

Researching Colorado Ancestors



Colorado's 64 Counties (FamilySearch Research Wiki)

Where do I find records?

Depending on the record type and the time your ancestor lived, many records can be requested from the [Colorado State Archives](#) or the [Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment](#), while others are available in online databases or at a local county office.

Additional Resources

- [FamilySearch Research Wiki](#)
- [Cyndi's List](#)
- [CDC's Where to Write for Vital Records](#)
- [Atlas of Historical County Boundaries](#)
- [PPLD Genealogy Databases](#)
- [PPLD Genealogy Class Calendar](#)

Birth Records

Birth records are officially registered with the state, not county, starting in 1908. Compliance was often delayed.

Early – 1907

- Official record may not exist
- Check CO State Archives or local county courthouses

1908 – Present

- Records kept by the state
- Check CO Dept. of Public Health and Environment

Other records provide birth information. Check for marriage, death, military, and census records, and newspapers.

Marriage Records

Marriage (and divorce) records are generally recorded by the county, once the county was organized.

Places to look:

- *CO State Archives* - Search their marriage index (not complete), containing marriage records for dozens of counties (1860-1960)
- *CO Dept. of Public Health and Environment* - Provide verification (not copies) of marriages/divorces (1900-1939 and 1975-Present)
- *County Clerk & Recorder* - the county that issued the marriage license or granted the divorce may be able to provide copies.

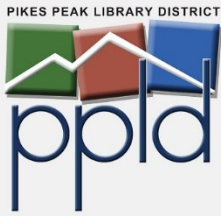
Death Records

Death records are officially registered with the state, not county, starting in 1908. Compliance was often delayed.

Early – 1908

- Official record may not exist
 - Check CO State Archives
- 1908 (some earlier) – Present**
- Records kept by the state
 - Check CO Dept. of Public Health and Environment

Other records, like probate and newspapers, contain death information.



Researching Colorado Ancestors

Colorado Census Records

Colorado became a territory 1861 and was granted statehood in 1876. This impacted how the region was counted in various censuses.

Federal Census

Listed as the Colorado, Kansas, or Nebraska territory, parts of Colorado were enumerated in the federal census as early as 1850.

State Census

The state of Colorado enumerated just one state census, in 1885.

Special Census

Colorado is included in mortality schedules for 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1885 as well as various Native American census rolls (1848-1970).

Tip! Check FamilySearch and Ancestry for census records of all types.

Additional Records

Cemetery and Church Records - Record-keeping varied by location and denomination. Start with [Find A Grave](#) to search for your ancestor. View their county cemetery lists for information about cemeteries by county.

Military - Service records and veteran benefit records (pension and bounty land). Most are kept at the [federal level](#), but the [State Archives](#) does have some Colorado Volunteer and National Guard records.

Land - Deeds, land grants, tax records, etc. The U.S. acquired Colorado land in 1848. Initial sales of this public land are kept with the [Bureau of Land Management](#), but following private sales are generally kept in county offices.

Court - Crime, property disputes, licenses, adoptions, lawsuits, etc. These records are usually kept by the court that handled the case (e.g., Supreme Court, court of appeals, district courts, county courts).

Probate - Records for settling a decedent's assets: wills, petitions, inventories, etc. Held by county clerk or State Archives.

Immigration - If your ancestor immigrated to the U.S., research the location of their arrival. These records are generally not held by the state of Colorado.

Naturalization - Court records, Declarations of Intent, Petitions for Citizenship, etc. Prior to 1906, naturalization records may be held by the county that processed your ancestor's paperwork (check the State Archives). After 1906, this was done at the federal level (check the [National Archives](#)).

Colorado Newspapers

Newspapers can include obituaries, birth, marriage, and social announcements, local news, and legal postings.

[Pikes Peak NewsFinder](#)

PPLD's local newspaper index and database

[Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection](#)

Index/database of Colorado newspapers

[Chronicling America](#)

The Library of Congress' database and directory

[Newspaper Archives](#)

Newspaper database available with PPLD library card



"Researching Colorado Ancestors" by Pikes Peak Library District is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Creator: Cara Ramsey, PPLD Regional History & Genealogy

Last revised date: 7/30/2021

[Twitter](#) [Instagram](#) [Facebook](#) @PikesPeakLibraryDistrict