



Idaho Resources

Family History Sources in the Gem State

Idaho History

The first major wave of settlers to Idaho was drawn by the lure of gold. Just three years after gold was discovered, in 1863 the territory of Idaho was created, consisting of ten counties. The new territory included what is now all of Montana and most of present-day Wyoming. Mining was Idaho's chief producer of wealth until the beginning of the twentieth century when agriculture became the number one industry.



In 1866 the first district land office in Idaho opened in Boise. After the Civil War, Confederate refugees settled in Idaho. Others came to Idaho during a renewed mining boom during the 1880s and 1890s and with the coming of the railroads to the farmland of southern Idaho.

When the new Idaho Constitution was drafted in 1889, territory officials sought to resolve disagreements about whether to keep northern Idaho from becoming part of Washington territory. Many compromises were reached to set the boundaries before Idaho became a new state on 3 July 1890.

Idaho was never a "melting pot," but it did have its share of ethnic groups, such as the Scandinavian converts to the Mormon faith who colonized in eastern Idaho and the Finns who settled in the high mountain valleys near Payette Lakes. Coeur d'Alene mines attracted miners from Wales and immigrants from the Balkans. Likewise, hundreds of Chinese came to Idaho in the 1860s and 1870s to work in the mines. The Basque migration from the Spanish Pyrenees came primarily to Idaho, northern Nevada, western Oregon, and California as sheepherders. Japanese immigrants began settling in southwestern Idaho prior to World War II.

Idaho's Native American population lives on four reservations: Nez Perce Reservation, Coeur d'Alene Reservation in northern Idaho, Fort Hall Reservation north of Pocatello, and Duck Valley Reservation in Owyhee County.

Idaho's development was often turbulent, yet tolerant and just at times as well. The Mormon east, non-Mormon west, and the northern mining part of the state developed three distinct cultures that eventually grew and bonded into the state of Idaho.



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Significant Dates (through 1942)

- 1805** – Lewis and Clark reached Lemhi Pass in present day Idaho.
- 1810** – Fort Henry, the first construction by Americans in Idaho, was established.
- 1811** – While exploring the Snake River Valley, the Pacific Fur Company discovered Boise Valley.
- 1820** – The southern boundary of Idaho at the 42nd parallel was established by a treaty between the United States and Spain.
- 1824** – The Northwest Territory became part of the United States by treaty with Russia.
- 1843** – The Oregon Trail was established in Idaho.
- 1852** – Gold was discovered on the Pend Oreille River.
- 1853** – The northern part of Idaho became part of Washington Territory.
- 1854** – Snake River Indians massacred 21 settlers in Boise Valley.
- 1859** – The southern part of Idaho became part of Washington Territory.
- 1860** – Gold was discovered at Orofino Creek and the first permanent settlement was established at Franklin.
- 1863** – The Idaho Territory was organized including Wyoming and Montana. The U.S. Army attacked Shoshone Indians in the Bear River massacre; more than 200 Shoshone warriors were killed.
- 1864** – Boise became the capital of Idaho. The territorial legislature adopts statutes of common law; dower and curtesy laws were recognized.
- 1867** – The legislature adopted the community property system of marital law.
- 1877** – The Nez Perce Indian Wars were fought.
- 1878** – The Bannock Indian Wars were fought.
- 1880** – Lead and silver lodes were discovered in the Wood River area.
- 1887** – Married women could write a will but could not include her half of community property. As a widow she only received one-half of the couple's community property.
- 1890** – Idaho entered the Union as the 43rd state on 3 July 1890.
- 1895** – County recorders were required to issue marriage licenses.
- 1896** – Idaho women received complete suffrage.
- 1897** – Bitterroot Forest Reserve was established to protect bison.
- 1906** – The largest sawmill in the United States began operating in Potlatch, Idaho.
- 1907** – Birth and deaths were required to be recorded at the county level.
- 1910** – Forest fires consumed one-sixth of Idaho's forests, destroying many communities.
- 1911** – Birth and deaths were required to be registered with the state.
- 1915** – Arrowrock Dam was completed. A married woman could control the income from her earnings and own separate property.
- 1917** – Prohibition was adopted statewide.
- 1919** – A married woman could control the disposition of her separate estate.
- 1931** – The first state income tax law was instituted.
- 1935** – Statewide prohibition was repealed.
- 1942** – Japanese-Americans were moved to an internment camp at Hunt, Idaho.
- 1949** – National Reactor Testing Station near Arco, Idaho established.
- 1955** – Arco became the first United States town to be powered by atomic energy.



