

CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY

CALIFORNIA HISTORY SECTION

RESEARCH GUIDES

SAN MATEO COUNTY HISTORY



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California History Section

900 N Street Room 200

9:30-4 Monday-Friday

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First established in 1856 after breaking away from San Francisco, San Mateo County had an estimated population of 769,545 as of 2018. This county, however, has a far older history than these basic statistics might indicate. Several early European explorers, including Portola visited this region, which eventually became home to several Spanish and Mexican ranchos. The county also features a number of historic lighthouses, which prevented any number of shipwrecks, as well as Filoli, a historic home with particularly lavish gardens. Not surprisingly given its wealth of historic sites, this region boasts of many history and genealogy organizations. If you are looking for exciting local history resources in the [California History Section's](#) rich collections, then check out what we have for this county!

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ENJOY YOUR RESEARCH!

DIGITIZED RESOURCES

Can't come to the library just yet? No worries! There are a number of online resources you can explore related to San Mateo County!



Digitized Publications

A few years ago we digitized some of our more fragile publications. You can now see documents related to San Mateo County on Internet Archive!



URL: <https://archive.org/>

Type in Search Box: (San Mateo County) AND collection:(californiastatelibrary)

Select Option: "Search Full Text of Books"



Digitized Images

We have scanned and digitized a portion of our extensive photograph collection, including images related to San Mateo County. You can see them on Calisphere!



URL: <https://calisphere.org/institution/51/items/>

Type in Search Box: ("San Mateo County")

DIGITIZED RESOURCES



[California State Association of Counties](#)

Like Wikipedia but locally grown, this government website provides basic information about San Mateo County.



URL: <http://www.counties.org/county-websites-profile-information>



[County Website](#)

Want to learn what San Mateo County residents have to say for themselves? Check out the county government's website!



URL: <https://www.smcgov.org/>

GENERAL RESEARCH TIPS

While many of our materials are online, even more are only in hard copy. Use the following resources to learn about our San Mateo County resources.



Catalog

If you are looking for San Mateo County materials, your best source is our [catalog](#). You can do a general search on the catalog, but also be sure to check out our specialized resources on page 8 of this research guide!



URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&lang=en&sortby=rank

Type in Subject Box: (San Mateo County)



California Information File II

Sometimes the catalog doesn't provide as much detail as you might like. This is why we created the California Information File II, successor to the analog California Information File I. In this resource, you can find indexing to individual articles, as well as San Mateo County deeds, restaurant menus, pamphlets and more!



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCalinfo.htm

Type in Search Box:

1. San Mateo
2. Name of a city in San Mateo County

GENERAL RESEARCH TIPS



The screenshot shows a search interface for 'City and County Directories'. It features a title bar with a city skyline image. Below the title, there is a search instruction: 'Enter one or more search terms. The more terms you enter, the fewer results you will get. To search for a range of years, type a colon between the years, e.g., 1940-1950.' The form includes several input fields: 'County', 'City', 'Year', 'Title', 'Author', 'Publisher', and 'Material type'. Each field has a small 'x' icon to its left. At the bottom, there is an 'Advanced Query...' link and a 'Go' button.

City Directories

Looking for a person? How about the history of a location? You can trace this information and more via our city directories! See what we have by checking our specialized database.



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCityDir.htm

Type in Search Box:

1. San Mateo
2. Name of a city in San Mateo County



The screenshot shows a search interface for 'Telephone Directories'. It features a title bar with a telephone keypad image. Below the title, there is a search instruction: 'Type in the city or county. If you get too many results, add the year to your search.' The form includes several input fields: 'Location-White Pages', 'Location-Yellow Pages', 'Year', and 'Material type'. Each field has a small 'x' icon to its left. At the bottom, there is an 'Advanced Query...' link and a 'Go' button.

Telephone Books

Are you not finding what you need in our city directory collection? No worries, you might find it in our telephone book collection. See what we have by checking our phone book database.



