louisiana is given back to the French by the Spanish.
- 1803** – The Louisiana Territory is purchased by the United States from France.
- 1812** – Louisiana was admitted as the 18th state on April 30th, 1812.
- 1814** – The Treaty of Ghent was signed with the British; the last battle of the War of 1812 was won by Andrew Jackson.
- 1832** – More than 5,000 people died during a yellow fever and cholera epidemic in New Orleans.
- 1853** – More than 11,000 people died during a yellow fever epidemic in New Orleans.
- 1861** – Louisiana seceded from the Union and joined the Confederacy.
- 1862** – New Orleans was captured by Union troops and stayed under Union control for the rest of the Civil War.
- 1866** – Thirty eight people are killed and 146 others are wounded during a race riot in New Orleans.
- 1868** – Louisiana is admitted back into the Union.
- 1873** – More than 100 African American men are killed in the Colfax Riot.
- 1879** – Louisiana adopted a new state constitution. The mouth of the Mississippi River was deepened to allow larger vessels to reach New Orleans.
- 1884** – New Orleans was home to the World's Fair.
- 1891** – Eleven Italians charged with the murder of Police Chief Hennessy were lynched by a mob.
- 1893** – More than 2,000 people die in Louisiana when a hurricane hits.
- 1914** – Vital records started being recorded state wide. Prior to that the Roman Catholic Church was the most likely place to record christenings, marriages and burials.
- 1915** – More than 275 people were killed by a hurricane that caused over \$13 million worth of damage.
- 1921** – A new state constitution was adopted.
- 1927** – 1,300,000 acres of land are devastated and over 300,000 people are left homeless due to floods.
- 1928** – Huey P. Long was elected as governor of Louisiana.
- 1932** – Huey P. Long was elected as a U.S. Senator.
- 1934** – Law enforcement officers with the aid of a posse gun down Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow near Gibsland.
- 1935** – Huey P. Long was assassinated at the state capitol.



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1939 – Governor Richard Leche resigned amidst political scandal.

1956 – The world’s longest over water bridge, Lake Pontchartrain Causeway, was finished.

1957 – Hundreds of people were killed by Hurricane Audrey.

1958 – Segregation on city buses was abolished in New Orleans.

Louisiana Censuses

Federal censuses for the state of Louisiana began in 1810 and were taken every ten years thereafter. They are currently available through 1940, except for the mostly destroyed 1890 census. However, caution should be used with indexes for Louisiana. Many of the French and Spanish names were transcribed incorrectly, and numerous omissions exist.

The French and Spanish were diligent scribes and many censuses exist for Louisianans, including assessments for the French Period dating 1699–1732 and for the Spanish Period dating 1766–1805. These censuses focus on specified areas or towns.

Some of the censuses for the colony's inhabitants are listed in Alice Eichholz, ed., *Ancestry's Red Book: American State, County and Town Sources* (Salt Lake City: Ancestry, 1992) and are listed on the Ancestry.com wiki.

Louisiana Census Records on Ancestry.com

- [Louisiana, Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1791-1890](#)
- [U.S. Census Reconstructed Records, 1660-1820](#)
- [Louisiana Census Records. Volume II: Iberville, Natchitoches, Pointe Coupee, and Rapides Parishes, 1810 and 1820](#)
- [The Census Tables for the French Colony of Louisiana from 1699 Through 1732](#)
- [Louisiana Census Records. Volume I: Avoyelles and St. Landry Parishes, 1810 and 1820](#)

<i>Population</i>	
1810	76,556
1820	153,407
1830	215,739
1840	352,411
1850	517,762
1860	708,002
1870	726,915
1880	939,946
1890	1,118,588
1900	1,381,625
1910	1,656,388
1920	1,798,509
1930	2,101,593
1940	2,363,516
1950	2,683,516
1960	3,257,022
1970	3,641,306

Louisiana Vital Records

As of 1990, the state archive stores all birth records over 100 years old and death and marriage records over fifty years old. Some parish health departments have alphabetical birth and death indexes for their areas; however, they are not complete listings of all births and deaths of that parish. Those records more recent are housed at the Office of Public Health.



