



Guide to Genealogy Resources at the Washington State Library

www.sos.wa.gov/library/Genealogy.aspx

Location:

6880 Capitol Boulevard South, Tumwater, Washington

Hours:

12:00 pm to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday (Closed state holidays and weekends)

Phone Information:

Reference Desk 360-704-5221

Other Contact Information:

Reference Email askalibrarian@sos.wa.gov

Ask A Librarian Options www.sos.wa.gov/library/ask.aspx

Online Catalog:

www.sos.wa.gov/library/catalog.aspx

Mailing Address:

Washington State Library

PO Box 42460

Olympia, WA 98504-2460

The first American library north of the Columbia River, the Washington State Library was established by the Organic Act of the Territory of Washington passed on March 2, 1853.

The State Library holds over 40,000 rolls of microfilm for Washington newspapers from the territorial period in the 1850s to the present. Most newspaper microfilm is available for interlibrary loan. Please contact your local library to initiate your request.

Currently, eight microfilm reader/printers are available on site. Because we do loan microfilm, not every reel is available for in-library use every day. Please check our online catalog or call the Library for information.

State Library public services staff is able to do specific look up requests only. Such research includes: searching death dates, city directories and other specific lookups related to the history and genealogy of Washington State. Please be specific with your request. We will not answer obituary requests.

America's Genealogy Bank

The State Library has a subscription to America's Genealogy Bank which provides access to a variety of resources including historical U.S. newspapers (Seattle Times 1924-1984), obituaries, historical books and documents, and the Social Security Death Index. This resource is available on site only.

Ancestry Library Edition

The State Library has the Ancestry Library Edition which provides access to a variety of resources including U.S. census indexes & images 1790-1930; a version of Ancestry.com's U.S. Immigration Collection; the U.S. Data collection of vital records, the Social Security Death Index, and World War I draft registrations; and United Kingdom and Ireland census images and indexes.

This resource is available on site only.

Biographical Resources

The State Library has many biographical resources available on site for genealogy research: Biography and Genealogy Master Index, Washington Pioneers (a multivolume set published by the Washington State Genealogical Society), Told by the Pioneers, and Family Records of Washington Pioneers (a 65 volume set published by the Daughters of the American Revolution). There is also a large collection of biographies of Washingtonians and other persons from the Pacific Northwest. Resources available online are Thurston County Pioneers, Governors of Washington State, and Women in the Washington State Legislature.

Birth Registers – 1891-1907

The State Library has early Birth and Death Registers. Registers or returns of births and deaths were recorded by each county auditor prior to 1907 when the functions were transferred to the state. With a few exceptions, before 1891 births and deaths were not recorded by any level of government in Washington. Birth Registers record names of parents, name of child, date, and birthplace.

Please note that many births and deaths went unrecorded during this period and that the completeness of these pre-1907 records varies from county to county.

Birth Records Index – 1907-1929

Beginning July 1, 1907, the State Department of Health assumed the duty of recording births and deaths.

The State Library has a microfilm index to births organized by the Soundex system. The index shows the names of father, mother, and child, birth date, birthplace, and certificate number.

Please note copies of birth certificates dating from July 1, 1907 – present may be obtained through the State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics.

City and County Directories

The State Library has an extensive collection of city directories dating from 1890 to present. If trying to find the specific place an ancestor lived, or verify his or her residence during non-census years, searching city and county directories may provide you with the information you need.

County Histories

The State Library has county histories available on almost every county in Washington, some of which are available through interlibrary loan.

Daughters of the American Revolution Publications

The State Library has several publications produced by the DAR: *Family Records of Washington Pioneers*, *Genealogical and Historical Gleanings* in 9 volumes, *Miscellaneous Records: Series 2: Volumes 5-38*. The library also has the “every name index” to the Washington State Society Daughters of the American Revolution Genealogical Records Committee Collection covering the years 1927-2000, Series 1-3.

Donation Land Claims

The State Library has the abstracts to donation land claims as well as microfilm of the Washington Donation Land Files, 1851-1903.

Death Registers— 1891-1907

The State Library has early Birth and Death Registers. Registers or returns of births and deaths were recorded by each county auditor prior to 1907 when the functions were transferred to the state. With a few exceptions, before 1891 births and deaths were not recorded by any level of government in Washington. The Death Registers record name, place, date, and cause of death.

