

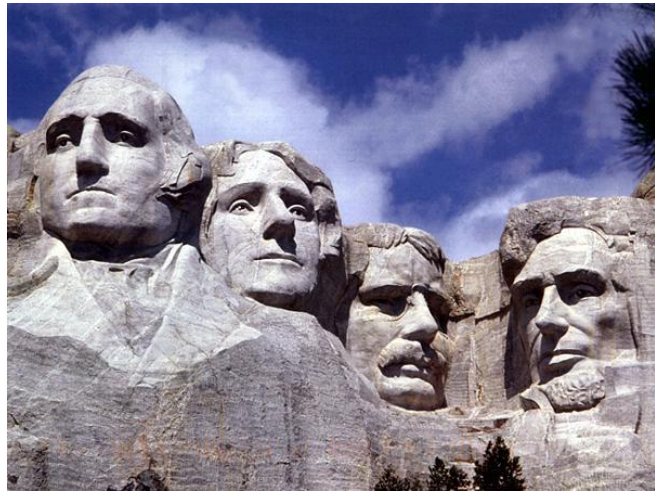
# South Dakota State Research Guide



## Family History Sources in the Mount Rushmore State

### South Dakota History

French explorers are known to have made their way to what is now South Dakota as early as 1743. Creating a topographical transition between the prairies of the Midwest and the Rocky Mountains to the west, South Dakota's eastern glacial drift river region and western Black Hills remained the home of the Arikara and the Sioux until 1825 when tribal conflict drove the Arikara farther west. Sioux remained in the state and still comprise most of South Dakota's Native American population.



The Spanish held dominion over the land for the last part of the eighteenth century, but South Dakota was sold to the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Early nineteenth-century trappers and traders established headquarters in the area, transporting furs down the Missouri from Fort Pierre, then part of Missouri Territory. It was not until the 1850s that any permanent U.S. settlements began. Land east of the Missouri River fell under the successive jurisdictions of the Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa territories before finally settling in Minnesota Territory in 1849. The portion west of the Missouri River became part of the vast, unsettled, northern Nebraska Territory in 1854.

In the winter of 1856–57 the Dakota Land Company from Minnesota received a charter to establish a settlement in Medary, near the town of Brookings. At about the same time, Western Town Company from Iowa received a charter to establish settlements in the area along the Sioux River. A sawmill, store, and houses were built in what is now Sioux Falls.

The Homestead Act of 1862 encouraged settlers to stake claims. Although economic depression, drought, and grasshoppers plagued expansion, the development of land offices, railroad expansion, and changing crop conditions contributed to the population growth. Gold was discovered in the Black Hills in 1874, a lode that until recently was still the largest in the Western Hemisphere. The discovery pressured western migration into that portion of the state previously closed to settlers by agreement with the Sioux. The state's reservation system began with the Yankton in the southern part of Douglas County in 1858. In 1863 the Winnebago and Santee Sioux were moved from Minnesota to a small reservation near Fort Thompson, which later became the Crow Creek Reservation. The Battle of the Little Big Horn in Montana was chronologically followed by the legal opening of the South Dakota's gold mining region and its adjacent grazing land.

With the peak of expansion in 1885, Sioux Falls became an area where people from the east could come for a short period of time and obtain a divorce. Easterners brought a demand for culture with them—operas, plays, concerts, and hotels. Rapidly growing eastern river region settlements and prosperity in the mines created pressure for statehood below the 46th parallel for the southern part of the territory. The U.S. Congress approved the division of the territory creating the states of North Dakota and South Dakota in 1889.

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Throughout the push toward statehood, relations between the Sioux and the white settlers remained difficult, climaxing in the warfare at Wounded Knee in 1890. Nearly one-third of the white population at the time was foreign-born, coming primarily from Eastern Europe and Scandinavia.

Life for the pioneer farmers in the Dakota was a hard one, immortalized by the words and experiences of such authors as Laura Ingalls Wilder and Ole Rølvaag. It was not an easy task to develop a home and farm from the raw, pathless prairie. Remote from neighbors, the prairie dweller led a lonely life. Only through perseverance and determination was a home carved out of what had heretofore been wilderness. Today the state's economy remains largely dependent on livestock, food, lumber and wood products, manufacturing, tourism, and service occupations. The Homestake Mine in the Black Hills is no longer in existence. Sioux Falls is the location of a major medical center with an increasing population.

The above section is from *History of South Dakota* in the [Ancestry.com Wiki](#), and was originally published in *Red Book: American State, County and Town Sources*, ed. by Alice Eichholz, CG, Ph.D., chapter by Laura Hall Heuermann and Marsha Hoffman Rising.

## South Dakota Census Records

South Dakota first appears in the federal in 1860 as unorganized Dakota and in 1870 as the Dakota Territory. There was a special federal census of the area in 1885. There were also state censuses in 1895, 1905, 1915, 1925, 1935, and 1945.

