

Alaska State Archives

Guide for Genealogists and Family History Research

About the Archives

The Alaska State Archives holds select government records created by Alaska's District (1884 -1912) and Territorial (1912 - 1959) government as well as records created after Alaskan Statehood in 1959. This page is designed to help researchers understand the processes and availability of records held at the Alaska State Archives and about where to look for them.

Family History research includes both the study of family pedigrees (genealogy) and specialized studies of common locations and surnames. The Alaska State Archives has primary and secondary sources (records) that may be helpful to family historians and genealogists.

Archives Holdings

The Alaska State Archives' largest pre-1959 holdings consist of Governor's correspondence and Territorial Court records (1884 -1959), including land records from the Court Recorder's Offices around Alaska.

Alaska's Court System documented **vital statistics prior to 1959**, including births, deaths, and marriages. The oldest vital statistics records are documented, at times randomly and unpredictably, in the pre-1900 Court Recorder's volumes. Pre-1959 guardianship, adoption, and **probate records** are held by the Alaska State Archives. The Alaska State Archives also holds the bulk of **pre-1959 naturalization records** for Alaska, with a minority of these types of records also held by the Seattle Branch of the National Archives. The Alaska State Archives has a record of all individuals from Alaska who served in **World War I**.

Record Restrictions

Researchers should know that vital records post-1959 can be obtained from the Alaska State Health Analytics and Vital Records Section, Division of Public Health. Some records carry restrictions. Death and Marriage records carry a 50-year restriction. Birth records are restricted for 100 years. Adoption records are confidential and require written permission of the Alaska Court System to access.

Alaska State Archives does not have copies of federal censuses or Bureau of Indian Affairs censuses.

About the Alaska State Libraries, Archives & Museums

These agencies are housed together in the new SLAM (State Libraries, Archives, and Museum) building opened in 2016. The Division of Libraries, Archives & Museums web page gives links to both modern and historical information. The LAM (Libraries, Archives, and Museums) homepage gives a **Historical Collections** link in the *Search our Collections* box that identifies Collection Guides, Indexes, and Educational Resources. It links to Sitka's Sheldon Jackson Museum. It also links to Alaska's Digital Archives and contact information for the Alaska State Library. On the Alaska State Library's *Historical Collections* page, the *Popular Resources* side box gives other links helpful to genealogy and family history research. The SLED link gives information resources for, about, and by Alaskans, including cemetery links.

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Creation of Alaska Courts 1800s to 1959¹

Created	Court Name	Divisions	Precincts	Information
Alaska purchase, 1867	No formal government in Alaska	Cases tried in district courts of California, Oregon, or Washington		General laws of Oregon made applicable to Alaska
Alaska's Organic Act of 1884 ²	First U.S. District Court	Sitka Water Lane Circuit ³	Commissioners assigned to Sitka, Wrangell, Juneau, Unalaska ⁴	District of Alaska Revenue Cutter <i>Bear</i> transported court along coast of Alaska
1900 ⁵	First Judicial Second Judicial Third Judicial Divisions	Juneau, Saint Michaels Eagle City	Territorial capital moved from Sitka to Juneau	Congress enacted Civil Code for Alaska
1900 ^{6 7} (1903 ⁸)		U.S. District Court moved from Sitka to Juneau		Two federal judges added to Court System ⁹
1909 ¹⁰ (1910 ¹¹)	Four judicial divisions	Juneau Nome Valdez Fairbanks		Third Judicial Division split into Third and Fourth Judicial Divisions
1901, ¹² 1910 ¹³	Floating Courts	Third Division		US Revenue Cutters <i>Thetis</i> , <i>Rush</i> , <i>Perry</i> , <i>Bear</i> , <i>Tahoma</i> , <i>Manning</i> , <i>McCulloch</i>
Second Organic Act, Alaska, 1912 ¹⁴		Juneau Capital of Territory		Territory of Alaska created
1948 ¹⁵	Third Judicial District	Moved to Anchorage from Valdez		
1956 – 1958 ¹⁶	Anchorage District Courts	Anchorage District Courts backlog		Visiting US District Court Judges from various states and Hawaii
Statehood, ¹⁷ 1959	Extended Alaska State Court System			Alaska, 59 th State of the United States of America

A booklet entitled *Record Group Inventory: District and Territorial Court System (1987)* is available through the Alaska State Archives.

