



HOW TO SELECT A RECORD TO SEARCH:

Choose a Source of Information

Why select a type of record first? Most record repositories have a catalog of records. The catalog describes and lists each record under a specific record type. The sections on this page will guide you to the type of record to look for, if your research objective is clearly defined.

If your research objective is to find information about. . .

A VITAL EVENT IN THE LIFE OF A PERSON, INCLUDING:

- Vital Events
- Birth
- Marriage
- Death

Then go to section **1** to choose a record type that contains vital event information.

A BIOGRAPHICAL EVENT OR PERSONAL DESCRIPTION AND RELATIONSHIP OF A PERSON, INCLUDING:

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption • Burial • Citizenship • City or parish of foreign birth • Debt • Divorce • Foreign place of origin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness • Imprisonment • Living relatives • Migration • Military service • Naming customs • Occupation • Orphaned | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place where lived • Property owned • Public or legal transactions • Religious activity • School • Servitude | <p>Personal Descriptions,
Characteristics and Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Relatives (parents, children, spouse) • Maiden name • Physical description |
|--|--|--|---|

Then go to section **2** to choose a record type that contains biographical information.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT A PLACE, GROUP OR SUBJECT, INCLUDING:

- History (of places or groups)
- Geography (of places)
- Culture (related to religious, social and ethnic groups)
- Language (including the handwriting of a culture)
- Facts (about places or groups)
- Record Repositories (where records are kept)
- Instructions (related to conducting research in a specific place)

Then go to section **3** to choose a record type that contains background information.

1 CHOOSE A RECORD TYPE THAT CONTAINS VITAL EVENT INFORMATION

First, look for birth, marriage and death information about your ancestor in compiled records. Consider the following examples located in a Family History Center™. . .

- Ancestral File™ (available in the FamilySearch™ computer program, or on the world wide web).
- The International Genealogical Index™ (IGI) (available on microfiche and in the FamilySearch computer program, or on the world wide web)
- Family Histories. Look for your ancestor's surname in the Family History Library Catalog™ Surname section, (available on microfiche and in the FamilySearch computer program, or on the world wide web)

Then, if you do not find information in compiled records, such as the ones above, look for one of the record types listed under your research objective below. . .

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Birth | Vital Record or Civil Registration, Church Records, Census, Emigration and Immigration, Naturalization and Citizenship, Bible Records, Cemeteries, Obituaries, Military Records, Town Records, Newspapers, Occupations |
| Marriage | Vital Records or Civil Registration, Church Records, Newspapers, Bible Records, Military Records, Divorce Records, Land and Property, Town Records |
| Death | Vital Records or Civil Registration, Cemeteries, Probate Records, Church Records, Obituaries, Bible Records, Military Records, Funeral Homes, Town Records |

NOTE: If you have searched for a record type above and have not found a record, then contact another record repository where that type of record may be stored.

2 CHOOSE A RECORD TYPE THAT CONTAINS BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

First, find your research objective below. Then, choose one of the record types next to it.

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|-----------------|---|
| Adoption | Guardianship, Genealogy, Census Biography, Court Records, Probate Records, Church Records, Directories, Obituaries, Societies |
| Age | Vital Records or Civil Registration, Census, Cemeteries, Military Records |
| Burial | Cemeteries, Obituaries, Vital Records or Civil Registration, Church Records, Funeral Homes, Town Records |

Citizenship	Naturalization and Citizenship, Biography
City or parish of foreign birth	Church Records, Naturalization and Citizenship, Genealogy, Biography, Vital Records, Civil Registration, Newspapers, History, Emigration and Immigration
Country of foreign birth	Church Records, Civil Registration, Naturalization and Citizenship, Census Records, Emigration and Immigration
Debt	Poorhouses-Poor Law
Divorce	Divorce Records, Court Records, Vital Records or Civil Registration, Newspapers
Foreign place of origin	Emigration and Immigration, Census, Naturalization and Citizenship, Church Records, Military Records
Illness	Medical Records
Imprisonment	Correctional Institutions, Concentration Camps
Living relatives	Genealogy, Directories, Court Records, Obituaries, Census, Biography, Societies, Church Records, Probate Records
Maiden name	Vital Records or Civil Registration, Cemeteries, Probate Records, Church Records, Bible Records, Obituaries, Newspapers, Military Records
Migration	Emigration and Immigration, Census, Naturalization and Citizenship, Genealogy, Biography
Military service	Military Records
Naming customs	Names-Personal, Social Life and Customs
Occupation	Census, Directories (City), Emigration and Immigration, Officials and Employees, Court Records, Business Records and Commerce, Newspapers, Merchant Marine
Orphaned	Orphans and Orphanages, Guardianship
Physical description	Vital Records or Civil Registration, Naturalization and Citizenship, Emigration and Immigration, Biography, Military Records, Genealogy, Personal Journals
Place where lived	Census, Directories (City), Land and Property Taxation, Voting Registers, Church Records, History, Military Records
Property owned	Probate Records, Land and Property, Taxation Manors
Public or legal transactions	Court Records, Public Records, Newspapers, Notarial Records
Relatives (parents/ children/spouse)	Vital Records or Civil Registration, Church Records, Bible Records, Census, Probate Records, Emigration and Immigration, Obituaries, Notarial Records, Naturalization Citizenship
Religious activity	Church Records, Jewish Records, Buddhist Records, Hindu Records, Islamic Records, Shinto Records, History, Biography, Census, Cemeteries
School	Schools
Servitude	Slavery and Bondage

