

RESEARCH GUIDE

ARIZONA

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ALTHOUGH ARIZONA IS THE YOUNGEST OF THE contiguous states, it has been home to Native peoples for at least 12,000 years and to Spanish settlers predating American independence. The state's long history can prove a fertile ground for your genealogy research.

HISTORY

By about 200 A.D., Pueblo tribes began living in adobe structures, sometimes built into caves or hillsides. And by about 450, the Hohokam were farming the Gila and Salt River valleys near present-day Phoenix, eventually constructing a 700-mile network of irrigation canals. A Hopi village, Oraibi, established around 1150, is thought to be America's oldest continuously inhabited town. Later-arriving tribes included the Navajo and Apache.

The first Spanish expedition, led by Father Marcos de Niza, arrived in 1539. De Niza's report of finding the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola inspired Don Francisco Vásquez de Coronado to explore the Southwest from 1540 to 1542. Coronado's party claimed the region for Spain, and a splinter expedition were the first Europeans to see the Grand Canyon.

Unlike in neighboring New Mexico (where Santa Fe was founded in 1610), only a handful of Spaniards followed Coronado to Arizona. In 1687, Father Eusebio Francisco Kino began establishing missions in the Sonoran Desert, including San Xavier del Bac in 1700 south of present-day Tucson. Farther south, Tubac became the first Spanish garrison ("presidio") in Arizona in 1752, followed by Tucson in 1775.

The American Southwest remained in Spanish hands until 1821, when Mexico

gained its independence from Spain. Portions of Arizona were in the Mexican states of Alta California, Sonora and Nuevo México. But the Mexican-American War (1846–1848) flipped Arizona's flag—and the rest of the "Mexican Cession"—to the stars and stripes. And in 1854, the Gadsden Purchase added the final slice from the Gila River to today's southern border.

From its acquisition by the United States, Arizona was part of the vast New Mexico Territory. The refusal of Congress to recognize a separate Arizona Territory led to the southern part of the region briefly siding with the Confederacy during the Civil War. After the "California Column" of Union troops defeated the Confederates, President Lincoln established the Arizona Territory in 1863, with a provisional capital at Fort Whipple (later moved to nearby Prescott).

Although gold had been discovered in Gila City in 1858, Arizona's fast-growing mining industry would ultimately focus on copper. Boomtowns flourished and failed, leaving the state littered with ghost towns. Tombstone and Bisbee briefly became the largest towns in the state and the wildest in the country, epitomized by the famous gunfight at Tombstone's O.K. Corral in 1881. In the 1880s, the arrival of the railroad meant Arizona copper and cows could readily reach customers nationwide.

Tension between the growing numbers of European and American settlers and Native peoples (dating all the way back to a Pueblo revolt against the Spanish in 1680) continued to bubble over throughout the 1800s. This culminated in the Long Walk in 1864, when the US government forced 9,000

FAST FACTS

STATEHOOD: 1912

FIRST FEDERAL CENSUS:
1860 (as territory); 1920 (as state)

BIRTH AND DEATH
RECORDS BEGIN: 1909

MARRIAGE RECORDS BEGIN:
never statewide; 1864 (county)

CONTACT FOR VITAL RECORDS:
AZ Dept. of Health Services,
Bureau of Vital Records

Navajo to relocate from eastern Arizona to Fort Sumner, New Mexico. Other forced relocations followed.

Armed resistance continued for several years, notably in the ongoing Apache and Tonto Wars. Conflict largely ended when Apaches under Geronimo surrendered to US General Nelson Miles at Skeleton Canyon in 1886.

Today, several Native American reservations are located in the state, and Arizona (with 20-plus tribes) has the third-largest Native population in the United States. The largest tribes include the Navajo Nation in the northeast and the Tohono O'odham Nation in the south along the Mexican border.

Statehood on 14 February 1912 signaled a population and economic expansion made possible by the previous year's completion of the Roosevelt Dam, bringing reliable water to Phoenix. Arizona's third "C," cotton (after copper and cows) fueled further growth.

