

Birth Records

General Resources for Records of Birth, Baptism or Christening

FamilySearch Research Wiki:

“Birth Records” https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Birth_Records

“Locating United States Vital Records”

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Locating_United_States_Vital_Records

Vital Records US <https://www.vitalrecordsus.com/>

“Where to Write for Vital Records by State” – *National Center for Health Statistics*

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w/index.htm?CDC>

Cyndi's List <https://www.cyndislist.com/births/>

Library of Congress Research Guides “Vital Records”

<https://guides.loc.gov/pennsylvania-local-history-genealogy/vital-records>

United States Census Bureau “Birth Records”

https://www.census.gov/about/policies/foia/age_search_and_birth_records/birth_records.html

PA Historical & Museum Commission, “Vital Statistics Records”

<https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/Vital-Statistics.aspx>

Vital records consist mainly of birth, marriage, and death records. A great fact about these types of records is how multiple generations are listed within the record. **When it comes to birth records, most countries require civil registration with either a birth certificate or a birth registration.** For example, in Pennsylvania, birth certificates were first used in 1906; however, at the county or city level, birth registrations were used much earlier, primarily from 1893 - 1905. Around the United States, birth certificates became required in the 20th Century. Several New England States have birth registrations as early as the mid-1600s. Always note the date range for birth certificates as you change the location/place of birth. (Note: Pennsylvania birth records are now available through *Ancestry* and also the PA State Archives for 1906-1914.) Birth records are also found throughout the world. The best way to determine what is available and where to access those records is to use the *FamilySearch Research Wiki* and insert the “name of the country + birth records” into the search bar - “France birth records” for example.

The birth certificate or registration form generally required the following information: birth name of the child, names of each parent, maiden name of the mother, child's gender, birthdate, place of birth, name of doctor, midwife, or other person involved, and a registration date and location of the birth. Often there is additional information including type of birth (individual, twin, triplet), residence address for the parents, birth place for each parent, parental occupations at the time of the child's birth, and possibly the birth order within the family (born 3rd for example). The birth order can be useful in case an older sibling does not have a birth

certificate or when determining if children were born who did not live very long such as stillborn deaths, infant deaths, or the birth and death of a child between census years.

Churches and parishes also recorded births, most commonly when a baptism or christening occurred. A baptismal record might include the date of birth as well as the date of the baptism. Church records would include the child's birth name, date of birth and date of baptism/christening, name of each parent, mother's maiden name, location of baptism, clergy, witnesses, and name of the church. Remember to search among the family archival papers for both birth and baptismal records. Quite often paper copies of these important records were saved, along with other important family records. When working with birth records, start by searching for available civil records and then look for the church or parish records. If you can find both a civil record and a church birth record, use the two to compare and contrast information listed in that birth record with other informational records to verify facts about an ancestor. A benefit of finding birth, baptism, and/or christening records for an ancestor is that these records are considered to be highly accurate due to the record being created at, or shortly after, the child's birth.

Further reading:

Ancestry Family History Learning Hub, "Birth Certificates: A Cornerstone for Family History Research" <https://www.ancestry.com/c/family-history-learning-hub/birth-certificates>

Ancestry Family History Learning Hub, "Church Records" <https://www.ancestry.com/c/family-history-learning-hub/church-records>

Genealogy Bank, "Genealogy Tip: How to Find, Read, and Use Baptismal and Similar Records" <https://blog.genealogybank.com/genealogy-tip-how-to-find-read-and-use-baptismal-similar-records.html>

Family Tree Magazine, "The Genealogist's Guide to Birth Records" by Shelley K. Bishop <https://familytreemagazine.com/records/vital/birth-records-guide/>

FamilySearch Research Wiki, "Church Records" https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Church_Records

US Birth Certificates, "Birth Certificates: Long Form vs. Short Form" <https://www.usbirthcertificates.com/articles/birth-certificates-long-form-vs-short-form>

FamilySearch Guided Research "United States Birth Records" https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_Birth_Records

History, "The History of Birth Certificates is Shorter Than You Might Think" by Erin Blakemore <https://www.history.com/news/the-history-of-birth-certificates-is-shorter-than-you-might-think>