

# Researching in Oregon

Dawn Carlile, Genealogy Roots and Branches  
dcarlile8@comcast.net

## Overview of Oregon History

- Oregon Country aka Columbia District
- Provisional Government 1843
- Oregon Territory 1848
- Territorial Government 3 May 1849
- Statehood 14 Feb 1859

## Northwest Territory 1787

- Area that is now Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

## Timeline of Important Dates

May 11, 1792 – American Robert named the Columbia River.

1805-06 – Lewis and Clark arrived overland and built Fort Clatsop.

1807 – North West Company arrived at the headwaters of Columbia in present day British Columbia.

1809 – Missouri Fur Company formed.

1810 – John Jacob Astor forms the American Pacific Fur Company.

1811 – Fort built at Astoria.

War of 1812 – British captured Fort Astoria and changed the name to Fort George.

## Oregon Country

1818-1846 – area originally claimed by Great Britain, France, Russia, and Spain, now the British & U.S. occupied area jointly.

1815 – U.S. notifies the British it is claiming the Oregon Country.

1818 – Treaty signed allowing joint occupation while the northern boundary was determined.

1821 – North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company merged.

1820s-1830s – Other groups arrived.

1828 – America Society was founded in Massachusetts to settle the Oregon Territory, they tried in 1832 but failed.

January 1832 – First school was started at Fort Vancouver.

1834 – First missionary, a Methodist, arrives in Oregon Country.

1841 – Hudson's Bay Company brings 200 people from the Red River Colony (Manitoba, Minnesota, & N. Dakota) to settle near Fort Vancouver.

## Provisional Government of Oregon

July 5, 1843 – Settlers passed the Organic Act establishing a provisional government consisting of

- A three-member executive committee

- A secretary
- A treasurer
- A nine-member legislative committee

1846 – Oregon Treaty was signed that designated the area west of the Continental Divide from the 42<sup>nd</sup> – 49<sup>th</sup> Parallels as Oregon Country.

1848 – Oregon Territory officially formed.

May 3, 1849 – Territorial Government formed.

March 2, 1853 – Washington Territory was created.

February 14, 1859 – Oregon achieves statehood.

## Oregon Geography

295 miles north to south from the California border to the Washington border.

- 395 miles east to west, from the Pacific Ocean to the Snake River/Idaho border.
- 98,381 square miles (larger than the United Kingdom)
- 9<sup>th</sup> largest state
- Lowest elevation is sea level.
- Highest elevation is Mt. Hood at 11,249’.
- 36 counties.

## Burned Counties

- **Baker County Courthouse** – Some will books were lost in a county clerk’s office fire in 1890s. One early marriage register missing (as of 2005).
- **Grant County Courthouse** – The first courthouse burned August 12, 1870. A second fire occurred in 1885. The courthouse again burned on November 17th of 1950. Fire destroyed some pre 1900 marriage records.
- **Linn County Courthouse** – The original county courthouse was erected in Albany in 1853 but was destroyed by fire in 1861.
- **Polk County Courthouse** – Courthouse destroyed by fire in 1898.

## Oregon State Archives

Archival Records <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/records.aspx>

Early Oregonians Database <https://secure.sos.state.or.us/prs/personProfileSearch.do?searchReset=true>

- Person Profile
- Marriage Information
- Associated Persons
- Sources
- Date of birth
- Birthplace
- Date of death
- Place of death
- Father’s name
- Mother’s maiden name
- Other info you might find

- Occupation
- Date of arrival in Oregon Territory
- Two spouse's names
- Divorce case file
- Donation Land Claim
- Sources:
  - Census
  - Oregon Donation Land Claim
  - Yamhill Co. Marriage Record
  - California Marriage Record CAMR(fs)wc
  - Cemetery List

**Oregon Historical Records Index** <https://genealogy.state.or.us/>

- Records included in the index – listed by county
- Hints for searching
  - No commas
  - No periods
  - Start with surname
  - Narrow it down
    - County
    - First name
- Search Form
- Contact the archives to order copies or to get more information.
- Delayed Birth

**Oregon Historical County Records Guide**

<https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/records/county/Pages/default.aspx>

- County Records Inventories
- #1 Resource for Oregon Records
- Inventory for all 36 counties.
- Alphabetical by the title of series.
- Current as of July 2018.
- Lane County records might be at the state archives or at any one or more of these 16 locations.
- Description of the records
- Access restrictions
- Special notes
- Records at other locations
- Lane Co. Public Works Service Building
- Lane Co. Archives & Records Center
- Lane County History Museum

## Provisional and Territorial Records

<https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/records/provisional-guide/Pages/default.aspx>

