

Louisiana Family History Research: Four Centuries of History and Genealogy

Class 3: 19th Century Louisiana: From Louisiana Purchase to Statehood to Reconstruction

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History

1. Broke from wars, Spain and France made a trade in 1800 through the Third Treaty of San Ildefonso. Spain gave Louisiana to France in return for the Italian duchy of Parma.
2. The 1801 Treaty of Aranjuez clarified that this was a restoration not retrocession on the premise that France never officially gave any part of Florida to Spain
3. In 1803, the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from France for \$15 million
4. In 1804, the Legislative Council divided Louisiana territory into 12 counties: Orleans, German Coast, Acadia, LaFourche, Iberville, Pointe Coupee, Concordia, Atakapas, Opelousas, Rapides, Natchitoches and Ouachita
5. In 1807 the territorial legislature adopted the parish system and created 19 parishes (local government districts)
6. On 23 September 1810, American rebels under the command of Philemon Thomas attacked Fort San Carlos in Baton Rouge. After gaining control of the fort, the flag of the new Republic of West Florida was raised. This was a declaration of independence from Spain.
7. In 1810, the United States annexed the Florida parishes east of the Mississippi River from Spain, which were previously part of the Republic of West Florida
8. On 30 April 1812, Louisiana was admitted to the Union as the 18th state.
9. On 8 January 1815, the Battle of New Orleans was fought. It ended in a victory for the United States.
10. On June 19, 1838, the Jesuits at Georgetown College signed a contract with Louisiana sugar plantation owners Jesse Batey and Henry Johnson. This contract included the names of 272 enslaved persons.
11. In 1857, Louisiana banned individual manumissions by enslavers. This required court or legislative intervention.
12. In 1861, the city of New Orleans was captured by Union forces during the American Civil War.
13. In 1864, slavery was abolished in the state under Union control.
14. Reconstruction Acts of 1867 were passed.
15. In 1868, the new State Constitution was passed.

Vital Records

- **Birth and Death Records**

- Statewide registration of births and deaths did not start until 1911
- Orleans parish started recording births in 1790 and deaths in 1804
- Some parishes started recording vital records in the late 1800's. They are filed with the parish clerk of the court.
 - Exception: Orleans Parish vital records are filed with the Office of Public Health
 - Microfilmed copies can be found in FamilySearch under the Parish>Vital Records category

- **Divorce Records**

- Granted by the Louisiana Legislature 1805-1846
 - The records are found in printed copies of the Legislative Calendar and Official Journal.
 - These are available at university and public libraries in Louisiana.
- Starting in 1827, district courts in Louisiana parishes and the parish court of Orleans parish were given jurisdiction to oversee divorce cases.
 - Records are filed with the clerk of the court of each parish.
 - FamilySearch has Orleans Parish divorce records 1813-1924

- **Adoption Records**

- Pre-1900s adoptions, contact the clerk of the Circuit Court in the parish where the adoption took place
- Post 1900s, adoption records are sealed and confidential. A court order is required to unseal.
- In 2022, HB450 was passed allowing any Louisiana-born person over age 24 has the right to obtain their original birth certificate

Church Records

- Before statehood, Catholicism was dominant in Louisiana
- From 1912-1900, the largest denominations were Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran

Census Records

- No state or territorial census available for Louisiana
- 1810 Federal Census
 - First census Louisiana was included in after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803
- 1860 Federal Census – Bienville parish is missing
- Special Federal Schedules
 - Agricultural Schedules – 1860, 1860, 1870, 1880
 - Dependent, Delinquent, & Defective Classes Schedules – 1880
 - Mortality Schedules – 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880
 - Slave Schedules – 1850, 1860
 - Social Statistics Schedules – 1850, 1860, 1870
 - Union Veterans Schedule – 1890
 - Most schedules are digitized and online on Ancestry.com and FamilySearch. If not online, they are held at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Census Substitutes

- **Lists of Louisiana Sugar Planters (1881-1882)**
 - Contents include:
 - Names of sugar planters
 - Name of plantation
 - Post office address

