

“The Ayes Have It - Discovering Your Ancestors Through Voting Records”

**Miles Meyer
RootsTech 2025**

Voting records are not one of the record sets that most people think of for your genealogy research but since they are collected on a regular basis they can be used to replace the 1890 US Census, fill in details between censuses, and provide clues on additional records that should be searched.

Attendees will learn how to find voting records and use them in their research to build details of their ancestors.

History of Voting Rights in the US

Each of the following pieces of legislation affected the opportunity of US citizens to exercise their right to vote.

- **February 3, 1870:** The 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibited the federal government and each state from denying a citizen the right to vote based on that citizen's "race, color, or previous condition of servitude."
- **1890s-1960s:** Jim Crow Laws restricted many African-American men from voting.
- **August 18, 1920:** Women in the US were granted the right to vote by the 19th Amendment.
 - The amendment was first introduced in Congress in 1878
 - Nine western states adopted woman suffrage legislation by 1912
 - New York adopted woman suffrage in 1917
 - Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the amendment on August 18, 1920
- **August 6, 1965:** Voting Rights Act passed prohibiting racial discrimination in voting.

What is the difference between original records and extracts or compiled records?

- The original registrations list people in the order they registered.
 - Could help you group people together if they registered together.
- The extracted or compiled records are often in alphabetical order.
 - Places individuals with same last name together so you might find relatives.

What records should I look for?

- Register of Voters
- Voter Registrations
- Voter's Lists
- Register of Electors
- List of Electors
- Poll Books
- Lists of Qualified Voters
- Register of Naturalized Voters

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Alternatives to Voter Registration Rolls

- Poll Tax lists
- Militia Poll books
- Compiled Collections

Where can I find voting records?

- Local and State Archives
- Limited number of them are online
 - FamilySearch
 - Ancestry
 - State Memory Projects/Archives
 - Newspapers
 - GenWeb - US Genweb and State GenWeb sites may have compiled lists

What might you discover in voting records?

- Name
- Age
- Residence
- Location of birth
- How long your ancestor has lived in the voting precinct, county, and state
- Possibly immigration and/or naturalization information
- Occupation
- Migration information
- Land/property ownership
- Family relationships
- Marital status
- Deaths
- Criminal convictions
- Mental status
- Interesting notes/remarks

Examples of Florida voting records

- Ancestry – 1867-1868 – index only (\$)
- Florida Memory Project – 1867-1868 – index and images (color)
- FamilySearch – 1867-1905 – index and images
 - Importance of 1867-1868 Florida Voter Registration Records is that these were the first elections African-American males were encouraged to vote in Florida

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Resources:

- The Ancestor Hunt – Voter Lists Page - <https://www.theancestorhunt.com/voter-lists.html>
- Family Search - United States Voting Records - https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Voting_Records
- The Family History Guide – Court Records - <https://www.thefhguide.com/project-9-united-statesf3.html#b>
- Florida Memory Project - https://www.floridamemory.com/discover/historical_records/election1867

My Blogs:

<https://ourancestries.blogspot.com/>

<https://milesgenealogy.blogspot.com/>

OurAncestories Genealogy:

<https://milesmeyer1.wixsite.com/ourancestries>

