



# 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

Northern Europe - Lutheran	
 Belgium	 Norway
 Denmark	 Poland
 Finland	 Sweden
 Germany (northern)	 Switzerland (northern)

Southern Europe - Catholic	
 France	 Portugal

 Germany (southern)	 Spain
 Italy	 Switzerland (southern)

<b>Eastern Europe - Eastern Orthodox or Catholic</b>	
 Belarus	 Moldova
 Czech Republic	 Poland
 Estonia	 Russia
 Hungary	 Slovakia
 Latvia	 Ukraine
 Lithuania	 Yugoslavia

### 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  
<http://search.findmypast.com/search-world-Records/periodical-source-index>
- [www.heritagequestonline.com](http://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](http://www.google.com)  
[www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)  
[www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com)

Cyndis List [www.cyndislist.com](http://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
- *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy*, by Val Greenwood (US/Can 973 D27g 2000)
- *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)
- *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 1985, by Frank Mead and Samuel Hill (US/Can 973 K2mf)

- *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)
- *The WPA Historical Records Survey: A Guide to the Unpublished Inventories, Indexes, and Transcripts*, 1980, by Loretta Hefner (US/Can 973 A1 no. 189 or fiche 6051431)

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