

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL RESOURCES

This region covers the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

This is a non-comprehensive overview of some record types, resources, and strategies that may be covered on the ICAPGen regional exams. Use it as a starting point to direct your studies and to compile research reference guides.

IMPORTANT RECORD TYPES

Must Know Very Well	Good Working Knowledge
Cemetery records	Bible records
Census records (Federal, State and Territorial)	Census records <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special (Military, Mortality, Agriculture, etc.) • Spanish and Mexican
Church records (Baptism and christening, Marriage, Burial, Membership, Other, depending on denomination)	City directories
Land and property records (Patents & Deeds)	Court records (Civil, Criminal, Guardianship)
Newspapers (Obituaries, Legal notices and other articles)	U.S. Congressional records (U.S. Serial Set)
Probate records Intestate (administrator, bonds, inventories, settlement, etc.) Testate (executor bonds, wills, codicils, settlement, etc.)	Family histories and biographies
Vital records (Birth, Marriage, & Death) Divorce	Immigration and migration records (Migration routes, journals and histories of pioneer companies)
	Histories (Local, County State or Territory)
	Land and property records (Spanish and Mexican Grants)
	Maps, gazetteers, and historical geographies
	Military
	Periodicals
	Naturalization records
	Territorial records
	Tax records
	Voting records

RESOURCES

Repositories

Some repositories important for U.S. Southwest genealogical research are shown. You will also want to be familiar with repositories specific to smaller local areas where you do most of your research. The key to using repositories is understanding the differences between Federal, State, and local records, jurisdictions, and how to effectively navigate their resources both online and on site.

- Archives & Libraries
 - State Archives
 - [The Research Center](#) – Utah State Archives and Utah State History
 - [Online Archive of California](#) Digital resources from California repositories
 - [Colorado State Archives](#) Historical Records Index Search
 - [Nevada State Library, Archives, and Public Records](#)
 - [Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records](#)
 - [New Mexico State Records Center and Archives](#)
 - [California State Archives](#)
 - [California State Library](#)
 - [New Mexico State Library](#)
 - [Bancroft Library](#) at University of California, Berkeley
 - [Huntington Library](#) in San Marino, California
 - [Daughters of the Utah Pioneers](#) in Salt Lake City, Utah
 - [Harold B. Lee Library](#), Brigham Young University
 - [Denver Public Library](#)
 - [Family History Library](#) in Salt Lake City, Utah
 - [University of Arizona Special Collections](#)
 - [Cline Library](#) – Northern Arizona University
 - National Archive Branches
 - [National Archives at Denver](#)
 - [National Archives at San Francisco](#)
 - [National Archives at Riverside](#)
- Courthouses (county-level, state, and U.S. District)
 - Arizona Judicial Branch <https://www.azcourts.gov/>
 - California Courts Judicial Branch Home <http://www.courts.ca.gov/>
 - Colorado Judicial Branch <https://www.courts.state.co.us/>
 - Nevada Judiciary <https://nvcourts.gov/>
 - New Mexico Courts, The Judicial Branch of New Mexico <https://nmcourts.gov/>
 - Utah Courts <https://www.utcourts.gov/>
- Genealogical and historical societies
 - [California State Historical Society](#)
 - [Clark County \(Nevada\) Genealogical Society](#)

- [Northern Arizona Genealogical Society](#)
- [Southern California Genealogical Society](#)
- [New Mexico Genealogical Society](#)
- [Hispanic Genealogical Research Center of New Mexico](#)
- [Colorado Genealogical Society](#)

For more see: [FamilySearch Family History Research Wiki](#) and search "[name of state] Archives and Libraries."

Websites

Many archives have their collections listed in online finding aids, although this is not always the case. To discover collections that are not listed online, local knowledge is important. This can be gained through visiting the archives in person and engaging with local experts and historians. For online collections, the websites listed below are a good place to start. These suggestions were created by Volunteer groups and individuals who place useful content online.

