

Missouri Digital Heritage: Explore Our Collective Past

Missouri State Archives
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Missouri State Archives

The Missouri State Archives was created by the State Legislature in 1965 as the official repository for records of permanent and historical value. Its holdings date from 1770 – present and include: executive, legislative, and judicial records; records of state departments and agencies; land records; military records; state publications; photographic collections; county and municipal records on microfilm; and manuscript and reference collections.

Currently, the Archives holds more than 336 million pages of paper; 830,000 photographs; 9,000 maps; 72,000 reels of county records on microfilm, 1,200 cubic feet of published state documents, and 4,000 audio/video items.

Missouri Digital Heritage: www.sos.mo.gov/mdh

- Mission
 - o Access to Missouri’s history through institutional grants for digitization
 - o Aggregator of Missouri collections hosted elsewhere online
 - o Supporting education through access to primary sources and guides
- Collections
 - o 9 million records, in over 500 collections, from 94 institutions across Missouri
 - o Indexes to records, digitized records, links to exhibits and collections elsewhere online, and educational resources

How to Use Missouri Digital Heritage

- Browse Collections
 - o by Topic
 - o by Media Type
 - o View All
 - o by Institution
- Missouri State Archives Databases (see Quick Links on MDH main page)
- Collections from other institutions
- Advanced search: <https://mdh.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/search/advanced>

- Check boxes for specific collections to search by specific types of records (i.e. items with Photograph, Image, or Postcard in collection name for a search of images), then click Save to save collections chosen
- Filter collections by fields (i.e. Title, Description, Location) and level of exact match

Key Missouri State Archives Databases for Genealogical Research

Birth and Death Records, Pre-1910 (index to microfilm)

- Births and deaths were not required to be recorded until 1910, so what exists varies county to county and year to year (mostly 1883-1889)
- We have in-house indexes and other materials, so email us with specific questions.
- *Tip: Try first few letters of last name and/or variations of name*

Missouri Death Certificates, 1910-1972 (images)

- Closed for 50 years and then transferred to MSA every January
- Can search by Father/Mother/Spouse for years 1956-1972

Missouri Land Records, 1777-1969 (includes some images)

- French & Spanish Land Grants, 1790-1803
 - o Land grants made by both France and Spain (After 1803, land owners were required to prove ownership)
 - o Papers of Original Claimants-1st and 2nd Board of Land Commissioners
- State Land Patents, 1818-1969
 - o U. S. government donated ~6.5 million acres of federal land in Missouri to the State. The land was then sold by the State to fund designated projects:
 - Township School Lands
 - Swamp Lands
 - 500,000 Acre Land Grants
 - o Patents issued by the State of Missouri typically list the name of the purchaser(s), purchase and patent date, legal land description, name of county, number of acres
- United States Land Sales, 1818-1903

Soldiers' Records: War of 1812 to World War I

- Index cards that can lead to Muster and Descriptive Rolls for Civil War, Spanish-American War, and Missouri National Guard veterans

Missouri Union Provost Marshal Papers 1861-1866

- Created by the Union Army, but relate, in part, to Confederate sympathizers
- Index to microfilm:

- Union Provost Marshals' File of Papers Relating to Individual Citizens Database. Includes Loyalty Oaths, Letters/Correspondence, Bonds, Affidavits, Orders, Lists of Individuals
- Images online, accessed from Missouri Union Provost Marshal Papers main page:
 - Union Provost Marshals' File of Papers Relating to Two or More Civilians
 - Recruitment Lists of Volunteers for the United States Colored Troops for the State of Missouri

Missouri State Penitentiary Records, 1836-March 1931 (images)

- Register page with inmate name, inmate number, some background information (place of birth, education, family), crime committed, and date of release.
- Mugshots for 1928+ Registrations
- For April 1931-1987, send us a research request
- MSA also holds Governor's Pardons and Extraditions and Secretary of State's Commutations

Missouri Judicial Records

- Index to court records (primarily case files) from 63 counties
- Images online from the following counties: Adair, Andrew, Callaway, Clay, Barry, Bates, Clark, Crawford, Dade, Franklin, Gasconade, Greene, Holt, Jackson, Jasper, Lincoln, New Madrid, Nodaway, Oregon, Pettis, Platte, Polk, Ray, Saline, St. Charles, St. Louis County, St. Louis City, Ste. Genevieve, Taney, Washington, Webster, Worth
 - Updated with additional images on a quarterly basis
- MSA also holds many Circuit, Probate, County, and Municipal Court records on microfilm; submit a research request for those not indexed (See MSA website for listing)

Additional MSA Databases to check out:

- Coroner's Inquest Database
- Missouri Supreme Court Historical Database
- Naturalization Records

Genealogical Research using collections from other institutions

Missouri County Histories

- All counties are covered, at least regionally
- Currently includes 117 volumes

Missouri County Plat Books

- A selection of county atlases and plat books published from 1875-1930
- Currently includes 141 volumes

- *Tip: When searching within a particular book, view the transcript to more easily locate a specific name within Township/Range*

Just a few of the many resources to check out:

- 35th and 89th Division World War I Unit Histories, contributed by the National World War I Museum and Memorial
- 70+ newspapers from around the state contributed by the State Historical Society of Missouri and others
- Missouri Fire Insurance Maps, 1870-1957 contributed by the Kansas City Public Library; University of Missouri-Columbia Special Collections; Washington University; Missouri History Museum
- Ozarks Digital Library contributed by the Springfield-Greene County Library District
 - o Black Families of the Ozarks
 - o Green County Missouri
- Polk City Directories, 1859-1925 contributed by the the Hannibal Free Public Library
- Sprague Funeral Home Ledgers, contributed by the Marion County Library Subdistrict #1

How do I submit a research request to the Archives?

Please contact us by mail or e-mail. Our Genealogical Request form includes an overview of records useful for genealogical research. This form can be mailed or the same information may be sent by e-mail (archref@sos.mo.gov). Feel free to call with general questions, but research requests must be made in writing. We accept up to three requests per patron at a time.

A request should include:

1. Name of individual (two if a marriage/divorce)
2. Type of record (i.e. marriage, deed, divorce, probate/will, etc.)
3. County
4. Date/Date range (5 years for deeds, 10 years for everything else)

Interested in providing access?

Our volunteers are the reason the State Archives can provide so much information online! If interested in indexing projects, please contact our eVolunteer Coordinator at archvol@sos.mo.gov.

