United States Church Records
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This class is designed to provide individuals with a basic understanding of U.S. Church Records, including the various types of records, what is contained in them, how to find an ancestor’s religious denomination, and locating the records.

BASIC TYPES OF CHURCH RECORDS

- Christenings/Baptisms
- Marriages
- Burials
- Confirmations
- Communion
- Admissions and removals
- Financial records
- Sunday School lists
- Church censuses
- Church related newsletters

HOW TO DETERMINE YOUR ANCESTORS DENOMINATION

Which church do descendants belong to?

What is the national origin of the ancestor?

Was there only one church in town when the ancestor lived there?

Do family records give any clues?

- Marriage records
- Obituaries
- Family histories
- Cemeteries
- Family Bibles

Do funeral home, cemetery, or sexton records give additional clues?

If you find the name of the pastor who performed the marriage or funeral, check local histories.
or city directories to determine the denomination of the pastor. Then check the records for that church.

**Religions of Ethnic Groups**

- **English**
  - Church of England (Anglican)
  - (Protestant Episcopal)
- **Irish**
  - Catholic
  - Church of Ireland (northern) (Anglican)
- **Scots**
  - Presbyterian (Church of Scotland)
  - Episcopal (Anglican)
- **Welsh**
  - Church in Wales (Church of England) (Anglican) (Episcopal) (Established)
- **French**
  - Catholic
  - Protestants - Huguenot
- **German**
  - Lutheran (northern)
  - Catholic (southern)
  - Reformed
- **Dutch**
  - Dutch Reformed
- **Greek**
  - Greek Orthodox (Eastern Orthodox)
- **Mexican & Latin American**
  - Catholic
- **Russian**
  - Russian Orthodox
- **Scandinavian**
  - Lutheran
- **Swiss**
  - Lutheran (north)
  - Catholic (south)
  - Reformed

**By region of origin**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northern Europe - Lutheran</th>
<th>Southern Europe - Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany (northern)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Switzerland (northern)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Major Religions in Various Areas of the United States

- New England: Congregational
- Southern States: Baptist, Protestant Episcopal, Anglican
- Maryland & Louisiana: Catholic
- Southwest: Catholic
- Pennsylvania: Lutheran, Quaker, Mennonite, Amish
- New York: Dutch Reformed, Catholic
- Utah: LDS
- Upper Midwest: Lutheran
- Alaska: Russian Orthodox

LOCATING THE RECORDS

Check the church of attendance
- Telephone directories
- Search online
  - Church mergers
- Yearbook or annual of present denomination
- Online search of church or denomination

Church ceased to exist
- Utilize all available local and denominational information
- Church clerk
- Denominational archives, libraries, historical societies
  - Check for a central archive or library
FamilySearch Catalog

- Do a place search for either the town or county and then click on church records or church record indexes. Also go to Records, choose the United States or any state and then in the Filter by Collection Name box, enter the word Church.

PERSI (Periodical Source Index) available at the following places:

- Findmypast available free at the FHL and many family history centers.
- Look for church records under the state and/or for local or regional periodicals via the website: http://search.findmypast.com/search-world-Records/periodical-source-index
- www.heritagequestonline.com available at many local public libraries

RESOURCES ONLINE

FamilySearch Wiki

- Search by name of religion
  https://wiki.familysearch.org

Search Engines

- Search by town, county, state and the name of the church or minister
  www.google.com
  www.yahoo.com
  www.bing.com

Cyndis List www.cyndislist.com

- Click on “R” for Religion and Churches or choose “U” for United States, then click on a state and then Religion & Churches.

SOURCES

- *International Genealogical Index*
- Encyclopedias
- Histories of city/town/county
- *Source Book and Bibliographical Guide for American Church History*, 1921. (US/Can 973 K2ms)
- *A Survey of American Church Records*, 1978 (US/Can 973 K2k)
- Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, annual, (US/Can 970 K2wh)
- The Source, edited by Loretto D. Szucs and Sandra H. Luebking (US/Can 973 D27ts 2006)
- Check List of Historical Records Survey Publications, WPA. Bibliography of Research Project Reports (US/Can 973 A3c 1969)

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