
BASIC

GENEALOGICAL

RESEARCH

RESOURCES

Persons researching family histories often request records from Sedgwick County Government. This brochure provides basic information about what records Sedgwick County has to assist with genealogical research, refers researchers to other agencies responsible for certain records, and suggests alternative sources when public records are not available. *Always, our goal is to make information about Sedgwick County more accessible to all researchers.*



*Sedgwick County...
working for you*

Birth Records

Birth certificates from 7/1/1911 to present are on file in Topeka with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Office of Vital Statistics. *Sedgwick County does not maintain birth records and cannot provide copies.*

Death Records

Death certificates from 7/1/1911 to present are filed in Topeka with the Office of Vital Statistics. Before 1885 there was no requirement in Kansas to record deaths. *Sedgwick County has no death records.*

The City of Wichita microfilmed death certificates for deaths occurring within its city limits for 1887-1910. *A listing is available at the Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society's web site. Both the Society and the Wichita Public Library can provide copies of these death certificates.*

The Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society has compiled alternative information about deaths from private mortuary records, newspaper obituary notices, and cemetery records and headstones. *Contact the Society for details, or visit its web site.*

Marriage Records

Marriage certificates since 5/1/1913 are on file in Topeka with the Office of Vital Statistics. Custodian for earlier records is the State's 18th Judicial District Court. For persons applying in person, District Court is able to provide a copy of any marriage certificate it has on file. District Court conveyed original marriage license applications for 1879-1990 to the Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society after microfilming.

Immigration and Naturalization

Immigration and Naturalization records consist of two parts: (1) first intention papers, and (2) final naturalization papers. Applicants for naturalization filed documents in county courthouses until 1911. After 1911, applicants filed with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

To obtain citizenship before 1911, immigrants were required to live in the United States for five years, including at least

six months within the state in which they filed. First intention papers were to be filed three years before application for naturalization. *Please note that applicants sometimes filed first intention and final naturalization papers in different counties.*

District Court has first intention papers for 1870-1905 and 1908 (journal missing), and final naturalization papers for 1871-1906. Information from all final naturalization records was transcribed onto index cards as part of a WPA project about 1936. *An alphabetized listing of final naturalizations is available at the Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society web site. The Clerk of District Court has authorized Sedgwick County Records Management Services to provide access to these records.*

Divorce Records

The District Court has divorce records dating back to the early 1900's. Since 7/1/1951, all District Courts have reported divorces to the Office of Vital Statistics.

Burial and Cemetery Records

There appears never to have been any statutory requirement for counties to record burials. The closest record Sedgwick County has found is one journal, which attempted to record cemetery plot sales — only a handful of entries appear for the early 1920's.

Several townships and cities operate cemeteries. For example, the oldest Wichita cemetery, Highland, reverted to the City of Wichita more than a decade ago when its private cemetery association could no longer fund maintenance.

Volunteers searched Sedgwick County to find all cemeteries, assembled and input any available cemetery records, and laboriously inventoried gravestones where records otherwise were not available to create a database of all burials. *Contact the Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society to search this database, or view lists for each cemetery at the Society's web site.*

Assessment Rolls (1876-1898)

Sedgwick County Records Management microfilmed the oldest real estate and personal property assessment rolls (1876-

1898), for a preservation project funded in part by the Kansas State Historical Records Advisory Board. For most years township journals list all adult residents and their ages. Journals for some townships are missing, and some are damaged, up to total loss in a few cases. *Full sets of microfilm and finding aides are available at both the Wichita Public Library (Downtown, Genealogical Section) and at the Wichita State University Library. Sedgwick County Records Management Services will provide a summary brochure upon request.*

Coroner and Autopsy records

The Sedgwick County Clerk has six volumes of Coroner's Records, with the earliest entry dated 9/24/1910 and the latest being 5/18/1954. Two volumes (c. 1894 to 9/1910, and 8/28/1919 to 10/16/1924) are missing. Journal entries are chronological. Entries from journals were transcribed onto a set of typed, alphabetized file cards in 1936 as part of a WPA project. *The County Clerk has authorized Records Management Services to provide access to these records.*

The County Clerk also is custodian for certain autopsy reports of the County Coroner, which date from about 1952 until 7/1/1976. Reports are filed alphabetically, and indications are that some files are missing. Due to a change in State law, District Court is custodian for Coroner and autopsy reports from 7/1/1976 to present.

Tax Rolls

The County Clerk and County Treasurer have a large quantity of tax rolls, dating from the early 1880's. The great majority are stored at a commercial records storage facility, and retrieval would require advance payment of fees. Assessment rolls from 1876-1898 are easily accessible on microfilm and are available for viewing at Wichita State University and the Wichita Public Library.

County School records

Various pupil and teacher records exist for the old county schools, which predated the current system of unified school districts. After elimination of the County

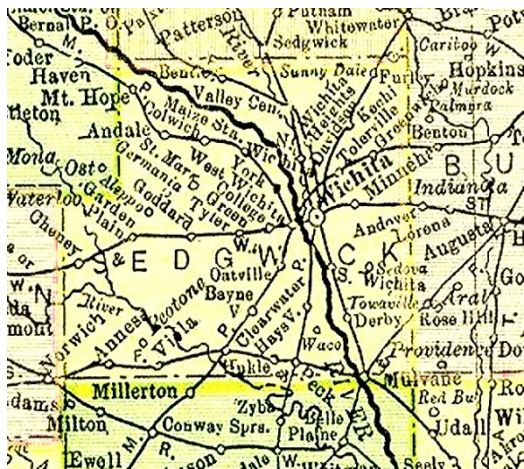
Superintendent of Schools in 1965, the Kansas Legislature assigned county school records to each county's Register of Deeds for preservation. These records have not yet been inventoried in detail. *Contact the Register of Deeds for access.*

General Information

The Kansas Legislature created Sedgwick County in 1870. For the first few decades growth was rapid, and priorities were to create the basics of civilization — roads, bridges, schools, a jail, etc. Keeping good records for future research had a low priority, if it was contemplated at all.