3 CHOOSE A RECORD TYPE THAT CONTAINS BACKGROUND INFORMATION

First, find your research objective below. Then, choose one of the record types next to it.

History (of places or groups)	History, Colonization, Histories of Churches, Minorities, Periodicals, Chronology, Encyclopedias and Dictionaries, Centennial Celebrations, Migration Internal Law and Legislation, Military History, Yearbooks
Geography (of places)	Gazetteers, Maps, Historical Geography, Postal and Shipping Guides, Description and Travel, Names-Geographical
Culture (related to religious, social and ethnic groups)	Religion and Religious Life, Social Life and Customs, Minorities, Native Races, Ethnology, Folklore
Language (and handwriting of a culture)	Language and Languages - Dictionaries, Handwriting
Facts (about places or groups)	Almanacs, Statistics, Politics and Government, Population, Occupations, Heraldry, Names-Personal, Dwellings
Record repositories (in country, state, city, etc.)	Archives and Libraries - Directories, Societies - Directories
Instructions (related to conducting research in a specific place)	Handbooks, Manuals, etc., Periodicals

Go to a Place Where Records are Stored

Where are records stored? If a record that was created about an event in your ancestor's life still exists, it could be in two or more places:

1. The original record is probably somewhere in or near the place where it was created.
2. A copy of the original record may have been handwritten, photocopied, microfilmed, microfiched or made part of a computer file. If one or more copies were made, one of those copies is in a record repository (place where records are kept) that you can contact. Some examples of record repositories include, a library, archive, court house, home, Family History Center, genealogical and historical society, etc.

How do I get access to the records in the repository? Talk with the person who is responsible for preserving and maintaining the records. Ask if the records are available for access. Tell him or her the type of record you are looking for, your ancestor's name, and the place and date of the event.

Choose a Record to Search in the Repository's Catalog

How do I find records in the catalog? Look under the name of the location where you assume the event occurred, and the type of record you selected.

How do I know which record to choose?

- Compare the catalog's description of the record with your research objective on your Research Log.
- Decide which record description appears to possibly contain the information you are looking for. Remember, look for information about the ancestor you chose, including a specific event, place, and date. When you find a record that appears to match, describe the record on your Research Log.

Glossary of Record Types

The descriptions below are definitions of the majority of record types that exist throughout the world. Library catalogs list and describe the content of each record in a library's collection. This list includes all of the types of records in the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A., the largest genealogical library in the world. Most of the records described are available in more than 3,500 Family History centers worldwide. You may also find many of these types of records at other repositories.

A

Almanacs— Books that describe the events of one year (weather, floods, cycle of moon, statistics on people, etc.) for a place. They may give addresses of governments, organizations, or churches.

Archives and Libraries— Descriptions of archives, libraries, museums, and other places where records are stored.

B

Bible Records— Pages from family Bibles which record births, marriages, deaths, family relationships, and some genealogies. These pages may have been copied, collected, or indexed by family name.

C

Cemeteries— Records about burial places, tombstone and monument inscriptions, records of sextons, lists of the buried, cemetery landscape and design, or how to copy gravestones or take rubbings. May give birth, marriage, and family information.

Census— An official count of a people taken by government or church. Depending on the place and time, it may be sketchy (only the name of the head of household and the number of persons living there) or detailed (names of all people in household, ages, sex, occupation, income, etc.).

Centennial Celebrations, etc.— Records of celebrations of historic events, anniversaries (100th, 50th, etc.) in which the history of a country, church, place, or organization may be told.

