Researching in "THE SOUTH"

Research in "The South" is different than research in New England or the Midwest or most other parts of the U.S. There is a lot of folklore about what can and cannot be found in Southern states. There is also some variance in the list of states considered to be a part of "The South." Also remember when researching that being "Southern" is as much a cultural issue as it is a geographical one. This discussion relates to geography and history.

What You Need To Know When Researching "The South"

- Where is "The South?"
- Settlement, Immigration and Migration Patterns
- The Civil War and Reconstruction
- Structure of the courts and county governments

Research strategies that are the same as for other states:

1. Read the local and state histories
2. Find out what records are available for the area you are searching
3. Become familiar with the records available at the state archives for the state you are interested in.
4. Contact the local historical and/or genealogical society for assistance

Where is "The South?"

It is important to know what states make up "The South." Many geographers place different states in the category of the Southern United States. The following is a list of states to be considered "Southern" for this discussion.

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Florida
- Georgia
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Maryland
- Mississippi
- Missouri
- North Carolina
- Oklahoma
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Virginia
- West Virginia

The history of the settlement of the southern US

- The Southern colonies were originally settled by the British.
- Some colonies became a haven for Catholics who were fleeing the Protestant dominance in England.

Migration patterns into and through the south

The migration into and through the south was heavily influenced by the geography of the area. A study of the geographical formations and consequent impact on migration is required.

Because of the Appalachian Mountains migration from coastal states in the south was to the south along the face of the Appalachian Mountains rather than to the west. Migration to the west followed mountain passes and rivers. Early migration from Pennsylvania and Virginia was through the Cumberland Gap and then north across Kentucky to what is now western Tennessee or south down the east face of the Appalachians through North and South Carolina into Georgia and then westward into Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and on to Texas and Arkansas.

Religious history of each state

The South is generally known as "The Bible Belt" of the United States. Religious affiliation was important to settlers and church histories can provide valuable clues for researchers. There are a large number of church histories available throughout state archives and in the headquarters of each of the major religions.

Native American history in the southern US

The Southern US was the haven of the Cherokee, Seminole, Creek, Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes and many smaller tribes. As the European settlers began to demand more territory to the west and to the south, the domain of these tribes shrunk. Because the settlers and Indians lived in close proximity to each other, there was a great deal of intermarriage, especially with the Cherokee, who frequently could pass for white. In many families, these Native American spouses were identified as "Black Dutch" or Black Irish." The "black" designation accounted for their darker skin tones which were explained as those found in the more southern parts of those European nations.

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 called for voluntary relocation for Native American tribes in the Southeast to points west of the Mississippi. In 1838-1839, the remaining Cherokee were forced out of Georgia and Florida in an action that has come to be known as "The Trail of Tears."

French Settlement history of Louisiana and the Mississippi River

In April, 1682, the French explorer Rene Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, claimed the Mississippi and all its drainage for France and named it Louisiana in honor of Louis XIV. New Orleans began life in 1718 as a French-Canadian outpost, an unlikely set of shacks on a marsh.

Immigration and Migration of Germans, Irish and Scotch-Irish in the South

There were a great number of Germans who came to America and settled in Pennsylvania. Some of these migrated to North Carolina and on into the expanding South. There were a large number of German immigrants in the 1700s who also entered America through North Carolina. They, too, migrated south through South Carolina, Georgia and on into Alabama, Mississippi and then to Arkansas and Texas.

The Irish fled Ireland and many settled in the South in their attempt to escape the numerous "famines" of Ireland, the most notable of which was "the potato famine."

Virginia had a large Scotch-Irish settlement on the east face of the Appalachians in the Shenandoah Valley.

The Civil War and Reconstruction

In the South there was only one war—The Civil War. The other wars—the American Revolution, the Spanish-American War, WW I and WW II, etc. are not "The War".

The Confederate States of America included:

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Florida
- Georgia
- Louisiana
- Mississippi
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Virginia

Other states which are sometimes included as Southern States include:

- Missouri—was a border state which was claimed by both the Union and the Confederacy and had both Union and Confederate elected governments during the War.
- Kentucky—was a border state and had both Union and Confederate elected governments during the War.
- West Virginia—part of Virginia until June 20, 1863 when it separated from Virginia over the issue of the Civil War. West Virginia was part of the Union, but its roots are in the history of Virginia.
- Oklahoma—was not a state during the time of the Civil War, but the five Indian tribes living there supported the confederacy. In fact, the Cherokee, Stand Waite, is the only Native American in US history to have served as an officer in any US military. He was a General in the Missouri State Militia, fighting on behalf of the Confederacy.
- Maryland—depends on the list and/or map whether a Southern state or a Mid-Atlantic State. Maryland was placed under martial law in 1861 to prevent a vote of secession.

If your ancestors lived in any of these southern states during the period from 1850-1900, then a study of the Civil War and Reconstruction is a must. While most southerners were not slave owners and did not support the war, they were conscripted to serve in the Confederate Army. Some abandoned the south and fought for the North. Each southern state's experience in the war was different and therefore, a study of each individual state during this time is also important.

The experiences of Reconstruction in the South accounts for the loss of property and family fortunes, the breakup of family farms and the movement further west, mostly to Texas. Some individuals had to flee their

homes in the south because of conflicts with the "Yankee Carpetbaggers" who were in charge of the new governments.

