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/](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

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/](https://vitalrecords.nc.gov/)

The following resources are available through 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.


Other Resources
- “Online Searchable Death Indexes & Records” [http://www.deathindexes.com](http://www.deathindexes.com)
- “VitalChek” – order official vital records online [http://www.vitalchek.com](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.

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

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


- “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/](https://statelibrarync.org/newspaper/)

*State Archives of North Carolina* newspaper holdings: [https://files.nc.gov/dncr-archives/guide_master_april_2018_0.pdf](https://files.nc.gov/dncr-archives/guide_master_april_2018_0.pdf)

GHL newspaper database subscriptions: [https://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/ghl/resources/online#newspapers](https://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/ghl/resources/online#newspapers)