- Date the form was sent
 - Date the form was returned (usually blank)
 - Remarks
- Available in the National Archives catalogue
- **Tax Records**
 - Civil War Tax (1865)
 - Internal Revenue Assessment Lists (1863-1866)
 - Register of Direct Tax Payers (1892-1900)
- **Voter Registration Records**
 - Recorded at the parish level
 - Orleans and St. Tammany Parish voter registration records (1867-1905) are online on FamilySearch

Newspapers

- 1803 – Two newspapers started publishing
 - Union: New Orleans Advertiser and Price Current
 - “Le Telegraphe, et le Commercial Advertiser”
- By the 1820s newspapers appeared in English, French, and Spanish
- Many newspapers went out of business between 1861-1865

Land Records

- **Notarial Records**
 - Marriage contracts, probate records, deeds, mortgages, acts of sale, emancipations, procurations, contracts, and partitions of property records
 - From 1769-1803, records are in Spanish
 - From 1803-1830, most records in French and occasionally English
 - Arranged by date under name of notary within the Parish
- **Deeds**
 - Recorded in conveyance books at the parish level
 - Many are digitized and on FamilySearch under Parish>Land Records category

- **Federal Land**

- Land was set aside in the states of Michigan, Illinois and Louisiana for War of 1812 veterans
- Land could also be purchased through government land offices based on various legislation
 - Examples: 1820 Land Act and 1862 Homestead Act

Probate Records

- Probate records pre-1845 were kept in probate courts
- Since 1845, probate records were kept by the clerk of the district court in each parish
- Probate records may be filed with the notarial records, where deeds and mortgages were recorded.

Court Records

- **Types of Courts:**

- Spanish Cabildo
 - Ended in 1803
 - Spanish government who oversaw court and land issues
- District Courts
 - Jurisdiction over probate, divorce, equity, criminal and civil cases
- Parish Courts
 - Criminal and minor civil cases
- Supreme Court
 - Appeals court
 - Originally created in 1804 as the Superior Court

TIP: If no index exists within the case papers, check for a separate index or docket book in the FamilySearch catalog.

Military Records

- **War of 1812**

- Index to Compiled Service Records on FamilySearch and Fold3.com

- Compiled Service Records can be ordered from the National Archives in Washington, D.C.
- Pension Files 88% digitized on Fold3.com
 - Undigitized pension files can be ordered from the National Archives in Washington, D.C.
- **Civil War**
 - Union Service records and pension files can be ordered from the National Archives in Washington, D.C.
 - Some early widow's pensions (Union) available on Fold3.com
 - Confederate service records and pensions available on FamilySearch
 - Southern Claims Commission Files:
 - Allowed claims by Southerners to file for reimbursement if they met the following criteria:
 - Proof of loss of property
 - Supported the Union during the Civil War
 - Did not provide any assistance to the Confederates
 - Resident of the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia
 - Records are held at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.
 - Some are digitized in the National Archives catalog

Naturalization Records

- Index available on FamilySearch (1838-1861)
- Petitions available on both Fold3.com (1838-1861) and FamilySearch (1812-1932)

Records of Enslaved Persons

- **Records for the Enslaved**
 - Various databases exist that document enslaved persons in Louisiana
 - Slave Manifests of Vessels Arriving in New Orleans
 - Georgetown Memory Project
- **Free People of Color Records**
 - Manumission records found in various archives including court records, probate records, etc.