If your ancestry is African-American, then a study of the Civil War and Reconstruction is important to your family research. Former slaves can only be found by researching the plantations that they lived on. After the Civil War, many southern slaves relocated to Texas for the promised "40 acres and a mule" with which they could start a new life.

Become familiar with the structure of the courts and county governments throughout the history of each state

Each southern state has a unique evolution of county government and the related courts. A study of the evolution of the courts and where records were generated and recorded is necessary to locate documents. For instance, in Alabama almost all court actions including marriages, civil actions and probate were handled by the "Judge of Probate" Court. Even some land records are recorded in this court. Other states, such as North Carolina and Virginia restructured their court system several times.

Some Facts to Keep In Mind When Researching the South:

- The dominant religion is Southern Baptist. Protestants far outnumber Catholics. This is changing, especially in Texas, where the number of Mexican Catholics is approaching, if not exceeding the number of Protestants.
- A plantation was anything that was a self-contained farming enterprise which had an owner with laborers. Most Southern farmers were also blacksmiths and may be listed as such in the census.
- Cotton, while a predominant crop, was not the only farm product in the South. Southern crops included tobacco, corn, wheat, rice, peanuts, timber (hardwood and pine), fruits and a vast array of vegetables.
- Most farms/plantations did not own slaves. These farms were usually worked by families, apprentices or other individuals employed by the owner.
- Some African-Americans were both free and slave-owners.
- Most Southern courthouses survived the Civil War unscathed. Virginia has the greatest number of "burned counties" and Maryland has none.
- There have been a number of courthouses destroyed by fire, tornado, floods and other natural disasters since the Civil War.
- Many Southern records have survived and may be found in state archives, libraries and museums.
- The South had a number of ports through which immigrants could enter the US.
- The oldest city in the United States is located in the South—St. Augustine, Florida (1565)

Some Sources for Southern Research

- BLM Land Grants
- Georgia State Land Lotteries
- Land Grants for Virginia, Maryland, North & South Carolina, Georgia & Texas
- Oklahoma Land Rush
- State Military Records
- Confederate Records are generally found at the local courthouse or State Archives
- Slave Schedules
- Alien Registrations
- Oaths of Allegiance (Alien and Confederate)

- Reconstruction Records
- Confederate Soldiers' Homes
- Confederate Pension Files
- United Daughters of the Confederacy
- The United Confederate Veterans and the Sons of the Confederacy
- *Confederate Veteran* Magazine
- *Southern Footprints* Magazine
- *Alabama Records (Vols 1-256),* by Pauline Gandrund
- *The Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlement of Virginia,* by Lyman Chalkey
- Etc.

SIGNIFICANT DATES OF CONFEDERATE STATES

State	Settlement	State-hood	Secession ordinance	Admitted C.S.A.	U.S. Congress representation restored	Local rule reestablished
Virginia	London Company 1606; Virginia Colony 1607;One of the Original 13 colonies	1788	April 17, 1861	May 7, 1861	January 26, 1870	October 5, 1869
South Carolina	Charles Town Settlement 1671; Royal Colony-British 1723; one of the Original 13 colonies	1788	December 20, 1860	February 4, 1861	July 9, 1868	November 28, 1876
Georgia	Spanish 1587; English Colony 1733; One of the Original 13 Colonies	1788	January 19, 1861	February 4, 1861	July 15, 1870	November 1, 1871
North Carolina	English 1653; US. Possession 1783; one of the Original 13 colonies	1789	May 20, 1861	May 16, 1861	July 4, 1868	February 2, 1871
Kentucky	Augusta Co, Virginia 1763; Fincastle Co, Virginia 1772; Kentucky Co, Virginia 1776	1792	November 20, 1861	December 10, 1862	n/a (dual gov't)	n/a
Tennessee	Watauga Association 1771; Washington Co, N.C. 1776; Southwest Territory 1790	1796	June 8, 1861	May 16, 1861	July 24, 1866	October 4, 1869
Louisiana	Spain 1541; France 1715; Spain 1763; Louisiana Purchase 1803; Louisiana Territory 1804; Orleans Territory 1804	1812	January 26, 1861	February 4, 1861	July 4, 1868	January 2, 1877
Mississippi	French 1699; British 1763; Spanish 1779-1781; Claims by Georgia relinquished in 1803; Mississippi Territory 1798	1817	January 9, 1861	February 4, 1861	February 23, 1870	January 4, 1876
Alabama	Spanish-1702; English 1763; Mississippi Territory, 1798; Alabama Territory 1817	1819	January 11, 1861	February 4, 1861	July 14, 1868	November 16, 1874
Missouri	French 1682; 1682-1803—back & forth between France and Spain numerous times; Louisiana Purchase 1803; Territory of Louisiana 1805; Missouri Territory 1812	1821	October 31, 1861	August 19, 1861	n/a (dual gov't)	n/a
Arkansas	Louisiana Purchase 1803; Missouri Territory 1812; Arkansas Territory 1819	1836	May 6, 1861	May 18, 1861	June 22, 1868	November 10, 1874
Florida	Spain 1513; British 1763; Spain 1783; Florida Territory 1822	1845	January 10, 1861	February 4, 1861	June 25, 1868	January 2, 1877
Texas	Spain; Mexico; Republic of Texas (independent nation) 1836	1845	February 1, 1861	March 2, 1861	March 30, 1870	January 14, 1873

NOTE: According to the *New York Public Library Desk Reference*, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina and South Carolina were all readmitted June 25, 1868, and Georgia was readmitted a second time on July 15, 1870.