Louisiana Resources

Family History Sources in the Bayou State

The Catholic churches throughout the state which kept registers of christenings, marriages, and burials and were the recorders of Louisiana's early vital records. Many of these records have been published. For marriage records for parishes other than Orleans, contact the Office of the Clerk of Court for that parish.

Louisiana Vital Records on Ancestry.com

- [Web: Louisiana, Find A Grave Index, 1700-2012 \(Free\)](#)
- [Louisiana, Statewide Death Index, 1900-1949](#)
- [Louisiana, Marriages, 1718-1925](#)
- [New Orleans, Louisiana, Marriage Records Index, 1831-1920](#)
- [Louisiana Marriage Records, 1851-1900](#)

Other Louisiana Vital Records Resources

- [Louisiana Vital Records and Statistics](#): Holds records of births, marriages, and deaths. Many records are confidential and access is restricted for 50-100 years. See the web site for specific information.
- [Louisiana State Archives](#): See the Vital Records page for information on the Archive's holdings and links to online vital records indexes, including Louisiana death records and birth and marriage records for Orleans Parish. Records ordering information is provided.
- [New Orleans Public Library](#): The [Library's Special Collections](#) page includes links to several vital records indexes, including the Louisiana Biography and Obituary Index; New Orleans Justice of the Peace marriage Records, 1846-1880; and the New Orleans Marriage Index from the *Daily Picayune*, 1837-1857. Records ordering information is provided.

Louisiana Military Records

- [U.S., Confederate Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865 \(Free\)](#)
- [U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947](#)
- [U.S., Union Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865 \(Free\)](#)
- [Louisiana Confederate Soldiers](#)
- [Louisiana Soldiers in the War of 1812](#)

Louisiana Immigration & Travel

- [New Orleans, Passenger Lists, 1813-1945](#)
- [New Orleans, Passenger List Quarterly Abstracts, 1820-1875](#)
- [Louisiana, Naturalization Records, 1836-2001](#)
- [New Orleans, Louisiana, Slave Manifests, 1807-1860 \(Free\)](#)
- [Italian Passengers to Louisiana, 1905-10](#)



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Special Collections

City Directories

Use the browse box in the upper right corner to determine what directories are available for your ancestor's area. If they lived in a rural area, check to see if that area was included with a larger city in the vicinity.

Other Resources

The organizations listed below provide information about Louisiana history and genealogy. In addition to these state-level resources, many counties and towns maintain important genealogical collections in local libraries, genealogical societies, or historical societies, so check for a local resource when researching.

- [Louisiana State Archives](#): The Research Library page provides an overview of the Archives' holdings, and includes links to online indexes of vital records, passenger lists, Confederate records, and a useful FAQ.
- [Louisiana State Library](#)
- [Louisiana Historical Society](#): The "Resources" link contains a detailed list of research archives located in New Orleans.
- [Louisiana Historical and Genealogical Society](#): Publishes *The Louisiana Genealogical Register*. The "Links" page provides contact information for local genealogical societies.
- [Louisiana State Museum](#)
- [Louisiana GenWeb](#)
- [Louisiana Digital Archive](#)
- [National Archives at Fort Worth](#): This facility maintains records from Federal agencies and courts in Louisiana, including census, military, court, naturalization, and immigration records.
- [Bureau of Land Management \(BLM\) General Land Office Records](#): The BLM administers Federal Land for public land states including Louisiana, and maintains records of land patents which granted land from the Federal Government to individuals. Use the Land Patent Search to locate land grants by name. Many record images are available on the web site. See the FAQ for more information on how to locate and use land patents.

Help and Advice

- [Louisiana Family History Research](#)
- [Parishes of Louisiana](#)
- [Research in the Deep South](#)
- [Why Southern Research Is Different, Part I and Part II](#)
- [The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands](#)

[View all Louisiana collections on Ancestry.com](#)