“Wichita” takes in much more territory as a generic place than it did (and does) for a city with legal boundaries. “Wichita” may denote a residence near Wichita in an unincorporated area, on a farm or even in a smaller municipality.

Sedgwick County is large. It helps greatly to pin down geographic locations as specifically as possible. “A farm located two miles east of Goddard” is much better than “a farm west of Wichita” for an 1880's location — it narrows the search.



Sedgwick County – 1895

When asking any agency for records, provide as much detail as possible — names, dates, and any information about residence

that may be known from family stories (i.e., nearby towns, railroads, rivers or roads).

Most County records relevant for genealogical research are not indexed for searching easily by name. Records originally were created for taxation or other business purposes and organized by taxing district or some other administrative unit.

Changes in place names complicate research. Certain communities no longer show on maps at all. Some townships named in early County records are now part of Harvey County. Certain townships were “carved” from others, as population grew and townships were progressively organized.

Obtaining Vital Statistics records

The primary source for vital statistics is the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Office of Vital Statistics.

- **Office of Vital Statistics**
1000 SW Jackson
Topeka, KS 66612-2221
- Call 785/296-1400 during the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4:40 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- Fax: 785/296-8075
- E-mail: vital_records@kdhe.state.ks.us
- www.kdheks.gov/vital
- Application forms are required for birth, death and marriage certificate requests (available from the State by mail, by download from the Vital Statistics Web site, or from the County Clerk's Office Web site).
- Fees are subject to change without notice. Current fees information is available at the State Vital Statistics website.
- Proof of legal representation, direct interest, or written authorization required.

Internet sites

The Kansas State Library no longer hosts **KSGENWEB**. The new site, The KSGenWeb Project is operational with records being transferred from the old site through the end of 2014. A variety of information is available at this website for most Kansas counties, including Sedgwick.

- <http://www.ksgenweb.com>

Wichita State University Library's Special Collections site presents its

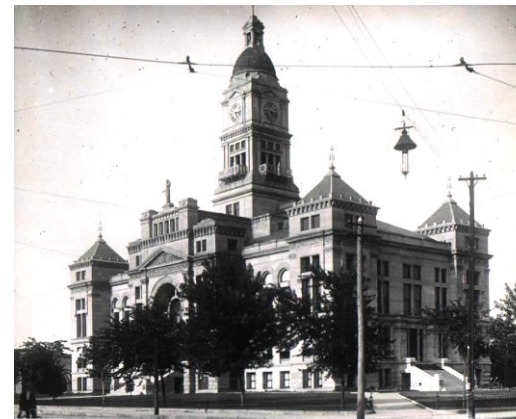
extensive collection of Kansas maps, and a Wichita photographs archives.

- <http://specialcollections.wichita.edu/>

Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society

The Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc. is a private organization of persons concerned with genealogy and community history.

- **Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society**
PO Box 1121
1203 N. Main
Wichita, KS 67201-1121
- Research library is open 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Tuesdays and Saturdays.
- 316/264-3611
- <http://www.mhgswichita.org>



Sedgwick County Courthouse – 1905
Used with permission of the Wichita Public Library

Wichita Public Library Wichita Genealogical Society

The Wichita Public Library's Local History and Genealogy Collection includes a variety of information for genealogical research. Wichita Genealogical Society volunteers respond to genealogical requests.

- **Wichita Public Library**
223 S. Main
Wichita, KS 67202
- 316/261-8509
- www.wichita.lib.ks.us/researchers/history/
- www.wichitagensoc.org/

District Court–18th Judicial Dist.

For information about marriage records prior to 5/1/1913, divorce records, certain autopsy and coroner records, and various other courts records, contact ...

- **Clerk of the District Court – Records**
Sedgwick County Courthouse
525 N. Main, 11th floor
Wichita, KS 67203
- 316-660-5900

Sedgwick County agencies

For County records mentioned in this brochure, contact ...

- **County Clerk**
Sedgwick County Courthouse
525 N. Main, Suite 211
Wichita, KS 67203 316/660-9222
www.sedgwickcounty.org/countyclerk/
- **Register of Deeds**
Sedgwick County Courthouse
525 N. Main, Suite 415
Wichita, KS 67203 316/660-9400
www.sedgwickcounty.org/deeds/
- **DIO/IT Records Management Services**
Sedgwick County Courthouse
Courthouse Records Center
525 N. Main
Wichita, KS 67203-3782 316/660-9840

Kansas Open Records Act

The Kansas Open Records Act (KORA) governs access to all Sedgwick County records. Contact the Freedom of Information Officer for more information about KORA or to discuss any related concerns:

- 316/660-9840
- E-mail: kora-fio@sedgwick.gov



*Sedgwick County...
working for you*

Sedgwick County Government Division of Information and Operations

Records Management Services
Courthouse Records Center (basement mezzanine)
525 N. Main ■ Wichita, KS 67203-3782
316/660-9840 ■ FAX: 316/941-5105
www.sedgwickcounty.org