

## Pennsylvania: Keystone Resources in the Keystone State

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### Macro Implications for Records

- Different colonies (CT, MD, and VA) laid claim to large areas of Pennsylvania. We need to search in adjoining counties and even states for records. France claimed western PA and early residents might even be in French records.
- Locating records often depends on the confusing Pennsylvania county boundaries that changed as the colony grew from three counties to 67 (the last one, Lackawanna, was finally created in 1878). You need to understand county boundaries at any given time to know which courthouse or repository might hold your ancestors' court, tax, marriage, church, or land records. Before about 1900, nearly all personal records are held at county level as the county *existed at that time*.
- Different levels of government (federal, state, county) generated different paperwork. Examples:
  - Legal records: typically in county but may be in state or federal resources
  - Land records: may be in state (PHMC) or county repositories (see below)
  - Tax records: may be federal, state or county (see below)
  - Military records: may be in federal or state or even county records (see below)
- Migration patterns help locate where they came from and went to. Indian treaties opened land to settlement or caused violence, funneling pioneers into new migration patterns or driving them away. Roads sprang from Indian paths, but topography prevented westward settlement beyond the Allegheny Mountains and promoted settlement in valleys.

How to Track County Boundary Changes: the key to accessing specific records lies in knowing the county boundaries as it existed at the time of the transaction. Don't forget to think of adjoining counties and/or states!

- "Evolution of the Counties" map: [http://ancestortracks.com/Formation\\_of\\_the\\_Counties.jpg](http://ancestortracks.com/Formation_of_the_Counties.jpg) (download and save)
- "Animated map" showing boundary changes over time and by census year (scroll down and click on year): <http://www.mapofus.org/pennsylvania/>
- *Atlas of Historical County Boundaries Project* of Newberry Library (<http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/downloads/index.html>). Download Google Earth first, then click on "Download Files" on the *Atlas* home page. Select "State Downloads" to specify the states that interest you, or "U.S. Downloads." Choose to download the KMZ files (they work with Google Earth). When you open Google Earth, be sure to check the relevant KMZ file and it will show you the chronological slider.

Vital Records: Some cities (esp. Philadelphia in 1860 and others in 1870) started recording vital records earlier, but counties began registering births and deaths in 1893. All counties kept marriage licenses from 1885. The state took over in 1906. Early vital records were primarily kept by churches and/or pastors and priests.

- An often-overlooked excellent source of records is the 1852-1854 set that the state mandated but then abandoned. If you find a family in the 1850 or 1860 census with young children, other children may be recorded in the 1852-1854 birth records, giving the maiden name of the mother.
  - Births 1852-4: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2349>
  - Marriages 1852-4: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2486>
  - Deaths 1852-4: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2487>
- Official statewide vital records registration was required starting January 1906; contact the Department of Health (<http://www.health.pa.gov/MyRecords/Certificates/Pages/11596.aspx#.WaRRUpOGNp9>). Before 1906, contact the appropriate county.
  - Birth and marriage records
    - 1885-1950 and 1709-1950: <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1589502> (county marriages) and <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1681005> (births and christenings)