Please note that many births and deaths went unrecorded during this period and that the completeness of these pre-1907 records varies from county to county.

Death Records Index – 1907-2004

The State Library has microform indexes of deaths covering the period from 1907-2004. The indexes are organized by the Soundex system. Additional print transcriptions, records, or indexes for deaths are also available.

Please note copies of death certificates dating from July 1, 1907 – present may be obtained through the State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics.

Divorce Records Index – 1968-2004

Beginning in 1968 the State Department of Health assumed the official duty of recording marriages and divorces for the state.

The State Library has a Soundex index of Divorce Records arranged by the name of Husband or name of Wife. Available information includes the husband’s name, wife’s name, date of divorce, city, county, and certificate number.

Please note copies of divorce certificates from years between 1968 and present may be obtained through the State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics.

Gazetteers and Business Directories

The State Library has gazetteers and business directories dating from the late 19th and early 20th century. Among some of the titles are Pacific Coast Business (1867), Disturnell’s Business Directory and Gazetteer of the West Coast of North America (1882), McKenney’s Pacific Coast Directory (1883-4, 1886-7), and Oregon, Washington and Idaho Gazetteer and Business Directory (1886-7, 1892).

Maps and Atlases

The State Library has Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps on microfilm, and Metsker atlases of topographical maps for each Washington County.

Marriage Records Index – 1968-2004

Beginning in 1968 the State Department of Health assumed the official duty of recording marriages and divorces for the state.

The State Library has a Soundex index to Marriage Records arranged by name of groom or name of bride. Available information includes groom's name, wife's name and maiden name (if different), date of marriage, city, county, and certificate number.

Please note copies of marriage and divorce certificates from years between 1968 and present may be obtained through the State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics.

Military

The State Library has copies of World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, for Washington State. We also have a variety of personnel registers for the Army, Navy, and National Guard.

Newspapers – 1853-Present

The State Library has copies of Washington newspapers dating from 1853 to present day available on microfilm. Most microfilm is available for interlibrary loan through your local public library. Holding information about the newspaper collection is in the Library Catalog.

Passenger Lists

The State Library has passenger and crew lists of arrivals at Seattle and Oregon ports for the late 1800s to the 1950s.

Periodicals

The State Library has a large number of local genealogical and historical periodicals available for reference such as *Genealogy Bulletin*, *Family Tree Magazine*, and *Family Chronicle*. Library holding information is available from the Library Catalog. You may request a copy of an article from any of our journals by contacting the Reference Desk (360) 704-5221.

Telephone Directories

The State Library has a large collection of telephone directories for major and small towns in Washington. The date spans of the directories range from the 1920s to the present.

Territorial Assessment Rolls

The State Library has microfilm copies of the assessments for all privately owned property in Washington Territory. The assessments show location of land (by legal description), names of owners, acreage, assessed value of land and improvements. Years available are 1857, 1860, 1874, and 1875.

Territorial Censuses

The State Library has Washington Territorial Census Rolls 1857-1892 available on microfilm. These censuses vary by county and years.

Some territorial censuses are available through the Secretary of State's Digital Archives web page.

United States Census

The State Library also has Federal census records of Washington State for years between 1850-1880 and 1900-1930. The Library also has Indian Census rolls, 1885-1940 for Pacific Northwest Native Americans.

Additional State or Local Genealogical Sources

The State Library has some additional collections of materials of interest to genealogists: the Northwest Collection (materials documenting Washington State's history and culture), the Regional Depository collection of federal publications (dating to the beginnings of our country), and the Depository collection of state agency publications. Further information on these collections is available at the State Library.

Records from the Washington State Archives:

The Washington State Archives and its State Archives Regional Branches have genealogical records including:

- Business Licensing Records
- Court Records (Naturalization, Probate, etc.)
- Divorce Records (not from every county) (pre-1968)
- Marriage Records (pre-1968)
- Military Records
- Pioneer Certificate Application Files
- School Censuses

The State Archives has begun to scan these records and put them online in their Digital Archives www.digitalarchives.wa.gov