



The Bred, The Wed and the Dead

Introduction Course to U.S. Vital Records

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General Definitions:

- Jurisdiction: Any entity that creates a record. For example: Kansas is a jurisdiction.
- Vital Record: A government record that records birth, marriage, death, divorce or adoption
- Delayed Births: Recorded after the event, popular at the start of Social Security.
- B: Birth
- M: Marriage
- D: Death

Valuable Vital Records Information:

- Recorded at or near the time of the event
- Provides clues for further research
- Couples generally married in late teens or twenties
- Couples often married near bride's home
- Look at all the information
- Watch for changes in jurisdiction
- Millions of records online (not just through FamilySearch and Ancestry)

Changes Through Time:

- Ledgers (early-mid 19th century): Paragraph format
- Registers (mid 19th century-mid 20th century): Printed tables, record of multiple people per page
- Certificates (mid 20th century-current): Pre-printed forms, one individual per record

Birth Records Information:

- Name
- Gender
- Date/Place of birth
- Parents' Names
- Name of Hospital
- Birthplace of parents
- Occupations of parents
- Marital Status of mother
- Number of children borne

Marriage Records Information:

- Name of bride and groom
- Ages (might just be recorded as "of age")
- Residence
- Marriage date/place
- Name of Minister/Priest/Justice of the Peace

Types of Marriage Records:

- Consent Affidavits: Required for men and women “underage”; permission from parent or legal guardian
- Banns/Intentions: Public announcement of marriage to prevent illegal marriages
- Bonds: Guarantees of payment if they cannot be legally married
- Register/Return: Minister’s records being returned to government entity for validity
- Application/Licenses: Most common, most genealogical information, returned to clerk
- Certificate: Only actual proof of the marriage

Death Records Information:

- Name
- Date of death
- Place of death
- Date of birth
- Race
- Cause of death
- Name of informant

Regional Differences:

New England:

- Excellent Vital Records
- Early records on town level
- Statewide registration begins 1841-1897

Mid-Atlantic:

- Early BMD in large cities only
- New Jersey and Delaware have early marriages
- Statewide registration of BD 1878-1915
- Statewide registration of M 1849-1906

South:

- No South Carolina early marriages
- Statewide registration of BMD anywhere between 1899-1962
- Virginia: began BMD in 1853, stopped between 1896-1912

Locating Vital Records:

- FamilySearch Wiki
- FamilySearch Catalog
- Google
- Vital Rec
- Ancestry
- VitalChek

Midwest:

- County BMD begin at county creation, often in 1860s
- Statewide registration of BMD between 1880-1962

West:

- HUGE VARIETY
- County registration of M start at county creation or by 1890
- Statewide registration of BMD between 1903-1978

Pacific:

- Hawaii: Statewide registration for BMD start as early as 1840, compliance by 1890s
- Alaska: Statewide registration for BMD starts in 1913