Chronology— Records which tell how different people measure days, months, years, and keep track of time.

Church History— Histories of Christian churches, which may be general (e.g., history of a denomination, worldwide) or specific (e.g., a certain church building, a Catholic parish, a Latter-day Saint ward, etc.).

Church Records— Records of Christian churches that often give information about christenings, baptisms, marriages, and deaths, as well as church membership and other things. In many places, churches kept the only official records.

Civil Registration— Official records of vital information (births, marriages, and deaths) kept by civil leaders, outside the United States and Canada.

Colonization— Records of colonies in new lands, often with lists of persons, ethnic groups, and classes of people. Colonists may

have been prisoners sent to settle new lands, free men enticed to go to new lands, those who chose to go to new lands, or those forced to leave their homelands.

Compiled Records— Information that has been gathered from various sources and compiled as a record of events, relationships, circumstances, often in the form of biographies, family histories, etc.

Concentration Camps— A written descriptive work pertaining to institutions who detain groups of people based on their race, religion, national origin, etc.

Correctional Institutions— Records of institutions which confined people (those who committed crimes, debtors, etc.) as inmates. May list names of persons held there and their guardians.

Court Records— Proceedings, actions, and discussions of various. Court records cover criminal offenses, licensing, contracts, divorce, probate, land and property, etc.

D

Description and Travel— Records about the geography of a place, which may include personal impressions and descriptions. Provide background material, historical descriptions, and social history.

Dictionaries— Books of words and their definitions, arranged alphabetically. Dictionaries may define words used in one language or may contain words translated from one language to another.

Directories— Alphabetical or classified lists that include the names and addresses of (1) the inhabitants or organizations of a place, or (2) members of an organization.

Directories— Alphabetical or classified lists that include the names and addresses of (1) the inhabitants or organizations of a place, or (2) members of an organization.

Divorce Records— Collections of records of divorces and annulments.

Dwellings— Records about buildings and homes—the design, construction, traditions, etc. May discuss architecture generally (e.g., Georgian home styles) or note specifics (e.g., the buildings on one Scandinavian farm). Useful for background information for personal or family histories.

E

Emigration and Immigration— Records about people moving out of or into a country. May contain lists of ship's passengers, people who bought tickets from a ticket agent, police registration on leaving or arriving in a country, etc. Does not include records of moves within a country.

Encyclopedias and Dictionaries— Records which inform concisely about many general subjects or which explain one subject thoroughly.

Ethnology— Records about races of peoples—their traditions, origin, background; where

or how they lived; their physical, social, and religious characteristics, etc.

F

Family Histories— Records that contain genealogical information, biographical sketches, or stories about members or branches of a family, or those having a common surname.

Folklore— Records of stories, tales, and oral traditions of a people. May discuss religious beliefs, explanations of creation of the world, and sagas that depict history and heroes.

Funeral Homes— Records pertaining to funeral homes or mortuaries, including business records, burial expenses, and information on the deceased.

G

Gazetteers— Records which list geographical names alphabetically, often giving descriptions of those localities or their map coordinates.

Genealogy— Records that trace family ancestors or descendants, and family histories of many families who do not share a single surname. May have descriptions or charts of pedigrees, family trees, and family groups.

Guardianship— Court decisions, legal records, and any information about a guardian's responsibility for a child, including adoption.

H

Handbooks, Manuals, etc.— Reference works in which facts and information pertaining to a certain subject are arranged for ready reference and consultation.

Handwriting— Records about early forms of handwriting (alphabets, writing samples, instructions on how to decipher, etc.).

Heraldry— Records about coats of arms, family crests, flags, emblems, seals, etc., and how they were devised, granted, or used.

Hindu Records— Records, documents, or registers created by Hindu sects which often contain birth, marriage, or death information.

Historical Geography— Records about changes in boundaries, jurisdictions (civil or church), or territories at different times in history. May include background of prominent families, including genealogies.

History— Descriptions of the past events of a place, an institution, or a field of knowledge.

J

Jewish Records— Records, documents, or registers of Jewish religious groups, usually giving information on births, marriages, or deaths.

L

Land and Property— Records (private and civil) about the ownership and transfer of land and other property, including deeds, mortgages, brands, and marks of ownership.

Language and Languages— Records that define, teach, or describe major languages and specific dialects.

Law and Legislation— Records, histories, and descriptions of laws, codes, ordinances, etc.

M

Manors— Records about the feudal manor system: descriptions of the lord, his lands, buildings, and dealings with people on the land. May include lists of people, genealogies, histories, and probate and civil court records. A manor was an English or Middle Ages estate under the ownership of a lord who had rights over land and tenants. This included the right to hold court.