- Freedmen's Bureau Field Office and Bank Records on FamilySearch

Institutional Records

- Prison records
- Insane asylum records
- Orphanages

Published Sources, Indexes, and Guides

The Civil War Tax in Louisiana, 1865: Based on Direct Tax Assessments of Louisianians (Ville PLatte, LA: Provincial Press, 2003). Available online

<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/377345-redirect>

Websites

[AmericanAncestors.org](https://www.americanancestors.org)

- GU272 Memory Project - <https://gu272.americanancestors.org>

[Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com)

- 1890 Veterans Schedules of the U.S. Federal Census - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8667>
- Louisiana, U.S., Homestead and Cash Entry Patents, Pre-1908 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2074>
- U.S., French Catholic Church Records (Drouin Collection, 1695-1954) - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1111>
- U.S., Presbyterian Church Records, 1701-1970 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61048>
- U.S., Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Church Records, 1781-1969 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60722>
- U.S., Southern Baptist Church Records, 1750-1899 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/62267>
- U.S., Southern Claims Commission Master Index, 1871-1880 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1216>

FamilySearch.org

- Acts and deliberations of the Cabildo, 1769-1803: a record of the Spanish government in New Orleans - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/251028>
- Divorce and Annulments, Docket No. 5, v.1-32, 1880-1924 (Orleans Parish) - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/186152>
- Index to compiled service records of volunteer soldiers who served during the War of 1812 in organizations from the state of Louisiana 1812-1815 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/313063>
- Inquest Records, 1825-1945 (St. Tammany Parish) - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/500167>
- Louisiana Births and Christenings, 1811-1830, 1854-1934 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1674847>
- Louisiana Church Records, 1836-1938 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2790251>
- Louisiana Civil War Service Records of Confederate Soldiers, 1861-1865 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1932372>
- Louisiana Confederate Pensions, 1898-1950 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1838535>
- Louisiana Deaths 1850-1875, 1894-1960 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1609793>
- Louisiana, Eastern District Naturalization Petitions, 1838-1861 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1854308>
- Louisiana Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2333781>
- Louisiana Naturalization Records, 1812-1932 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1459894>
- Louisiana, New Orleans, Slave Manifests of Coastwise Vessels, 1807-1860 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2822773>
- Louisiana, Orleans and St. Tammany Parish, Voter Registration Records, 1867-1905 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/3326775>
- Louisiana, Orleans Parish Estate Files, 1804-1846 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1388197>
- Louisiana, Orleans Parish Will Books, 1805-1920 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2019728>
- Louisiana Parish Marriages, 1837-1957 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1807364>
- Louisiana State Penitentiary Records, 1866-1963 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1931391>

- Marriage Records Index and Contracts (Louisiana), 1718-1900 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/740124>
- Nonpopulation Census Schedules for Louisiana, 1850-1880 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/589491>
- Orleans Parish, Louisiana Records of Inquests and Views, 1844-1916 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/185133>
- Records of the insane asylum, 1858-1884 (New Orleans) - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/186947>
- Register of Direct Tax Payers - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/306257?>
- United States Census of Union Veterans and Widows of the Civil War, 1890 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1877095>
- United States Internal Revenue Assessment Lists, 1862-1874 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2075263>

Other Websites

- Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy (1718-1820 - <https://www.ibiblio.org/laslave/>)
- Bureau of Land Management General Land Office Records - <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx>
- Centenary College of Louisiana – www.centenary.edu
 - Holds the Archives of the Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church
- Fold3 - www.fold3.com
 - US, Naturalizations - LA Eastern, 1838-1861 - <https://www.fold3.com/publication/111/us-naturalizations-la-eastern-1838-1861>
 - US, War of 1812 Pension Files, 1812-1815 - <https://www.fold3.com/publication/761/us-war-of-1812-pension-files-1812-1815>
- Louisiana Digital Library - <https://louisianadigitallibrary.org>
 - Free People of Color in Louisiana - <https://louisianadigitallibrary.org/islandora/object/fpoc-p16313coll51%3Acollection?page=1>
 - Newspapers - <https://louisianadigitallibrary.org/louisiananewspapers>
- Louisiana State Archives - <https://www.sos.la.gov/HistoricalResources/LearnAboutTheArchives/Pages/default.aspx>
- National Archives – www.archives.gov
 - Lists of Louisiana Sugar Planters, September 1881-May 1882 - <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/2843329>
 - Southern Claims Commission Case Files - <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/southern-claims-commission>
- New Orleans City Archives & Special Collections - <https://nolacityarchives.org>