¹ Naske, Claus-M., "A History of the Alaska Federal District Court System, 1884-1959, and the Creation of the State Court System." RSA 410059, Alaska Court System and the Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska: Fairbanks, Alaska.

² Ibid, Title 1: The First Organic Act of 1884 creates a Judicial System, p. 23

³ Ibid, Title 12: The Floating Court

⁴ Ibid, Title 2: The First U.S. District Court, Sitka, p. 5

⁵ akhistorycourse.org, Alaska's Heritage, /http://www.akhistorycourse.org/americas-territory/alaskas-heritage/chapter-4-5-alaskans-and-the-united-states, *Alaska's capital moves to Juneau*

⁶ Naske, Title 14: The Creation of the Alaska State Court System, p. 2

⁷ Ibid, p. 13

⁸ Ancestry.com, ancestry.com/wiki, Alaska Court Records, Radford, Dwight A. "Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources"

⁹ Naske, Title 14: p. 2

¹⁰ Ancestry.com/wiki, Alaska Court Records, "Red Book"

¹¹ Naske, Title 14, p. 2

¹² Ibid, Title 3: Judge James Wickersham, p. 20

¹³ Ibid, Title 12, p. 1, 6

¹⁴ Ibid, Title 1, p. 23

¹⁵ Ibid, Title 11: Moving the District Court from Valdez to Anchorage

¹⁶ Ibid, Title 14, p. 4

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 1

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Searchable indexes

The Alaska State Archives has searchable indexes of **naturalization, probate, and vital statistics records**. The actual naturalization, probate, and vital statistics records held by the Archives usually contain more information than the index. **Genealogy and family history researchers** can visit the Research Room at the State Library, Archives, and Museum building (SLAM). The Alaska State Archives also supports distance researches through email (archives@alaska.gov) and phone (907 465-2270).

How to Access

On the Alaska State Archives home web page (<http://archives.alaska.gov>) choose **For Researchers** tab at top.

On the page, “**For Researchers**”, there are four side tabs on the right: **Search Collections, Collection Guides, Digitized Collections, Search for Published Government Documents**.

The **For Researchers** page (http://archives.alaska.gov/for_researchers/for_researchers.html) also gives an overview for conducting research at the Alaska State Archives and what is available. The lower area gives contact information and hours for the Alaska State Archives.

Side Tabs on For Researchers page:

Search Collections tab takes you to a page allowing searches of the collection catalog by keyword or topics. These collections can help you understand your ancestor’s Alaskan lifestyle and you may be fortunate enough to find specific reference and/or pictures of your ancestor. This tab also connects to the “**For Researchers page**”.

Collection Guides tab connects to an overview of Alaska State Archives Collections specifically helpful for **genealogists and family history researchers**. These spreadsheets and pdf files can be downloaded, opened, and/or saved on computer. On the side yellow tab there are other links that may be helpful to **family history researchers and genealogists** under *Popular Resources* and *Divisions of Libraries, Archives & Museums* headings also mentioned above. Specifics on the **Collection Guides** page will be covered more thoroughly below.

Digitized Collections tab links to a page giving an overview of the Alaska State Archives collections that have been digitized. It has tabs to specific historical collections of interest. Such area information can be useful for **genealogists** looking for known Alaskan ancestors to learn about specifics of life in Alaska during various time periods. It also has a tab that links to **Vital Statistics Records Online**. This page also contains the yellow side tab of *Popular Resources* links and *Division of Libraries, Archives & Museum links*.

Search for Published Government Documents tab connects to Alaska State Library web page with search possibilities of books, music, and more in the Alaska library system. Alaska State Libraries collection includes historical collections including newspapers where obituaries can be reviewed, individuals’ diaries, and additional repositories available that may be helpful to **family historians and genealogists**.