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Idaho Censuses

The first federal census for Idaho was taken in 1870. The census is considered complete, although the unorganized part of Kootenai was enumerated with Nez Perce County, and a part of the Bear Lake and Franklin County areas were enumerated with Cache County, Utah.

In the 1880 census, those living in the Yellowstone National Park area of Idaho were included in the Wyoming census rather than with Idaho.

The pre-statehood U.S Federal 1860 census covers the part of Idaho north of 46 degrees north latitude, which was included as part of Spokane County, Washington Territory. In addition, some people living in the southeastern corner of the Bear Lake area of Idaho were included in the census of Cache County, Utah Territory.

There are no known state-sponsored censuses for Idaho.

Idaho Vital Records

Idaho began registering births and death at the county level in 1907. Before 1907, the only birth and death records were kept by churches, midwives, mortuaries, and physicians.

After 1911, all births and deaths were registered directly with the state rather than the county. Early marriages were fragmentary at best. Ricks College in Rexburg has an index to all pre-1900 marriages recorded in Idaho.

- [Web: Western States Marriage Index, 1809-2011](#)
- [Idaho, Marriage Index, 1842-1996](#)
- [Idaho, County Free Press, Vital Records, 1886-1903](#)
- [Idaho, County Marriages, 1864-1950](#)
- [Idaho, Death Index, 1890-1962](#)
- [Idaho, Select Marriages, 1878-1898; 1903-1942](#)

Idaho Land & Wills

- [Lincoln County, Idaho, County Records 1886-1972](#)
- [Lemhi County, Idaho, County Records 1868-1964](#)
- [Twin Falls County, Idaho, County Records, 1906-1988](#)

<i>Population</i>	
1870	14,999
1880	32,610
1890	88,548
1900	161,772
1910	325,594
1920	431,866
1930	445,032
1940	524,873
1950	588,637
1960	667,191
1970	712,567
1980	943,935
1990	1,006,749
2000	1,293,953
2010	1,567,582



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Other Collections

City Directories

Use the browse box in the upper right corner to determine what directories are available for your ancestor's area. If they lived in a rural area, check to see if that area was included with a larger city in the vicinity.

Other Resources

In addition to the following state-level resources, many counties and towns maintain important genealogical collections in local libraries, genealogical societies, or historical societies, so check for a local resource when researching.

Statewide Research Resources

The organizations listed below provide information about Idaho history and genealogy. In addition to these state-level resources, many counties and towns maintain important genealogical collections in local libraries, genealogical societies, or historical societies, so check for a local resource when researching.

- [Idaho Historical Society](#): Maintains the Idaho State Historical Society Library and Archives in Boise. A small portion of the Idaho [State Historical Society Library and Archives](#) have been digitized in the [Idaho State Historical Society Digital Collections](#). The [Merle W. Wells Research Center](#) page contains information for genealogy researchers.
- [Idaho Genealogical Society](#)
- [Idaho GenWeb](#)
- [Idaho Government Documents](#): This searchable centralized collection of digital publications created by state agencies includes some historic images from selected Idaho counties.
- [The National Archives at Seattle](#): This facility maintains records from Federal agencies and courts in Idaho, including census, military, court, naturalization, and immigration records.