The arrival of Route 66 and the completion of Hoover Dam, followed by a wartime burgeoning in demand for aerospace industries, helped Arizona's population reach 1 million by 1960 (and 7.2 million by 2019). A border state, Arizona has a large Mexican-American population, with some families tracing their lineage in the region to when Arizona was held by Mexico.

VITAL ARIZONANS

It's easy to start exploring your Arizona ancestors' history with vital records. Prior to 1909, when territory-wide registration of births and deaths began, individual counties kept these records.

Participating counties sent copies to the Arizona Department of Health Services <www.azdhs.gov/licensing/vital-records/index.php>, which has now made these and later records searchable online with PDF scans <www.azdhs.gov/licensing/vital-records/genealogy/index.php>. There you can find birth records 75 years after date of birth and death records 50 years after date of death. Later records can be ordered from the department online; you must document your relationship to the person.

Arizona has no statewide marriage registration, however. An 1864 law required county recorders to keep marriage and divorce records. This responsibility

moved to county probate courts in 1891, and finally to the superior court clerk after 1912; see <www.azcourts.gov/az-courts/az-courts-locator>. Finding marriage information once you've identified the correct court, however, can be tricky, as marriage documentation is not the court's primary focus.

FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org> has birth and death collections that largely overlap those available from the state, as well as two collections of county marriage records. The Western States Marriage Index at BYU—Idaho <abish.byui.edu/specialcollections/westernstates/search.cfm> includes more than 40,000 Arizona entries. Subscription sites MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com> and Ancestry.com <www.ancestry.com> largely draw from the same sources as the free collections on FamilySearch.

COUNTING COPPERS

If you're researching early Hispanic ancestors from the Spanish or Mexican eras, several published indexes cover Mexican censuses for the area that's now Arizona: 1801 and 1852 for Pimería Alta, and 1831–32 for Tucson, Tubac and Santa Cruz. These and other colonial records can be searched at the Mission 2000 site from Tumacácori National Historical Park <www.nps.gov/applications/tuma/search.cfm>. (For more on colonial records, see <www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Arizona_Colonial_Records>.)

A special census was taken of the newly separate Arizona Territory in 1864, when the first four counties—Yavapai, Mohave, Yuma and Pima—were organized. Subsequent territorial censuses were taken; only the 1864 and 1882 enumerations list all household members. All are available at Ancestry.com.

Arizona Territory was enumerated on its own in the US census beginning in 1870, and as part of New Mexico Territory in 1860. These and later headcounts are available at FamilySearch and major subscription sites. The first post-statehood census was in 1920.

Various "great registers" of voters may also be used as census substitutes and supplements. FamilySearch has these, organized by county, indexed and searchable with images, while Ancestry.com has a compiled collection

TIMELINE

1540

Spaniard Vázquez de Coronado explores southeast Arizona and claims the region for Spain

1752

The first Spanish garrison (*presidio*) is founded in Tubac

1821

Mexico (then including Arizona) wins independence from Spain

1848

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo transfers vast swaths of land to the United States, including much of modern Arizona

1854

The United States buys southern Arizona in the Gadsden Purchase, establishing the modern US-Mexico border



Monument Valley near the Arizona-Utah border

covering 1866 to 1955 <www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60875>.

The Family History Library has microfilm reels of Native American census rolls for Arizona tribes. You can also search a nationwide FamilySearch collection of tribal censuses <www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2761958>.

GRAND RECORDS

Check out these other records and resources for finding your ancestors from the Grand Canyon State:

● **Newspapers:** Arizona has a rich tradition of newspapering, beginning with the *Weekly Arizonian*

in Tubac in 1859. You can search digitized editions at the Arizona Newspaper Project <apps.azlibrary.gov/anp/search.aspx> and browse by county, decade or title at the Arizona Memory Project <azmemory.azlibrary.gov/digital/custom/newspapers>. MyHeritage also has a consolidated collection of some 850,000 pages from 26 Arizona titles <www.myheritage.com/research/collection-10637/arizona-newspapers-1866-2009>. Many Arizona newspapers are included in nationwide collections such as those at Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com <www.newspapers.com>, GenealogyBank <www.genealogybank.com> and the free Chronicling America <chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>. In addition, FamilySearch has collections of