General Online URLs of Alaska Map and Location information:

<http://www.qsl.net/k17j/county.html> Alaska Judicial Districts map

<https://books.google.com> *Native American Placenames of the United States* by William Bright

<http://alaska.guide/Bays> Alaska Guide website of water names

<http://books.google.com/books> *Dictionary of Alaska Place Names* by Donald J. Orth

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Collection Guides page (http://archives.alaska.gov/for_researchers/coll_guides.html)

In addition to **Vital statistics Records Online**, **Probate Indexes**, **Naturalization Records**, and **Genealogy Resources** detailed below, this page has the following links for **genealogist** and **family history research**. Some of these links may give broader understanding of an Alaskan ancestor's life and activities.

The **Genealogy Resources tab** at the Archives links to a **Genealogy Resources at the Archives** page giving information about *How to Request information* from the Archives, *Web Resources* on various topics, and genealogy. [Resources Outside the Archives](#) gives Federal Resources, Alaskan Resources, and Goldrush Resources contact information. [Finding School Records](#) goes to the *Searching for Alaska School Records* page that gives a listing of the small collection *Available at the Alaska State Archives* and contact information for schools *Not Available At The Alaska Archives*.

The **WWI Military Service Records** section contains lists created in 1923 identifying Alaskans who served during the war, number of service members by community, and death statistics,

The **Historical Sites** section gives a guide to Alaska Historical Sites Files in a pdf. The **Records of Alaska Natives in Religious Archives** section is a pdf prepared in 2014 that gives detail of known organizations that have significant religious records of interest to Alaska natives. It also links other online resources of similar genealogical topic.

The other six yellow tabs on this page give information in specific areas of research that may be of interest to those family historians whose ancestors were involved in those areas.

The **Vital Statistics Records Online**, **Probate Indexes**, and **Naturalization Records** links are detailed more below. These indexes give specific genealogical information.

The side box on the **Collection Guides** page gives links to *Popular Resources Archives for Regular People*, a PDF with a story. The *Records of Alaskan Natives in Religious Archives* is also linked above. The other links could be useful for specific area ancestor detail involved in these areas.

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About Vital Statistics Records Online

The **Alaska State Vital Statistic Index** was created by FamilySearch.org Indexing and contains Births, Deaths, and Marriages alphabetized by last name. It is a searchable spreadsheet linked to familysearch.org digitalized documents.