- [Cyndi's List](#) categories for each of the states
- [Facebook](#) genealogy pages for the region, use search field to locate specific groups
- [FamilySearch](#) Research Wiki article "[United States Genealogy](#)"
- USGenWeb and USGenWeb Archives
- [Linkpendium](#) links by locality for each of the states
- Your favorite search engine
- [The Family History Guide](#)

"In addition to exploring the archives and libraries listed in the "Repositories" section above, consider investigating university libraries for important region-specific websites. Begin with this brief (non-comprehensive) list:

- [Mountain West Digital Library](#). Digital collections from Utah, Nevada, and Idaho.
- [Western History and Genealogy Collection](#) at the Denver Public Library
- [Rocky Mountain Online Archives](#) Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico
- [American Heritage Center](#) Libraries in New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming
- [Center for Southwest Research](#) at the University of New Mexico
- [Center for Southwest Studies](#) at Fort Lewis College, Colorado
- Heritage West digital archives from Western States repositories
- [Autry Museum of the American West](#) includes a research library
- [Western States Marriage Index](#)
- [Arizona Memory Project](#) Digital resource from Arizona repositories
- [Salsa Library Consortium](#) – 7 New Mexico libraries

Finding aids

Finding aids listing the sources that repositories hold are often available online, but not always. Knowledge of such collections not listed online can often be obtained through local experience, visits to repositories, and conversations with local experts.

- The Huntington Library, located in San Marino, California, offers public access to mission records through its online database, [Early California Population Project \(ECP\)](#).
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) can provide direction to resources specific to the Southwestern U.S., such as guiding you to relevant archives, databases, and research strategies. (My perspective on AI is that it is a powerful tool that genealogy researchers can benefit from when we take the time to learn about how it works and how to apply it to specific research purposes. For example, I used AI to enhance the quoted paragraphs in this review to consider for clarification.)

Book-length research guides

To enhance your genealogical research skills, it's beneficial to read guides covering various aspects like research techniques, analysis, writing, and different types of records. Regardless of your expertise level, a thorough study of research guides specific to your states of interest, local repositories, record types, and particular topics can significantly deepen your understanding of the region. General guides are so plentiful that any list could quickly go out-of-date and would risk overlooking some. The following list serves as an introduction.

- Spiros, Joyce V. H. *Handy Genealogical Guide to New Mexico*. Gallup, New Mexico: Verlone Publishing, 1981
- Jaussi, Lauren Richardson, Gloria Duncan Chaston, and Lauren Richardson Jaussi. *Genealogical Records of Utah*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co, 1974.
- Beers, Henry Putney. *Spanish and Mexican Records of the American Southwest: A Bibliographical Guide to Archive and Manuscript Sources*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979.
- Spiros, Joyce V. Hawley. *Genealogical Guide to Arizona and Nevada*. Gallup, N.M.: Verlone Publishing, 1983.
- Parker, J. Carlyle. *Sources of Californiana: From Padron to Voter Registration*. Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1969
- Temple, Thomas W. II. *Sources for Tracing Spanish-American Pedigrees in the Southwestern United States*. Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1969
- Clint, Florence Runyan. *Colorado Area Key: A Comprehensive Study of Genealogical Record Sources of Colorado, Including Maps and Brief History*. Denver: Eden Press, 1968.
- George and Peggy Ryskamp. *Finding Your Mexican Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide*. Provo, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, 2007. (This was helpful for language requirements)

The following guides cover all US regions.

- *Becoming an Excellent Genealogist: Essays on Professional Research Skills*. ICAPGen, © International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogist, ICAPGen 2024. All Rights Reserved

2012.

- *Mastering Genealogical Proof*. National Genealogical Society, 2015.
- *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy*, 4th ed. Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc., 2017.

For more see:

- [FamilySearch Research Wiki](#) and search “[name of state] for Further Reading.”
- If needed, ask genealogists in your community or on social media for additional recommendations.

Flier-length research guides

Flier-length research guides for your area may be available from many organizations, in series such as the following.

- Family Tree Magazine's [State Research Guides](#) various series on states (\$)
- Legacy Family Tree's [Legacy QuickGuide™](#) series on states (\$)
- The In-Depth Genealogist's [In-Brief Research Guides](#) series on states (\$)
- [National Genealogical Society](#) “Research in the States” series (\$)
- Ancestry.com state research guides

STRATEGIES FOR U.S. SOUTHWEST RESEARCH

- **Vital Statistics and Recording Laws in Each State:** Understanding when vital records (birth, marriage, death) started being recorded in each state is crucial. For example, in Arizona, marriage and divorce records have been maintained by the county since a 1864 territorial law, with the responsibility shifting to clerks of probate courts between 1891 and 1912. It's important to note that in Arizona, these records are held by the Clerk of the Superior Court in the county of occurrence, not the Office of Vital Records, and there's no statewide registration of marriages.
- **Census Records:** Census records are vital for constructing family units and tracing ancestry. In the Southwest, this includes not only the U.S. federal censuses but also Spanish, Mexican, and territorial censuses. Knowing the years these censuses were conducted helps in locating ancestors during different historical periods.
- **Jurisdictional History:** The Southwestern U.S. has a complex jurisdictional history involving Spanish, Mexican, U.S. territorial, and federal governance. Each period's records may be stored in different locations, and understanding these changes is key to finding the right records.
- **National Archives Regional Facilities:** The National Archives has regional facilities in Riverside, San Francisco, and Denver that hold records relevant to Southwestern U.S. genealogy. Understanding their holdings can provide valuable information not available elsewhere.
- **Interaction with Federal and Territorial Government:** In the Southwest, individuals may have interacted with the government in various ways, such as through land grants, mining

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claims, water rights, and military service. Researching these interactions often involves looking into regional National Archives facilities and the Congressional Serial Set for records and legislative actions related to these matters.