DAVE AND LES JACOBS/STOCKSY

1863

The Arizona Territory is formed; two years earlier, a separate Arizona Territory supported the Confederacy

1867

Arizona cedes much of its land west and north of the Colorado River (including modern Las Vegas) to Nevada

1886

Geronimo surrenders, largely ending armed conflict between the US armed forces and American Indians in the region

1912

Arizona joins the Union, the last of the Lower 48

1983

La Paz County is created from Yuma County, setting modern county boundaries

TOOLKIT

Websites

Arizona Memory Project <azmemory.azlibrary.gov>

Arizona Genealogy Birth and Death Certificates <www.azdhs.gov/licensing/vital-records/genealogy/index.php>

AZGenWeb Project <sites.rootsweb.com/~azgenweb>

Cyndi's List: Arizona <www.cyndislist.com/us/az>

FamilySearch Research Wiki <www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Arizona,_United_States_Genealogy>

Linkpendium: Arizona <www.linkpendium.com/az-genealogy>

Western States Marriage Records Index <abish.byui.edu/specialcollections/westernstates/search.cfm>

Publications

Arizona Place Names by Will C. Barnes (University of Arizona Press)

Arizona: A History by Thomas E. Sheridan (University of Arizona Press)

Hispanic Arizona, 1536–1856 by James E. Officer (University of Arizona Press)

Historical Atlas of Arizona by Henry P. Walker and Don Bufkin (University of Oklahoma Press)

Archives & Organizations

Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records <www.azlibrary.gov>

Arizona Genealogical Advisory Board <www.azgab.org>

Arizona Historical Society <www.arizonahistorical.society.org>

Arizona State University Library <lib.asu.edu>

National Archives at Riverside <www.archives.gov/riverside>

Pioneers' Cemetery Association <www.azhist.cemeteries.org>

Sharlot Hall Museum <www.sharlothallmuseum.org>

University of Arizona Library <www.library.arizona.edu>

Arizona obituaries, and obituaries make up part of the state library and archives' 100,000-entry biographical database <apps.azlibrary.gov/bio>.

● **Directories:** The Arizona Memory Project has two directory collections, one covering city and business directories <azmemory.azlibrary.gov/digital/collection/dir> and another of city directories <azmemory.azlibrary.gov/digital/collection/azcitydirect>. Ancestry.com has a searchable “gazetteer and business directory” of 1912–1913 Arizona and New Mexico <www.ancestry.com/search/collections/27490>, as well as city directories including Phoenix and Tucson.

● **Yearbooks:** You can search school yearbooks in a statewide collection, “Looking Back—Arizona’s School Yearbooks” <azmemory.azlibrary.gov/digital/collection/azyearbooks> and in a collection focused specifically on Tucson High School <azmemory.azlibrary.gov/digital/collection/thbmem>.

● **Wills and Probate:** Early probate records were kept by probate courts in New Mexico Territory, then by Arizona county probate courts. Since statehood, they’ve been handled by the superior courts. FamilySearch has a collection of Maricopa County (Phoenix) probate records, and Ancestry.com has a statewide collection <www.ancestry.com/search/collections/9043>.

● **Immigration and Naturalization:** As a border state, Arizona has records of arrivals from Mexico. At FamilySearch, these include collections of statewide arrival manifests from both Arizona and Texas, as well as collections for individual points of arrival such as Douglas and Nogales. Arizona crossings are included in an Ancestry.com collection, “Border Crossings: From Mexico to U.S., 1895–1964” <www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1082>. Ancestry.com also has a collection of Arizona state court naturalization records <www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60877>.

The examples here from the Arizona Memory Project barely scratch the surface of the records, photos, maps and other resources collected at this site from the state library and archives <azmemory.azlibrary.gov>. Of particular interest is a collection of oral histories at <azmemory.azlibrary.gov/digital/custom/oral-histories>. The state library and archives has a summary page for its genealogy information at <azlibrary.gov/arm/research-archives/genealogy-online-resources>. It has also partnered with Ancestry.com to make many of its online databases accessible at <www.ancestry.com/ai/collections/az/statearchives>.

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