Online Vital Statistics Index Description

Last names, first names, and some <i>also known as</i> names are recorded as well as event dates, gender and age where known. The documents date range is 1817- 1963. Alaska State Archives box numbers are also given. Locations are divided by Alaska Court Divisions. Event locations outside of Alaska are noted below.	
Alaska Court Divisions	City, Town, Village, and Other Locations
First Judicial District	Angoon, Annette Island, Annex Creek, Astrolabe Point, Auke Bay, Baranof, Bartlett Cove, Bell Island, Benjamin Island, Big Point Walter, Biorka, Biorka Island, Cape Fox, Chatanika, Chatham Straits, Chichagof, Craig, Chomley Sound, Dolomi, Douglas, Dundas Bay, Eliza Harbor, Excursion Inlet, Favorite Channel, Funter Bay, Gambier Bay, Garden Island, Gastineau Channel, George Inlet, Granville Channel, Graves Harbor, Gravina Island, Hadley, Ham Island, Hecate Strait, Helm Bay, Herring Bay, Hidden Inlet, Hollis Logging Camp, Hollis Rural, Hood Bay, Hoonah, Hydaburg, Hyder, Icy Straits, Juneau, Kake, Karheen Cannery, Karheen Cannery, Kasaan, Kendrick Bay, Ketchikan, Khantaak Island near Yakutat, Killisnoo, Korovin Island, Klawock, Korovin Island, Kuiu Island, Kupreanoff Harbor, Lena Beach, Lituya Bay, Loring, Loring Roosevelt Lagoon, Lynn Canal, Mary Island, Mt. Andrew, Myers Chuck, Mud Bay, Pelican, Pennock Island, Port Alexander, Port Althorp, Point Baker, Port Protection Harbor, rural Lynn Canal, Patterson Bay, Perseverance, Petersburg, Pirate Cove, Pleasant Island, Port Houghton, Port Walker, Port Walter, Portland Island, Ratz Harbor, Roe Point Cannery, Salmon Creek, Saxman, Scow Bay, Seal Cove Gravina Island, Sentinel Island Light Station, Sitka, Situk, Snettisham Inlet, Snug Cove Admiralty Island, Speel River, Taku Harbor, Taku River, Tee Harbor, Tenakee, Thane, Tokeen, Tongass Narrows, Traitors Cove, Treadwell, Tuxekan Island Logging Camp, Unuk River, Vallenar Bay, Vanderbilt Reef Lynn Canal, Wacker City, Walden Point, Warm Springs Bay, Wrangell, Yakutat, Yes Bay
Second Judicial District	Ambler, Barrow, Chevak, Deering, Kiana, Kivalina, Kobuk, Kotzebue, Noatak, Nome, Noorvik, Point Hope, Portage Lake Kobuk River, Selawik, Shungnak, Umarak, Wade Hampton
Third Judicial District	Adak, Afognak, Akhiok, Aleutian Islands, Alitak, Amchlitka, Anchorage, Atka, Attu, Ayaktalik, Belkofski, Black Lake, Californsky, Chignik, Clam Gulch, Cohoe, Company Harbor, Dolgoi Island, Dutch Harbor, Eagle River, False Pass, Fort Mears, Gulf of Alaska, Halibut Bay, Herendeen Bay, Homer, Ilak Island, Ikatana, Inanudak Bay shore, Ivanoff Bay, Jonesville, Kaguyak, Karluk, Karheen Cannery, Kenai, King Cove, Kodiak, Larsen Bay, Lazy Bay, Makushin Bay, Mod Island, Nelson Lagoon, Ninilchik, Old Harbor, Old Village, Olga Bay, Ouzinkie, Palmer, Perryville, Point Possession, Port Moller Bay, Sand Point, Saint George Island, St. Paul Island, Seldovia, Seward, Shemya Island, Sitkum Bay, Snug Harbor Gambler Bay, Squaw Harbor, Tyonek, Umkumiut, Unalaska, Unga, Unimak Island, Umnak, Uyak Bay, Wood Island, Woody Island
Fourth Judicial District	Akiachak, Bethel, Bettles, Chandalar, Cheching, Chifornak, Circle, Coldfoot, College, Cripple Creek, Eagle, Fairbanks, Fort Yukon, Fortuna Ledge, Forty Mile, Goodnews Bay, Graehl, Healy River, No-Grub Creek Fairbanks, Kipnuk, Koyukuk, Kwethluk, Kwigillingok, Manley Hot Springs, Mountain Village, Napekiak, Napaskiak, Nena, Nigtmute, Noatah, Nulato, Nunapitchuk, Oscarville, Perryville, Platinum rural, St Timothy, Salchaket, Sand Creek, Smithshore, Spring Camp, Stephens Passage, Tana Cross, Tanalian Pt., Tanana Crossing, Tetlin, Tok Junction, Tolovana, Tuluksak, Tununak, Tuntutuliak, Quinhagak, Umkumiut, Unaska, Wildewood, Wiseman
Other	at Sea, APO 939, M/S Unmak Native, Rural, Ship <i>Unalga</i> ,
Other States	California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin
Other Countries	Canada, Germany, and Siberia

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About **Probate Indexes**

The Alaska State Archives holds more than 17,000 probate case files and/or docket. Case types and numbers, volume and storage locations are included on the index. Alaska State Archives, FamilySearch, and Ancestry cooperated to digitize and index **Sitka probate documents** which should be available online at FamilySearch.org and/or Ancestry.com during or after 2017. The general location index is an alphabetized spreadsheet list and is updated as additional records are added.