- Ancestry: <http://search.ancestry.com/Places/US/Pennsylvania/Default.aspx?category=34>
- Alternatives:
  - funeral records, church records, obituaries, tombstones, cemetery records, newspapers, military records, census probate records, land records, mortality schedules, tombstones, county histories, Social Security Death Index, wills & probates, Orphans Court records, *taufschein*, *fraktur*, Bible records, Orphans Court records, census, tax lists, Social Security Death Index (SSDI), railroad retirement files.
    - Newspaper articles and obituaries: Library of Congress' "Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers" (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>)
    - Stanford's "Data Visualization: Journalism's Voyage West" compiling information from the Library of Congress' "Chronicling America" project (click on "View the Map" below the introduction that covers the map): [http://web.stanford.edu/group/ruralwest/cgi-bin/drupal/visualizations/us\\_newspapers](http://web.stanford.edu/group/ruralwest/cgi-bin/drupal/visualizations/us_newspapers)
    - Social Security applications and claims: If a person made a claim to receive Social Security retirement benefits during his/her lifetime ("Life Claim"), or if an heir claimed their death benefits ("Death Claim"), person's death benefits, an index is posted as "U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007): <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=60901>.
      - To receive a copy of a deceased person's original application for a Social Security Number (Form SS-5; \$21—order a photocopy of the *original* application, not the "computer extract"!): <https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ssa-711.pdf>. According to the Social Security Administration's privacy policy, ""under our current policy, we do not release the parents' names on an SS-5 application unless the parents' are proven deceased, have a birth date more than 120 years ago, or the number holder on the SS-5 is at least 100 years of age." Thus, if your ancestors' parents do not fit the above, include death certificate/ obits/tombstone photos/census records for the parents. The SS-5 will include occupation, address, birth date and place, parents' names (including mother's maiden name), and original signature.
    - Quaker Monthly Meetings: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2189>
  - Published Alternatives:
    - *Pennsylvania Vital Records from The Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine and The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 3 volumes. Do NOT miss this resource—every page is online and contains many references to births, baptisms, marriages, deaths and divorces. A large portion consists of German and Quaker records.
      - Vol. I: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=48382>
      - Vol. II: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=48383>
      - Vol. III: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=48607>
  - Church records
    - PA and NJ Church & Town Records 1708-1985": <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2451>
    - Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society: houses extensive collection of church records: <http://erhs.info/>
    - *Pennsylvania Births* series by John T. Humphrey (these books don't show sponsors but are excellent for identifying churches that families belonged to)
    - Pennsylvania church records transcriptions series by F. Edward Wright includes sponsors (Family Tree Maker CD #166, *Church Records: Selected Areas of Pennsylvania 1600s-1800s* contains numerous books by F. Edward Wright; searchable, includes sponsors, but only works on Windows XP. Some Family History Centers own this CD—call ahead). Individual books are available at DAR Library in D.C.

- *Pennsylvania German Church Records, 1729-1870* (Family Tree Maker CD #130—another CD that only works on Windows XP; evidently not all of these records have been uploaded to Ancestry). Wright's books are available at DAR Library.
- To find what church records exist for congregations inventoried by the WPA, browse Ancestry's "Pennsylvania, WPA Church Archives, 1937-1940" database (not all churches were inventoried): <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2795>
- To locate churches, consult U.S. City Directories:
  - <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2469> ;
  - [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org);
  - <https://sites.google.com/site/onlineDirectorysite/Home/usa/pa> ;
  - [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United\\_States\\_Directories](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Directories)
- Maps and atlases are other vehicles for locating churches:
  - Ancestor Tracks: <http://ancestortracks.com> (click on county)
  - <https://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1127>
  - <https://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2179>
  - World Digital Library: <http://www.wdl.org/en/item/11368/>
  - Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/maps/?q=pennsylvania>

Federal Non-Population Census Records (on microfilm at NARA): see

<http://www.archives.gov/research/census/nonpopulation/pennsylvania.html>

- Agricultural: 1850-1880 (by statistics per county and by county/township/farmer) (click on "Manuscripts" page, then county, then township to see image):  
<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/agriculture/census/index.html>
  - 1927 PA State Farm Census:  
<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/agriculture/census/1927-manuscripts.html>
- Manufacturing: 1820, 1850-1880 (only on microfilm, available at NARA)  
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/589445?availability=Family%20History%20Library>
- Mortality schedules: 1850-1885: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=8756>
- Defective, Dependent and Delinquent Classes: 1880  
(<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1634>)
- 1890 Veterans Schedule (most of the rest of the 1890 census was destroyed by fire):  
<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=8667>
- Septennial census returns, 1779-1863 (taken every 7 years but many are missing):  
<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2702>
- 1847 Quaker census of Philadelphia African-Americans:  
<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2709>

Legal Records: nearly all are in county repositories, historical societies, etc.

