22 Types of Populated Places in the United States

When looking for our ancestors in the United States we typically look for a "city" name, a "county" name and the state. Did you know that not every state uses the term "county" to describe that administrative/political subdivision? And did you know that in some states there are independent cities that are not a part of a county as well as consolidated cities and counties?

Did you know there are multiple names for the populated places found in every "county"?

Below you will find the names of the administrative/political subdivisions you may find in a state and the types of populated places you may find within those administrative/political subdivisions.

Similar to the "**Place Finder**" lists on The Ancestor Hunt, some locations may have been a different "type" of place or located in a different state or county in the past.

STATE ADMINISTRATIVE/POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS	
County	A county is an administrative or political subdivision of a state.
Borough	Alaska refers to their administrative or political subdivisions as boroughs instead of counties.
Parish	Louisiana refers to their administrative or political subdivisions as parishes.
Independent Cities	Independent cities are cities that are not within any county. They are an administrative division of the state and are referred to be the census bureau as a "county equivalent".
Consolidated Cities and Counties	A consolidated city-county occurs when a city and its surrounding county form an unified government.
POPULATED PLACES	
Boroughs	A borough is a type of municipality, incorporated part of a city or subdivision of a consolidated city.
Census-designated places	A census designated place is a statistical division created for the census bureau. The division consists primarily of unincorporated communities and the surrounding countryside.
City	A city is a densely populated, incorporated place with defined boundaries. Cities are the largest of the incorporated places in a "county".
Ghost Town	A ghost town is deserted or abandoned city or town. It is also referred to as a former populated place.
Hamlets	A hamlet is a populated place that is smaller than a town or village.
Historic Districts	Historic districts are neighborhoods with a designated historic or architectural significance that are administered by state, county or local governments
Indian Reservation	An Indian Reservation is land governed by a Native American tribe. The tribal government is accountable to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
Magisterial Districts	Magisterial districts are similar to townships. They are civil divisions of towns or cities.
Military Installation	A military installation is any base, post, or other location under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense.
Municipality	An incorporated populated place formed by a municipal charter. This may include cities or towns.
Neighborhoods	A neighborhood is a localized community within a city or town.
Plantations	A plantation is a form of municipality with less governmental power than a city or town. This modern day use is used in Maine.
Towns	A town is an incorporated populated place with defined boundaries. They are smaller than cities, but larger than other incorporated populated places.
Townships	A township is a small area within a county. There are three types of townships; civil, charter and survey.
Unincorporated communities	An unincorporated area is an inhabited part of a county that is not governed by a local municipality.
Wards	A ward is an optional division of a city. The exact definition may depend on the city.
Villages	A village is a populated places is smaller than a town and larger than a hamlet.