

Sources for Vital Records

North Carolina began recording births and deaths in October 1913. Learn about the best ways to find those records

North Carolina State Archives (109 E. Jones St., Raleigh, NC; 919-814-6840 – Mail to: 4614 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-4614)

- <https://archives.ncdcr.gov/>
- Death Certificates, 1913-1979 [Statewide Index: 1913-1979]
- Marriage Bonds, 1741-1868 and Cohabitation Records, 1866-1867
- microfilmed birth, death, and marriage records for many counties

County Register of Deeds offices house birth and death records and marriage licenses for their counties

- North Carolina Association of Registers of Deeds <https://www.ncard.us/find-your-register-of-deeds/>

Several North Carolina county Registers of Deeds are making their birth/ death/ marriage records available Online. Use your favorite search engine with keywords: county name NC register of deeds.

North Carolina Vital Records (225 N. McDowell St., Raleigh; 919-733-3000, Mail to: 1903 Mail Service Center 27699-1900)

- Check with County Register of Deeds before you contact Vital Records. Check for fees <https://vitalrecords.nc.gov/>

The following resources are available through [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com):

- **“North Carolina Birth Index, 1800-2000”** - Includes Delayed Birth registrations that extend back into the 18th century; these require documentary proof of birthdate or age, birthplace, and parentage from other records and must identify contemporary owner of family Bible if presented for proof. Durham, Wake, Forsyth, and Dare counties are not covered.
- **“North Carolina, Marriage Records, 1741-2011”** – Includes marriage bonds 1741-1868, marriage registers, marriage licenses, marriage certificates, and cohabitation bonds. Cohabitation bonds were marriages records from 1866-1868 for former slaves.
- **“North Carolina Death Collection, 1908-2004”** - Index to North Carolina deaths: 1908-1967 has Images from microfilm copies of county death indexes obtained from the North Carolina State Archives and Records Section. Index for 1968-1996 from North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services does not include images.
- **“North Carolina Death Certificates, 1909-1976”** – This database is of digitized death certificates for the state of North Carolina from 1909-1976. It includes stillborn deaths. Death certificates obtained from microfilm by North Carolina State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics

Other Resources

- Kemp, Thomas Jay. *International Vital Records Handbook*. 5th ed. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2009).
- “Social Security Death Index” <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1202535>
- “Vital Records Information United States” <http://www.vitalrec.com/>
- “Online Searchable Death Indexes & Records” <http://www.deathindexes.com>
- “VitalChek” – order official vital records online <http://www.vitalchek.com>

Substitutes for Vital Records

The following record types can be substitutes for birth, marriage, and death certificates. In some cases,



there are specific records within a category that will be listed; in other case, just a simple yes or no.

Substitutes	Births	Marriage	Death
Bible Records	Yes	Yes	Yes
Birth Certificates	Birth registers, Delayed birth certificates	No	No
Cemetery Records	If age or date is listed	If spouse is listed	Age or date on grave; findagrave.com
Census Records	age range 1790-1840, then ages 1850-current	1850-1940, especially 1900 and 1910	Mortality Schedules 1850-1880
Church Records	baptism	Yes	Yes
County Records	Apprentice, Guardian, Deeds, Military, Tax, Wills	Court minutes, Deeds, Estates, Tax, Wills	Court Minutes, Deeds, Estates, Tax, Wills
Death Certificates	May give age	May list spouse	Death registers,
Marriage Certificates	Age often given after 1868	Marriage register or marriage license	No
Military Records	Service/Enlistment records may give age	Widow's pension lists wife	Service record if died during service; pension
Newspapers	Birth announcements	Wedding announcements	Death announcement or obituary
Private Papers	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Security	Application	Surname change for women at marriage	Social security death index

Note: some sources will only give estimates or other information to help you narrow down when an ancestor was born, married, or died. Also, records of siblings may have information you are seeking.

Useful techniques for problems in working with vital records

Leary, Helen F. M. *North Carolina Research: Genealogy and Local History*. 2d ed. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Genealogical Society, 1996.

- "Strategy for Vital Records" p. 24
- "Strategy for the Census" p.24-27
- "Strategy for Estimating Birth Date" p. 61-62
- "Strategy for Marriage Records" p. 39-42
- "Appendix A: Selected Terms and Abbreviations" under "Age of" p. 569

Newspapers

State Library of North Carolina newspaper holdings: <https://statelibrarync.org/newspaper/>

State Archives of North Carolina newspaper holdings: https://files.nc.gov/dncr-archives/guide_master_april_2018_0.pdf

GHL newspaper database subscriptions:

<https://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/ghl/resources/online#newspapers>

U. S. Library of Congress. *Newspapers in Microform: United States, 1948-1983*. 2 vols. (Washington: The Library, 1984).