- Oregon Counties
  - Benton
  - Clackamas
  - Clatsop
  - Columbia
  - Coos
  - Curry
  - Douglas
  - Jackson
  - Josephine
  - Lane
  - Linn
  - Marion
  - Multnomah
  - Polk
  - Tillamook
  - Umpqua
  - Wasco
  - Washington
  - Yamhill
- These counties became part of the Washington Territory on 2 March 1853
  - Clark
  - Island
  - Jefferson
  - King
  - Lewis
  - Pacific
  - Pierce
  - Thurston
- Agencies
  - Auditor
  - Governor
  - Legislative Assembly
  - Military Department
  - Penitentiary Commission
  - Supreme Court
  - Superintendent of Indian Affairs
  - Territorial Secretary
  - Treasurer
- County Offices
  - Offices
  - Board of Equalization
  - Circuit Court
  - County Assessor
  - County Clerk
  - County Coroner
  - County Court
  - County School Superintendent
  - County Sheriff
  - County Surveyor
  - County Treasurer
  - District Attorney
  - Justice Court
  - US District Court

## Provisional and Territorial Government

- Index Cards
- Name
- Document number
- What it is

## Vital Records at the Oregon State Archives

[https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/records/aids-vital\\_listings.aspx](https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/records/aids-vital_listings.aspx)

- County issued records are listed by county
- May be originals, microfilm copies, or in publications
- Birth certificates - 100-year access restriction

- Marriage & divorce records - 50-year access restriction
- Death certificates - 50-year access restriction
- State certified death certificates are available for 1903 through 1971 and on January 3, 2023 the 1972 death certificates will be available.

## Resources

Clarke, S. A. ***Pioneer Days of Oregon History***. J.K. Gill Co.: Portland. 1905.

Vol. 1: [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Pioneer\\_Days\\_of\\_Oregon\\_History/teRYAAAAMAAJ?hl=en](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Pioneer_Days_of_Oregon_History/teRYAAAAMAAJ?hl=en)

Vol. 2: [https://ia800200.us.archive.org/4/items/pioneerdaysfore01clar/pioneerdaysfore01clar\\_bw.pdf](https://ia800200.us.archive.org/4/items/pioneerdaysfore01clar/pioneerdaysfore01clar_bw.pdf)

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Dobbs, Caroline C. ***Men of Champoeq: A Record of the Lives of the Pioneers Who Founded the Oregon Government***. Portland, Oregon: Metropolitan Press 1932. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/2564968?availability=Pocatello%20Idaho%20FamilySearch%20Library>

Federal Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration. ***Oregon: End of the Trail***. American Guide Series Portland, OR: Binford & Mort, 1940. <https://archive.org/details/oregonendoftrail00writrich>

Frémont, John Charles. ***Narrative of the exploring expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the year 1842, and to Oregon and North California in the years 1843-44***. New York, D. Appleton & Company; 1848. <https://archive.org/details/narrativeofexplo00fr>

Gaston, Joseph. ***The centennial history of Oregon, 1811-1912 v.1-4***. Chicago : S.J. Clarke, 1912. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081810206&view=1up&seq=11>

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Hawthorne, Julian. ***The story of Oregon; a history, with portraits and biographies***.New York: American Historical Publishing, 1892.  
v. 1 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002071117494&view=1up&seq=9>;  
v. 2 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433081782751&view=1up&seq=11>

Holman, Frederick V. "***A brief history of the Oregon Provisional Government and what caused its formation***."The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society 13, No. 2 (1912) pp. 89–139 <https://archive.org/details/jstor-20609900>

Horner, John B. ***Oregon: Her History, Her Great Men, Her Literature***. Portland, OR: The J.K. Gill Co. 1919. [https://archive.org/details/bub\\_gb\\_J8IdAAAAMAAJ](https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_J8IdAAAAMAAJ)

**Interactive Map of Oregon County Formation History.** <https://www.mapofus.org/oregon/>

Lenzen, Connie Miller, *Research in Oregon, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.*, Falls Church, VA: National Genealogical Society, 2022.

McArthur, Lewis A., and Lewis L. McArthur, ed. *Oregon Geographic Names 7th ed.* Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society. 2003. (Fourth edition:  
<https://archive.org/details/oregongeographic00mcar>)

**Oregon**, United States Genealogy, FamilySearch Wiki  
[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Oregon,\\_United\\_States\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Oregon,_United_States_Genealogy)

Oregon Historical Society, <https://www.ohs.org/>

Oregon History: Chronological Events - 1543-1850. <https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book/Pages/facts/history/chronology-1543-1850.aspx>

Oregon History: Chronology - 1851 to 1900  
<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book/Pages/facts/history/chronology-1851-1900.aspx>

Oregon State Archives <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/default.aspx>

USGS **Geographic Names Information System (GNIS)** <https://www.usgs.gov/us-board-on-geographic-names/domestic-names?p=138%3A1%3A5707269042885>