- Wills—don't forget probate files!
- Orphans Court files (a woman could not represent her children, so children under 14 were assigned a male guardian, 14+ chose a male guardian). An "Orphan" usually had a mother.
- Court files (Quarter Sessions = criminal court; Common Pleas = civil court)

Land Records (State)

- **Deeds** are in the **county courthouses** and are transfers of land from one individual to another. Indexes to deeds are called Grantee (seller) or Grantor (buyer) Indexes and are also in the county. Few deeds have been digitized. Many indexes have been microfilmed and are available through FamilySearch.
- The **original transfer** of land from the colony or state government to individuals took place though a five-step process: (1) application

**Remember: There are two distinct sets of land records: State and County**

(<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2350>); (2) warrant; (3) survey; (4) return of survey; and (5) patent (final title). They are filed in the **Pennsylvania State Archives** in Harrisburg. For the indexes to warrants and patents, as well as the **Copied Survey Books** (see volume and page # in right column of the appropriate county Warrant Register), use <http://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/Land-Records-Overview.aspx> –see “Images” for each topic. Supplemental warrant registers are also here: *Original Purchases Register, Old Rights Register, East Side Applications Register, West Side Applications Register, New Purchase Applications Register, Last Purchase Register, Depreciation and Donation Land Registers*. Also see Warrantee ownership Maps for neighborhoods and correlate with county histories.

WASHINGTON.											
No. of Warrant	NAME OF WARRANTER.	Description of Warrant	QUANTITY.	DATE OF WARRANT.	DATE OF REVOL.	Acres Returned.	NAME OF EXEMPTION.	Which Remains		Which Remains to Govt.	
								Vol.	No. Page.	Vol.	Page.
P. 1807.1	Allison, William	Survey	100.	1 July 1784	6 Sept 1790	164.6	William Allison	P	15	328	180.51
S. 1808.2	Allan, Joseph	"	500.	31 Aug. "	27 May 1785	954.	Joseph Allan	P	5	615	182.230
Madaybs	Anderson, Charles	"	400.	11 Sept. "	12 July 1790	265.100	Warrantee	"	16	362	182.230

#### Tax Records: may be in county, state or federal collections

- Tax records, some of which are published in the free online *Pennsylvania Archives* series on Fold3.com, supplement census schedules. They can be used to track a head of household’s financial success or failure; they can suggest a date of death, marriage, or migration. Tax records can be used to determine whether a particular man is the correct person on a generic military roll. Many, many tax lists have not been microfilmed or digitized and exist only in county archives which require on-site access. Some lists have been transcribed and some have digitized and posted online:
  - 18<sup>th</sup>-Century transcriptions (surrounding the Revolutionary War) of a few are in the 138-volume published *Pennsylvania Archives*. (<https://www.fold3.com/browse/246/h9Y02Zdgu>).
    - **Bedford**, Series 3, Volume XXII; **Berks**: S3, XVII and S3, XVIII; **Bucks**: S3, XIII and XXVII; **Chester**: S3, XII and XI and XXVII; **Cumberland**: S3, XX; **Fayette**: S3, XXII; **Huntingdon**: S3, XXII; **Lancaster**: S3, XVII; **Northampton**: S3, XIX and XXVII; **Northumberland**: S3, XIX and XXVII; **Philadelphia**: S3, XVI and XIV and XV and XXVII; **Washington**: S3, XXII; **Westmoreland**: S3, XXII; **York**: S3, XXI
  - “Pennsylvania, Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801” database (state): <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2497>
  - IRS Tax Assessment Lists for PA, 1862-1864 (federal): <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1264>
  - U.S. Direct Tax of 1798 (Pennsylvania, but federal tax): <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2060>
  - **The vast majority of originals are in the counties, most never microfilmed.**

#### Military Records (for state records, search *Pennsylvania Archives* on Fold3 (free) and use the Pennsylvania State Archives’ ARIAS (<http://www.digitalarchives.state.pa.us/>))