The following census collections are available on Ancestry:

- [South Dakota, Territorial Census, 1885](#)
- [South Dakota, State Census, 1895](#)
- [South Dakota, State Census, 1905](#)
- [South Dakota, State Census, 1915](#)
- [South Dakota, State Census, 1925](#)
- [South Dakota, State Census, 1935](#)
- [South Dakota, State Census, 1945](#)
- [U.S. Federal Census Mortality Schedules Index, 1850-1880](#)
- [1890 United States Federal Census Fragment](#) (includes part of Union County)
- [1890 Veterans Schedules](#)
- [U.S., Schedules of Special Census of Indians, 1880](#)
- [U.S., Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940](#)
- [U.S. Enumeration District Maps and Descriptions, 1940](#)

<b>Population</b>	
<b>1860</b>	<b>4,837</b>
<b>1870</b>	<b>11,776</b>
<b>1880</b>	<b>98,268</b>
<b>1890</b>	<b>348,600</b>
<b>1900</b>	<b>401,570</b>
<b>1910</b>	<b>583,888</b>
<b>1920</b>	<b>636,547</b>
<b>1930</b>	<b>692,849</b>
<b>1940</b>	<b>642,961</b>
<b>1950</b>	<b>652,740</b>



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### South Dakota Vital Records

Statewide registration of births, deaths, and marriages began in July 1905.

- [South Dakota Department of Health](#): Has an online index of births that occurred more than 100 years ago. Can also order vital records from the site; be certain to review eligibility criteria.

### South Dakota Collections on Ancestry

- [South Dakota Births, 1856-1903](#)
- [South Dakota Death Index, 1905-1955](#)
- [South Dakota Marriages, 1905-1949](#)
- [Web: South Dakota, Cemetery Index, 1831-2008](#)
- [Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Passenger Manifests of Airplanes, 1958-1961](#)
- [Doane Robinson's Encyclopedia of South Dakota](#)
- [History of Dakota Territory](#)
- [U.S., Union Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865](#)
- [U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918](#)
- [U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942](#)
- [U.S. Map Collection, 1513-1990](#)
- [U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989](#) (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.)
- [U.S. School Yearbooks, 1880-2012](#) (Search by name or use the browse box on the right-hand side of the page to look for yearbooks from your ancestor's school.)

[View all South Dakota collections on Ancestry](#)

### Other State Resources

The organizations listed below provide information about South Dakota 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.

- [South Dakota Genealogical Society](#)
- [South Dakota State Historical Society](#)
  - [State Archives of South Dakota](#)
- [South Dakota GenWeb](#)
- [South Dakota State Library](#)
- [The National Archives at Denver](#): This facility maintains records from Federal agencies and courts in South Dakota, including census, military, court, naturalization, and immigration records.

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## Family History Sources in the Mount Rushmore State

### Local and Regional Research

- [Sioux Valley Genealogical Society](#)

### Help and Advice

- [Map of South Dakota](#)
- [South Dakota Family History Research](#)
- [South Dakota County Resources](#)

### Significant Dates (through 1948)

Native American tribes that have inhabited present-day South Dakota include the Mandan, Santee, Teton (Brule and Oglala), Yankton, Tanktonnais, Arikara, Cheyenne, Omaha, and Poncas.

1743 – The Verendrye brothers claimed the area for France.

1803 – The U.S. obtained present-day South Dakota as part of the Louisiana Purchase.

1804 – The Lewis and Clark expedition explored the Missouri River in present-day South Dakota.

1812 – Land in part of South Dakota became part of the Missouri Territory.

1817 – The first American trading post was established near present-day Fort Pierre.

1831 – The first permanent white settlement was established at Fort Tecumseh (present-day Fort Pierre).

1834 – Land east of the Missouri River became part of the Michigan Territory.

1836 – Land east of the Missouri River became part of the Wisconsin Territory.

1838 – Land east of the Missouri River became part of the Iowa Territory.

1849 – Land east of the Missouri River became part of the Minnesota Territory.

1854 – Land east of the Missouri River became part of the Nebraska Territory.

1856 – Sioux Falls was founded.

1858 – The Yankton Sioux ceded most of their land in eastern South Dakota to the federal government.

1861 – Congress established the Dakota Territory.

1874 – Lt. Col. George A. Custer led an expedition that discovered gold in the Black Hills, leading to a gold rush in the area. It also led to war with the Sioux, as the expedition was on land that was part of the Great Sioux Reservation.

1878 – The Great Dakota Boom began; thousands of farmers rushed for land.

1879 – The family of Charles Ingalls settled near De Smet. Laura Ingalls Wilder would later write about her childhood there in the series of "Little House" books.

1889 – South Dakota was admitted as the 40<sup>th</sup> state. Pierre was named the temporary capital; it wouldn't be made permanent for another 20 years.

1890 – Troops with the 7<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cavalry killed more than 250 Lakota in the Wounded Knee Massacre.

1927 – Gutzon Borglum began work on the Mount Rushmore memorial.

1930 – Extreme drought hit the Great Plains, including South Dakota.

1935 – South Dakota's first electric cooperative was established in Burbank.

1944 – The Pick-Sloan Plan was passed; it funded four dams on the Missouri River in South Dakota.

1948 – Construction begins on the Crazy Horse monument in the Black Hills.