Help and Advice

- [Idaho Family History Research](#)
- [Counties of Idaho](#)
- [Track Down Your Western Trails Travelers](#)
- [Where Technology Meets Tombstone](#)

[View all Idaho collections on Ancestry.com](#)

Cherry orchards, farm lands and irrigation ditch at Emmett, Idaho, from the Library of Congress Photo Collection, 1840-2000.





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Important Dates for Idaho Counties

From [Idaho County Resources](#), part of the [Ancestry.com Wiki](#), and was originally published in [Red Book: American State, County and Town Sources](#).

County	Date Formed	Parent County(ies)	Birth	Marriage	Death	Land	Probate	Court
Ada	1864	Boise	1907	1864	1907	1865	1869	1865
Adams	1911	Washington		1911		1876	1886	1911
Alturas				1864		1864	1883	1865
Bannock	1893	Bear Lake/Oneida	1905	1895	1905	1880	1888	1866
Bear Lake	1875	Oneida	1907	1875	1907	1875	1875	1875
Benewah	1915	Kootenai		1915		1890	1915	1885
Bingham	1885	Oneida	1907	1865	1907	1865	1885	1866
Blaine	1895	Alturas/Logan	1907	1864	1908	1863	1883	1865
Boise	1864	original	1907	1867	1907	1863	1863	1863
Banner	1907	Kootenai	1907	1907	1907	1885	1891	1885
Bonneville	1911	Bingham	1911	1911	1911	1911	1888	1911
Boundary	1915	Kootenai/Bonner	1907	1915	1907	1886	1883	1883
Butte	1917	Bingham/Blaine/Jefferson		1917		1917	1886	1881
Camas	1917	Blaine		1917		1885	1897	1870
Canyon	1892	Ada/Owyhee	1906	1892	1907	1865	1885	1865
Caribou	1919	Bannock/Oneida		1919		1889	1898	1891
Cassia	1879	Oneida	1907	1874	1907	1875	1879	1879
Clark	1919	Fremont		1919		1866	1909	1890
Clearwater	1911	Nez Perce		1911		1871	1911	1883
Custer	1881	Alturas	1907	1879	1907	1872	1879	1879
Elmore	1889	Ada/Alturas	1907	1889	1907	1889	1892	1889
Franklin	1913	Oneida		1913		1874	1910	1878
Fremont	1893	Bingham/Lemhi	1907	1893	1907	1878	1889	1889
Gem	1915	Boise/Canyon		1915		1870	1896	1865



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Gooding	1913	Lincoln		1913		1913	1913	1913
Idaho	1864	Original	1907	1862	1907	1862	1865	1870
Jefferson	1913	Fremont		1914		1913	1901	1891
Jerome	1919	Gooding/Lincoln/Minidoka		1919		1919	1918	1884
Kootenai	1864	Nez Perce	1907	1881	1907	1881	1884	1881
Latah	1888	Nez Perce	1907	1888	1907	1881	1881	1879
Lemhi	1869	Idaho	1907	1869	1907	1867	1880	1868
Lewis	1911	Nez Perce		1911		1868	1911	1883
Lincoln	1895	Alturas/Logan	1907	1895	1907	1863	1883	1882
Logan								
Madison	1913	Fremont		1915		1913	1913	1893
Minidoka	1913	Lincoln		1913		1913	1908	1908
Nez Perce	1864	original	1880	1863	1907	1862	1864	1864
Oneida	1864	original	1907	1865	1907	1865	1871	1865
Owyhee	1863	original	1907	1876	1907	1865	1864	1873
Payette	1917	Canyon		1917		1917	1896	1917
Power	1913	Bingham/Fremont/Madison		1913		1913	1913	1913
Shoshone	1864	Original	1907	1875	1907	1871	1871	1866
Teton	1915	Bingham/Fremont/Madison		1915		1893	1900	1903
Twin Falls	1907	Cassia	1907	1907	1907	1880	1907	1907
Valley	1917	Boise/Idaho		1917		1876	1917	1879
Washington	1879	Boise	1907	1879	1907	1873	1878	1880