Two Online Searchable Probate Indexes

Record Years	Personal Information Listed	Precinct Listed	Case type
General Alaska 1884 - 1959	Alphabetical by last name: last and given names included	Aleutian Islands, Alisak, Anchorage, Bethel, Bristol Bay, Chitina/McCarthy, Chandalar, Chignik, Circle, Cordova, Council City, Dillingham, Douglas, Dyea, Eagle, Fairbanks, Fairhaven, Fort Gibbon, Fort Yukon, Fortuna Ledge, Fortymile, Goodnews Bay, Haines, Haycock, Homer, Hoonah, Hughes, Hydaburg, Hyder, Iliamna, Innoko, Juneau, Kanatak, Kantishna, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak/Sunrise, Kougarok, Koyukuk, Knik, Kotzebue, Kuskokwim, Kvichak, Manley Hot Springs, Mount McKinley, Napakiak, Nenana, Nigtmute, Noatak/Kobuk, Nome, Nulato, Nunapitchuk, Old Harbor, Palmer, Perry, Perryville, Petersburg, Port Clarence, Otter, Rampart Hot Springs, Ruby, Quinhagak, Saint Michael, Seldovia, Seward, Sitka, Skagway, Talkeetna, Tanana, Tolovana, Unalaska, Unga, Valdez, Wasilla, Wade Hampton (Kusilvak), Wrangell, Yakutat	Coroner's Inquest, Estate, Guardianship (minor and adult), Index to Books, Juvenile Court, Probate Case Files, Probate Docket, Probate Index, Probate Register, Rescue and Relief, Skagway Microfilm, Probate Journal, Will
Sitka 1892 - 1955	Alphabetical by last name; given names included	Sitka	Probate case files with box numbers, years, image file name, and folder numbers

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About **Naturalization Records**

Alaska State Archives holds the court records of the District Courts of Alaska that had authority for naturalizations records before 1959. Beginning in 1884 there was one district court in Sitka, there are now four divisions of the U.S. District Courts in Alaska. Naturalizations were usually recorded by the clerk of the court. Naturalization files include a variety of documents in the case files. The Indexes are searchable spreadsheets.

Online Searchable Alaska State Naturalization Index

The **Alaska State Naturalization Index** has the **alphabetized names of individuals** who sought naturalization in Alaska before 1959. It is a searchable list that often identifies **residence and occupation** of individuals, and other names known as. In addition to the record type, it identifies the case number and identifying **Archives box number** where these records are located. Record years are mainly **1895 to 1959** with some occasional 1960 to 1972 records.

Alaska Location and Country of Origin

Residence	Country of Origin
Alaska: Angoon, Auke Bay, Bluff, Bonanza Creek, Chichagof, Chilkoot Barracks, Cordova, Coulter, Council, Craig, Douglas, Excursion Inlet, Fort Davis, Fort Saint Michael, Fort Seward, Funter, Gambell, Golovin, Gustavus, Haines, Hawk Inlet, Hood Bay, Hoonah, Hooper Bay, Hydaburg, Hyder, Juneau, Kake, Kennecott, Ketchikan, Kiana, Killisnoo, Kimshan Cove, Klawock, Kotzebue, Kwiguk, Lituya Bay, McCarthy, Mount Edgecumbe, Metlakatla, Pelican, Perseverance, Petersburg, Pilot Station, Port Althorp, Port Armstrong, Port Beauclair, Nome, Seward, Shrine of Saint Teresa, Saginaw Bay, Shakan, Shungnak, Sitka, Skagway, Solomon, Sumdum, Taku Harbor, Teller, Tenakee Springs, Thane, Todd, Treadwell, Unalaska, Unalakleet, U.S.C.G. Cutter Bear, White Pass, Wrangell, Yakutat	Asia Minor, Argentina, Australia, Austria-Hungary, Azores Islands, Belgium, Bohemia, Brazil, British Bulgaria, Canada, Cape Verde Island, Ceylon, Chile, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Dalmatia, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Guatemala, Guiana, Herzegovina, Holland, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lebanon, Leyte, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, Moravia, Morocco, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Norway, Persia, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Russian-America, San Salvador, Scotland, Serbia, Servia, Siberia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Turkey, Wales, West Germany, Yugoslavia
Other locations: Wisconsin, Washington, California	Some Alaska natives