



Pacific States

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington

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MIGRATION AND BOUNDARY CHANGES

For state migration routes in the Pacific Region, see the FamilySearch Research Wiki article: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page. Wikipedia is a good source for maps that show the territorial evolution of the United States:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_evolution_of_the_United_States

Boundary changes

The Map of US website shows county border changes by state in an interactive map: www.mapofus.org. This site is useful to understand border changes and parent counties.

GOLD RUSH IN THE PACIFIC REGION

California — California Gold Rush (1848-1855), Northern California Gold Rush (1851+)

Oregon — Southwest Oregon (1851), Eastern Oregon (1860s)

Alaska — Klondike Gold Rush (1896-1899), Nome Gold Rush (1899-1909), Fairbanks Gold Rush (1902-1905)

LAND RECORDS

All states in this region are public land states, except Hawaii which has one single state-wide recording office. Person to person deeds were recorded by each county. You need to know the existing county where a person bought or sold land.

In public land states, government to person land was recorded by the Federal Land Office. Search General Land Office Records at <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>.

Alaska does not have counties. Deeds are filed at the office of the district recorder in each judicial district.

VOTING RECORDS

County recorders kept voting registers, sometimes called great registers, in the county. The early registers may include a physical description, residence, naturalization, and place of origin. In the FamilySearch Catalog, search for voting registers in both the state and county.

ALASKA

Alaska was part of Russia from 1799-1867. It was purchased by the U.S. in 1867. It became a district in 1884 and a territory in 1912. In 1959 Alaska became the 49th state. It is divided into boroughs rather than counties.

The 1884 Organic Act created a district in Alaska with a district court. It also provided for a judge, clerk, and commissioners with the court system. It extended Oregon laws to Alaska.

Boroughs: There are no counties in Alaska. The entire state is divided up into boroughs and census areas. A good explanation and map of the Alaska boroughs is Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_boroughs_and_census_areas_in_Alaska

Land and property: Alaska was a public domain state. The first general land office was set up in Sitka in 1885. Land records are indexed at the Bureau of Land Management website: gloreCORDS.blm.gov/default.aspx. The National Archives Pacific Alaska Region in Seattle has tract books and township plats. The Alaska State Archives has descriptions and maps of mining claims.

Pre-statehood vital records: Vital records were required in 1913, with general compliance by the 1950s.

CALIFORNIA

California was part of Spain, then Mexico until 1846 when it became the California Republic. In 1850, it became the 31st state.

California State Census records: The first state census for the entire state of California was taken in 1852. It is available on both FamilySearch and Ancestry. For a list of earlier partial state census records from 1788-1844, see FamilySearch Research Wiki: www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/California_Census

California Early Church records: The earliest church records in California were recorded by the California missions. Twenty-one missions were established by Catholic Franciscan friars in California from 1769 to 1835. The missions kept records which are available on the Early California Population Project provided by The Huntington Library, Arts Collections, and Botanical Gardens at: www.huntington.org/information/ecppmain.htm. See the "How to" Guide, found at:

California Voting records: The earliest California voting registers are often referred to as the Great Registers. They list names of the eligible voters. These voting records were usually taken every two years from 1866-1898. They can contain information including name, age, nativity, occupation, residence, naturalization, etc. The information varies.

Later California voter registrations do not include as much genealogical information. They can be found on Ancestry for 1900-1968. They include the name, address, occupation, and political party.

HAWAII

Hawaii was a kingdom until 1893, then a republic until annexed by the U.S. in 1898 and became a territory. In 1959, Hawaii became the 50th state.

Hawaiian naming practices: Although native Hawaiians are only 1% of the population, they do have specific naming practices. Prior to 1857, children did not carry their father's surname. After 1857, common naming practices for Hawaiians include shortened surnames, as in Kamalaninui to Kama. A person may have multiple names. If this is the case, find the name that was used in legal documents. Rank was important. A man may take his wife's surname if her rank was higher.

Hawaii immigration: During the 19th century, many Chinese, Japanese, and Portuguese came into Hawaii. There are separate immigration indexes for each group. From 1900 to 1952, there is also a separate Filipino immigration index. The Hawaii State Archives Digital Collections have manifest indexes for Chinese, Japanese, and Portuguese indexes. This website also has land and name indexes. <https://digitalcollections.hawaii.gov/greenstone3/library>.

OREGON

The Oregon Country was jointly occupied by the British and Americans until 1846. It became a territory in 1848. In 1859, Oregon became the 33rd state.

Oregon State and Territorial Census records: Oregon took multiple state and territorial censuses, however most of them were for specific counties. Check the FamilySearch Research Wiki for a list of censuses: www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Oregon_Census

Oregon Donation Lands: Oregon Donation Lands claims are derived from the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850. The act provided 640 acres of land free to every married couple that arrived in Oregon before 1 December 1850 - 320 acres recorded in the name of each spouse. To learn how to use these records, see the "How To Guide" on the Oregon Donation Lands here: **ADD THE LINK!**

Biographies of Early Oregonians: The Genealogical Forum of Oregon (GFO) has an Index of 12,158 biographies of early Oregonians. The index can be found here: <https://gfo.org/resources/indexes/pioneer/>

Early Oregonians Database: The Oregon State Archives has the searchable Early Oregonians Database for records of individuals who lived in Oregon before statehood in 1859. To search the index, click here: <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/pages/default.aspx>

WASHINGTON

Washington had joint British and American occupancy until 1846, then it was part of Oregon Territory 1848-1853. It became a U.S. territory in 1853. In 1889, Washington became the 42nd state.

Washington Territorial and State Census records: Territorial and state censuses were taken in Washington while it was still a territory. State census records were also recorded by the county from 1857-1892. They can be found on Ancestry.com under the collection *Washington State and Territorial Censuses, 1857-1892*.

Certificate of Head Tax

A “head tax” or immigration fee was required for all aliens entering the United States at Seattle for the years 1917 to 1924. These certificates were a permit to permanently enter the United States from a foreign contiguous territory. The collection is available on FamilySearch at the following link: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/573266>

REGIONAL AND STATE INTERNET SITES

Alaska

Alaska State Archives, <http://archives.alaska.gov/genealogy/genealogy.html>
Alaska Newspaper Project, <http://library.alaska.gov/hist/newspaper/newspaper.html>
Alaska’s Digital Archives, <http://vilda.alaska.edu>

California

California Digital Newspaper Collection, <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc>
California Genealogical Society and Library, www.californiaancestors.org
Online Archive of California, www.oac.cdlib.org

Hawaii

Hawai’i State Archives, <http://ags.hawaii.gov/archives>
Ethnic Hawaii Genealogy Resources, <http://guides.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/genealogy-hawaii>
Hawaiian Genealogy Indexes, <http://ulukau.org/algene/cgi-bin/algene>

Oregon

Genealogical Forum of Oregon, www.gfo.org
Oregon Historical Records Index, <http://genealogy.state.or.us>
Oregon State Archives, <http://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/records.aspx>

Washington

Washington State Archives - Digital Archives, www.digitalarchives.wa.gov
Washington State Library, www.sos.wa.gov/library