- French and Indian War: few official records; try *Pennsylvania Archives*, Fifth Series, Vol. 1
- Revolutionary War Records:
  1. Federal: Pennsylvania Line of Continental Army
    - a. Federal Pensions (& Widows Pensions): Fold3.com
    - b. 1840 census lists RW pensioners on reverse of each page
  2. State records for soldiers: <http://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/Revolutionary-War.aspx>
    - a. ARIAS (includes unit records): <http://www.digitalarchives.state.pa.us/>

- b. Revolutionary War Pensioners Index:  
([http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bah/dam/rg/di/RevolutionaryWarPensionersIndex/RevolutionaryWarPensionersIndex\\_MainInterface.htm](http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bah/dam/rg/di/RevolutionaryWarPensionersIndex/RevolutionaryWarPensionersIndex_MainInterface.htm))
  - c. Many published in *Pennsylvania Archives* on Fold3
- War of 1812
  - *Pennsylvania Archives*, Sixth Series (Fold3)
  - Pension files (Fold3)
  - Bounty Land (<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/default.aspx>)
- Mexican War:
  - *Pennsylvania Archives (PPA)*, Sixth Series, Vol. 10, 249-458 (Fold3)
  - "U.S. Mexican Pension Index, 1887-1926" (use the index, then order the file from NARA): <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1979390>
- Civil War
  - PHMC: <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bah/dam/rg/di/r19-65RegisterPaVolunteers/r19-65MainInterface.htm> (images of each register documenting PA Volunteers)
  - PHMC's "Civil War Veterans' Card File, 1861-1866" <http://www.digitalarchives.state.pa.us/archive.asp>
  - Conscientious Objectors: <https://genpa.org/public-collections/pennsylvania-civil-war-conscientious-objectors/>
  - Samuel P. Bates, *History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers 1861-1865*, five volumes. The "PA Civil War Volunteer Soldiers" website (<http://www.pacivilwar.com/bates.html>) allows you to search the volumes at [https://openlibrary.org/works/OL2277895W/History\\_of\\_Pennsylvania\\_volunteers\\_1861-5](https://openlibrary.org/works/OL2277895W/History_of_Pennsylvania_volunteers_1861-5) (also online at Archive.org).
- World War I
  - Ancestry's "*Pennsylvania, Spanish American War Compensation, 1898-1934*" is misnamed. The original files are in the Pennsylvania State Archives (PHMC, RG-19) and cover "those who gave Pennsylvania as place of residence and who served in World War I from 1917-1918, the Spanish-American War in 1898, the China Relief Expedition, or the occupation of the Philippines or Guam from 1898 to 1902." Online at Ancestry: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=2392>
  - "Soldiers of the Great War: Pennsylvania" transcribed from *Soldiers of the Great War*, Volume III, 1920: <http://www.info-ren.org/projects/btul/Pennsylvania/wwi.html>
  - U.S. Draft Registration Cards: <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=6482>
- World War II
  - "Old Man's Registration" (ages 45-64): <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1002>
  - WWII Draft Registration Cards (29 states including Pennsylvania): [https://www.fold3.com/title\\_816/wwii\\_draft\\_registration\\_cards#overview](https://www.fold3.com/title_816/wwii_draft_registration_cards#overview)

**Remember: There are *two* distinct sets of military records: Federal and State**

Selected Website Resources:

- Pennsylvania GenWeb (and GenWeb Archives): <http://www.pagenweb.org/resources.html>
- Linkpendium: <http://www.linkpendium.com/pa-genealogy/>
- FamilySearch books: [https://books.familysearch.org/primo\\_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=FHD\\_PUBLIC](https://books.familysearch.org/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=FHD_PUBLIC)
- Google Books: <https://books.google.com/>
- Archive.org: <https://archive.org/>
- PERSI: <http://search.findmypast.com/search/periodical-source-index>
- Pennsylvania Databases Online at Ancestry: <http://search.ancestry.com/Places/US/Pennsylvania>