URL: http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryPhonebk.htm

Type in Search Box:

1. San Mateo
2. Name of a city in San Mateo County

SPECIFIC RESOURCES IN OUR CATALOG

San Mateo County has a long and distinguished history! Check out our resources by type and by subject to learn more about this county's complex past.

	Type	Residents
	Newspaper Indexes	Vitals
Maps	Newspapers	African Americans
Books	Periodicals	Chinese Americans
County Histories	Statistics	Japanese Americans
Images		Native Americans
Manuscripts		Women

Subject	
Aeronautics	
Agriculture	
Business	
Cooking	
Education	
Environment	
Festivals	
Fiction	
Folklore	
Geology	
Horses	Shipping
Land	Railroads
Legal	Religion
Medicine	Restaurants
Migration	Streets
Mining	Taxes
Music	Water
Politics	Wildlife



A map of California with county boundaries outlined in green. San Mateo County, located in the northern coastal region, is highlighted in red.

ON-SITE RESEARCH RESOURCES

Our collection predates computers and so do some of our access points! If you are in the library, be sure to check the following analog files for leads on more resources.



California Information File

In the library? Check the California Information File before you do anything else! This file indexes over 130 years of California articles, books, and manuscript collections from all 58 counties.



Subject Headings: San Mateo County



Map File

Looking for a San Mateo county map? Our map file is a great place to start. We have a wide variety of maps, including Sanborn fire insurance maps. Some of our maps cover settlement patterns and even natural history.



Subject Headings: Counties: San Mateo



Photographic File

Sometimes a picture is worth a 1000 words and not all of our pictures are online. To check the rest of the collection search our picture file card catalog.



Subject Headings: Counties: San Mateo

OTHER ON-SITE RESOURCES

Despite our best efforts, some of our resources defy complete description. We suggest that you ask a librarian about San Mateo County information contained in the following resources.

Vertical Files



Our massive collection of vertical files covers a wide variety of topics, including individual counties. You can check them for pamphlets, certificates and even posters related to organizations, individuals, and area histories.



Subject Headings: Counties: San Mateo



Postcard Files

Separate from our photo collection, our postcard collection contains a number of images related to San Mateo County.

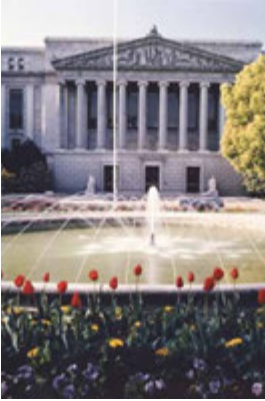
Most are not online.



Subject Headings: San Mateo County

OTHER PLACES TO LOOK

Of course, the California History Section doesn't have everything, so we suggest that in addition to looking at our collections, you contact the following organizations.



Other California State Library Sections

[Government Publications Section](#)

[Witkin Law Library](#)

[Sutro Library](#)

[General Information](#)



<http://www.library.ca.gov/government-publications/>

<http://www.library.ca.gov/law/>

<http://www.library.ca.gov/sutro/>

<https://www.library.ca.gov/services>

Other Organizations



[San Mateo County Historical Association](#)

[San Mateo County Genealogical Society](#)

[County Clerk-Recorder](#)

[San Mateo County Libraries](#)

[Peninsula Library System](#)

[Filoli](#)

[Coastside State Parks Association](#)

[California State Parks](#)



<https://historysmc.org/about-us>

<http://www.smcgs.org/>

<https://www.smcacre.org/clerk-recorder>

<https://smcl.org/>

<http://www.plsinfo.org/>

<https://filoli.org/>

<http://www.coastsidestateparks.org/>

<https://www.parks.ca.gov/>



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900 N Street Room 200
Sacramento CA 95814

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E-mail: cslcal@library.ca.gov
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This guide is also available online at:
<https://www.library.ca.gov/california-history/research-guides/>