

Danish Probate Records

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THE PROBATE PROCESS

The probate process in Denmark began soon after the death of an individual. Immediately after death, a notice was sent to the probate office. There was always a notice sent but not everyone had a probate done. Thirty days after the notice, the probate officials would meet at the home of the deceased to inventory the estate. They required all heirs to be present at the inventory. Sometimes it took multiple meetings to probate the estate.

Exceptions to the rules:

- If the widow of the deceased was pregnant when the husband died, the probate would be postponed until after the child was born. This ensured that the unborn child received their fair share of the inheritance.
- After the probate law of 1683, no one (widow or widower) could remarry until a probate had been held for the deceased spouse. This was used to ensure that under age children received what was rightfully theirs before the marriage.
- Some circumstances allowed an estate to go un-probated.

Guardians

Widows, women, and underage children had to have a guardian for the probate process. Widows were usually allowed to choose their own guardian. Her guardian was typically a male relative, especially a father or a brother. Guardians of single women and underage children were usually a close male relative from their father's side. If there were no male relatives from the father's side then it would be a male relative of the mother's side. The guardian could also be a brother who was already of age.

PROBATE RECORD TYPES

There are many types of probate records but there are three that you specifically need to know:

1. Dødsanmeldelsesprotokoller – Death register records (notices)
2. Navneregister – name registers to the actual probate records
3. Skifteprotokoller – Probate records

Along with the records, there are four probate courts you need to know

1. Herred – Court District
2. Byfoged – City Court
3. Herred Provsti – Ecclesiastical court

4. Gods – Estate court

GENEALOGICAL INFORMATION IN A PROBATE RECORD

- Name, age, residence, and occupation of the deceased
- Heirs (name, age, residence, relation to the deceased)
- Court Officials (rarely a relative)
- Guardians (name, residence, sometimes relation)
- Lots of legal jargon
- Inventory of the estate
- Debts and assets

TIPS AND TRICKS

- Do NOT attempt word for word translation (especially as a beginner)
- Every court organizes and records information differently
- Probate records typically begin with a date and end with signatures
- Get familiar with Key Word list

KEY WORD LIST

Danish	English
Afdøde	Deceased
Arvinger	Heirs
Boende	Living in
Broder (brødre)	Brother (Brothers)
Datter (Døtre)	Daughter (Daughters)
Enke/Enkemand	Widow/Widower
Følgende	Following
Gammel	Old
Hustru	Wife
i	In
Kone	Wife
Louværge/Lavværge	Guardian
Mand	Husband
Med	With
Moder	Mother
Mydige	Of age
Nevø	Nephew
Niece	Niece
Opholdsted	Residence
Paa/På	On
Skifte	Probate
Skifteforvalter	Probate official
Skifteretten	Probate court

Sogn	Parish
Søn (sønner)	Son (Sons)
Søster (Søstre)	Sister (Sisters)
Umyndige	Under age
Værge	Guardian
Yngste	Youngest
Ægteskab	Marriage
Ældste	Oldest
Aar/År	Year

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