



# United States Research: Midwest Region

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## Overview

The United States Midwest Region includes the following states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. These states are grouped together because of their similar history and background. Most of the Midwest was part of the Northwest Territory. Iowa, Missouri, and part of Minnesota were included in the Louisiana Purchase. These states have similar migration and settlement patterns, similar county jurisdictions, similar economies, and are also similar in the types of records that were created by federal and state governments. The following four record types will be discussed: church, census, land, and military. Federal records will not be discussed in this presentation, including government vital records.

## History and Background

### Early settlement and migration

The most common settlement and migration patterns in the Midwest were travel to the area from other states by canals, rivers, lakes and trails, especially from Pennsylvania to Ohio. Migration from Europe and east coast ports brought many ethnic and religious groups to the region. Early settlers may have traveled to Ontario or Quebec, Canada and then traveled to the Midwest. As Indian lands were ceded to the government, more land became available for white settlements increasing westward expansion.

### County jurisdictions

All the Midwest states use counties as the political jurisdiction. As more people headed west, new counties were created from existing counties. When a county was divided, the old county kept the records created previously. New records were created and held by the new county government. Before doing research in a county, find out when the county was created and what records may be held in the parent county.

### Burned counties

When a county is referred to as a "burned county" it means that the area has suffered record loss. The Midwest Region has had a variety of disasters where records were destroyed, including cyclones, fires, floods, theft, tornados, and war.

### Economy

Humid continental climate with four seasons. The rich soil in the Midwest made it a major farming and manufacturing center. In this region land and homestead records are valuable resources for finding information about an ancestor.

## **Slavery**

Missouri was the only slave state in the Midwest Region.

## **Helpful Resources general state and county**

Research Wiki articles

*[state name] United States Genealogy*

*[state name, county name] County*

## **Helpful Resources history and background**

[Royal Proclamation of 1763](#)

[Treaty of Paris 1783](#)

[Louisiana Purchase](#)

[Northwest Ordinance](#)

[Homestead Act](#)

## **Helpful Resources migration**

Research Wiki articles

[US Migration Trails and Roads](#)

[US Migration Canals](#)

*[state name] migration*

FamilySearch Webinars

[Religious Migration](#)

Other Resources

[1855 commercial map of the US with railroads, routes, and distances](#)

[Understanding Midwest Migration Patterns to Further Family History Research](#)

## **Helpful Resources burned counties**

Research Wiki articles

[Burned Counties Research](#)

## **Helpful Resources slavery**

[African American Slavery and Bondage](#)

## **Key Records**

### **Church Records**

The United States is a country of religious diversity. The Midwest especially is a melting pot of individuals from various countries and religions. The United States has never had “state church” where records were required to be kept. Church Records are an invaluable substitute for vital records. A Church Record may be the only record containing a birth, marriage, or death record of an ancestor.

Individuals may have attended the church of their homeland or came to the United States for freedom to worship in another religion. They may have changed denominations if it was convenient or they may have converted to other denominations. When a family moved to a new community, they may have attended the closest church to them or converted to another religion.

## Helpful Resources for church records

Research Wiki articles

[United States Church Records](#)

[\[state name\] church records](#)

[Gretna Green \(runaway marriages\)](#)

FamilySearch Webinars

[United States Church Records](#)

Other resources

[Cyndi's List: Religion & Churches](#)

## Census Records

Census records are an invaluable tool in family history research. They provide the residence of a family during a specific period of time and may include relationships to the head of household. Other information that may be found in a census record are the approximate ages of individuals listed in the household, state or country of birth, marriage year or age at marriage of the parents, and occupations. Later censuses may include the year of immigration for each person and citizenship information for the head of household. Using the place of residence from the census, other records can be searched in the locality to find more information about the family.

## Helpful Resources for census records

Research Wiki articles

[United States Census Records](#)

[\[state name\] census](#)

FamilySearch Webinars

[U.S. Census Research, Techniques, and Strategies](#)

[United States Censuses](#)

## Land Records

The availability of land attracted many immigrants to America and encouraged westward expansion. Land ownership was generally recorded in an area as soon as settlers began to arrive. Land records are used in family history research to learn where an individual lived and when he lived there. They may include information about other family members such as the names of a spouse, heir, other relatives, or neighbors. Land records may provide information about where a person lived previously, an occupation, military service, citizenship, or may give helpful clues to continue researching the family.

## Helpful Resources for land records

Research Wiki articles

[United States Land and Property](#)

[\[state name\] Land and Property](#)

[Bureau of Land Management Tract Books](#)

[Homestead Records](#)

[Metes and Bounds](#)

[Rectangular Surveys](#)

[War of 1812, Military Bounty Land Warrants, 1815-1858](#)

FamilySearch Webinars

[United States Land Records](#)

[Homestead Records](#)

[U.S. Measurement and Distribution of Public Land States](#)

[Sections, Ranges and Townships](#)

Other resources

[Land Record Definitions](#)

[Bureau of Land Management: General Land Office Records search](#) index to first sale of land

## **Military Records**

Missouri was the only Midwest state with Confederate soldiers. These records are kept on a state level. All other Civil War records are held on the Federal level.

## **Helpful Resources for military records**

Research Wiki articles

[United States Military Records](#)

[\[state name\] Military Records](#)

[US Military Bounty Land Warrants](#)

[Ages of Servicemen in Wars](#)

FamilySearch Webinars

[U.S. Military Records: Revolutionary War](#)

[U.S. Military Records: Civil War](#)

[U.S. Military Records: Pre-WWI Pension Applications](#)

[Selective Service Records \(WWI\) Draft Cards and More](#)

## **State Overviews**

Ohio resources

[Ohio Lands Book](#)

[Ohio History Connection](#)

[Ohio Memory](#)

Illinois resources

[1791 Act of Congress](#)

[Index to Illinois \(Kaskaskia\) land claims](#)

[Military Tract of 1812](#)

[Illinois State Archives](#)

[National Archive Branch Chicago](#)

Indiana resources

[Indianapolis Donation Land](#)

[Indiana State Library](#)

[Indiana Historical Society](#)

## Iowa resources

[1925 State Census index](#)  
[Iowa Digital Library](#)  
[Iowa State Historical Society](#)

## Michigan resources

[Michigan Biographical Index](#)  
[Seeking Michigan](#)  
[Michigan County Histories](#)

## Minnesota resources

[Minnesota Digital Newspaper Hub](#)  
[Minnesota Historical Society](#)  
[Iron Range Research Center](#)

## Missouri resources

[Missouri Compromise](#)  
[Missouri Digital Heritage](#)  
[National Archives Branch Kansas City](#)

## Wisconsin resources

[Milwaukee Port of Entry](#)  
[Canadian Border Crossings](#)

## **Additional Midwest resources**

[American State Papers](#)  
[Draper Manuscript Collection](#)  
[Draper Manuscript FamilySearch Catalog entry](#)  
[NARA Homestead Packets](#)  
[Grand Army of the Republic](#)  
[Grand Army of the Republic post index by state](#)

## **FamilySearch resources**

State research pages:

[Illinois](#), [Indiana](#), [Iowa](#), [Michigan](#), [Minnesota](#), [Missouri](#), [Ohio](#), and [Wisconsin](#)  
[Historical Records Collection](#)  
[Library Catalog](#)  
[Research Wiki](#)  
[Learning Center](#)  
[Family History for Beginners](#)  
[Beginning Research Techniques](#)