Maps— Maps, charts, or plans which may show current or historic locations of towns, buildings, boundaries, roads, rivers, railroads, parish boundaries, etc. Includes atlases.

Medical Records— Records about the medical field-hospital records; records of doctors, midwives (babies delivered), or other practitioners; lists of patients; licenses; etc.

Merchant Marine— Works and records dealing with publicly or privately-owned ships and their personnel.

Migration, Internal— Records about the movement of people within a country. May show growth of cities, movement of tribes or ethnic groups, or population changes due to industrialization, famine, plague, etc.

Military History— History of battles, wars, and armed forces (rarely includes names of soldiers).

Military Records— Military service records and lists of primarily men and boys who are serving, have served, or are eligible to serve in the armed forces. May include pensions, muster, or discharge lists.

Minorities— Histories and descriptions of racial, ethnic, religious, or other groups of people who were a small segment, distinct from the larger population of an area.

N

Names, Geographical— Books about names of places (geographical areas, countries, cities, street names, etc.). May give their origin, history, changes, or variations.

Names, Personal— Books about names of persons, families, deities, businesses, or ethnic groups. May give variations, histories, meanings, origins, or uses.

Native Races— Histories or descriptions of original peoples who lived in regions settled in modern times. Includes peoples such as American Indians, Australian Aborigines, Maori, etc.

Naturalization and Citizenship— Books, records, and laws concerning citizenship—the qualifications for, the process of, and country records. Includes oaths of allegiance and naturalization papers. May give birth, marriage, and family information.

Newspapers— Copies, clippings, or complete newspapers which usually contain birth, marriage, and death announcements.

Notarial Records— Records of notaries, who (in many places) verified business transactions, wills, marriage contracts, intention to marry, sale of land, etc.

O

Obituaries— Notices or lists of deaths, often with biographical sketches, usually from newspapers. May include funeral sermons.

Occupations— Records that give general descriptions of a specific job or trade. Includes information on guild, unions, apprenticeships, etc.

Officials and Employees— Lists and records of government officials and employees, including international agencies and institutions under government direction.

Orphans or Orphanages— Records about children raised or cared for by someone other than their parents (includes child-welfare cases). Name and age of child is usually given. May include descriptions of the institutions where these children lived.

P

Pensions— Records of compensation for military service, employment, disability, reparation, etc. Includes lists of eligibility, names of family, wife or widow, heirs, etc.

Periodicals— Regularly issued magazines or journals containing various articles.

Politics and Government— Records about the politics or government of an area. This includes parliament discussions, feudal society, economic policy, national or local governments, etc.

Poorhouses, Poor Law, etc.— Records about institutions that care for the poor, including lists of inmates, removal and settlement papers, and laws on care of the poor, etc.

Population— Studies of population statistics of certain places which give such things as size and density, growth, migration, vital statistics, average family, historical changes, etc.

Postal and Shipping Guides— List of post offices, railroad stations and stops, ports, terminals, etc., with place names and route

information.**Probate Records**— Records, wills, settlements, court proceedings, laws, etc., that deal with a person's estate at death. May include names of relatives.

Public Records— Any records created by civil authorities which do not fit under other specific subject headings.

R

Religion and Religious Life— Records about beliefs, customs, and practices of religious groups (rituals, tenets, etc.).

S

Schools— Records about educational institutions. May contain lists of teachers, students, or graduates.

Shinto Records— Records, documents, registers, etc., created by Shinto sects.

Slavery and Bondage— Records about slaves, indentured servants, serfs, or those who have been freed. May have lists of people, deeds of people considered as property, etc.

Social Life and Customs— Records about manners, customs, ceremonies, traditions, and lifestyles of a certain place.

Societies— Records of organizations, institutions, or groups active in particular field of interest. May include lists of members.

Statistics— Numerical information about a place or topic, such as tallies, trends, census, population, etc.

T

Taxation— Description of records of a tax system, including tax lists, lists of property, etc.

Town Records— Records of local civil governments, especially in New England and New York. May contain records of births, marriages, deaths, property, names of officials, tax rolls, business transactions, minutes, etc.

V

Vital Records— Collections of records of births, marriages, or deaths. In the United States, these include official government records.

Voting Registers— Lists of registered or eligible voters of countries, cities, or electoral districts. May include heads of households only.

Y

Yearbooks— Books that summarize the events of one year for a specific place, organization, or topic (such as demographics, farm production, government).