- **Census Substitutes:** In the absence of census records, other documents like voter registrations, school censuses, tax records, and city directories can be invaluable. They help in creating timelines and understanding when vital records began in specific localities.
- **Newspaper Records:** Newspapers are a rich source of information. Digital newspaper projects exist for each Southwestern state, and these can provide insights into the lives of individuals and families. Ethnic newspapers are particularly valuable for researching specific ethnic groups.
- **Land Grants in California, New Mexico, and Arizona:** The history of land ownership in these states, particularly with Spanish and Mexican land grants, is complex. When these territories were ceded to the U.S., the process of validating land claims affected many families. Understanding Private Land Claims and the boundaries of original ranchos can be crucial.
- **Native American Interactions and Influence on Records:** While detailed Native American research methodology may not be required, knowing which tribes were native to each state and their interactions with non-Natives is important. These interactions often influenced the types of records available and their content.

Each of these strategies requires a blend of historical knowledge and practical research skills. By mastering them, you can significantly enhance your genealogical research in the Southwestern United States.

STRATEGIES FOR UNITED STATES RESEARCH

In addition to the strategies specific to this region discussed above the strategies below apply to all US regions.

- **Search All Applicable Census Records:** Censuses are key resources in genealogy. They help in finding complete family units, tracking family movements, and providing vital data like ages, birthplaces, and occupations. Searching every available census year is essential for building a comprehensive family history.
- **Use Original Records:** Original records, created at the time of an event, are the most reliable. These can include birth, marriage, and death certificates, and can be found at various jurisdictional levels such as town, county, state/province, and federal/national. These records provide firsthand information.
- **Understand Your Family in Historical Context:** Place your family within the broader historical landscape. This includes understanding the impact of wars, jurisdictional boundary changes, and other significant historical events that might have affected your ancestors' lives.

- **Assemble Indirect Evidence Correctly:** If direct evidence (explicit information from a primary source) is not available, you may rely on indirect evidence. This involves piecing together information from multiple sources to support your conclusions. It's crucial to assemble this evidence logically and coherently.
- **Evaluate Each Record and Resolve Conflicts:** Analyze the information from each record critically. If you find conflicting information, attempt to resolve these conflicts through further research. Correlate your findings from different sources to build a consistent narrative.
- **Use Substitute Records for Missing Information:** If certain records are missing or there has been record loss, look for alternative or substitute records. For instance, a marriage might be recorded in civil records, church registers, or newspaper announcements. Checking all possible sources is important.
- **Source Each Event in a Person's Life:** Document the source of each piece of information you find. This practice is crucial for accurate citation in your research report and helps in verifying the authenticity of the information.
- **Keep a Research Log:** Maintain a log of all records you search, including those searches that yield no results. This helps in keeping track of your research process and ensures you don't repeat searches unnecessarily.
- **Verify Generational Links:** Confirm the connections between generations. It's important to have evidence supporting how each generation is linked to the next to ensure the accuracy of your family tree.
- **Understand Economics, Religion, Ethnicity, Prejudices, and Laws:** Contextualize your research within the economic conditions, religious affiliations, ethnic backgrounds, societal prejudices, and legal frameworks of the time and place. For example, be aware of the availability and type of records kept by major religious denominations in each state.

These strategies form the backbone of thorough and reliable genealogical research, helping you to create a detailed and accurate family history.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S. SOUTHWEST RESEARCH

For the U.S. Southwest some basic Spanish language skills are required. It is important to be able to identify a Spanish document (birth, baptismal record, marriage, or death/burial record) and be able to abstract important genealogical data such as name, parent's names, dates, places, etc.

NOTE: The exams are open book, including the Internet. Paper and/or digital research reference guides may be used during the test. Digital research reference guides on USB drives will be copied to the facility computer and deleted from that computer at the end of the test session. Research reference guides may also be accessed through a cloud account such as Dropbox, Google, OneDrive, etc.

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