



STATE OF WASHINGTON, } ss. No. 96624
 County of _____ }
Marriage Certificate

This Certifies, that the undersigned, W.A. Major
 by authority of a License bearing date the 24th day of June A. D. 1926,
 and issued by the County Auditor of the County of King, did on the 24th day of June
 A. D. 1926, at the residence of W. A. Major Seattle
 County and State aforesaid, join in lawful wedlock Edward T. Allen
 of the County of King and Elizabeth M. Ayres
 of the County of Alexander State of Washington with their mutual assent, in the presence of
Ralph D. Major and Mrs. W. A. Major witnesses.
 In Testimony Whereof, witness the signatures of the parties to said ceremony, the witnesses and myself,
 this 24th day of June A. D. 1926

Witness:	Parties:	Officiating Clergyman or Officer:
<u>Ralph D. Major</u> <u>Mrs. W. A. Major</u>	<u>Edward T. Allen</u> <u>Elizabeth M. Ayres</u>	<u>Rev. W. A. Major</u>
Filed.....192.....		P. O. Address <u>Seattle</u> Washington

Vital Records in Genealogy

Hope Tillman and Walt Howe



Walt

Types of Vital Records

1. Birth records
2. Marriage records
3. Death records
4. Divorce records
5. Adoption records

These are legal documents

Vital records are essential sources of information in genealogical research

Vital records are foundational to genealogical research, as they offer a well-documented and official account of an individual's life, establishing links between generations, documenting important events, and providing a starting point for tracing one's family history. Their significance lies in their role as primary sources that offer a reliable and structured path to understanding the past.

Historical context

- History of vital record keeping reflects the evolution of society's needs, from ancient civilizations' rudimentary inscriptions to today's highly organized and technologically advanced systems.
- Legal requirements for recording vital records

Evolution of Vital Recordkeeping

Ancient Civilizations:- The practice of recording vital events can be traced back to ancient civilizations. In ancient Egypt, for instance, records of births and deaths were inscribed on stone and clay tablets.

The Romans maintained records of births and deaths, although these records were often limited to the upper classes.

Middle Ages and Church Records: During the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church became the primary institution for recording vital events in Europe. Parish registers, maintained by churches, recorded baptisms (births), marriages, and burials (deaths). These records were kept in Latin and often in cryptic shorthand.

Renaissance and Secular Record Keeping: As Europe transitioned from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, some secular governments and local authorities began to maintain their own records. In England, for example, civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths began in 1837 with the introduction of the General Register Office.

Evolution of Vital Recordkeeping (2)

Colonial America and Early America: In colonial America, vital record keeping was influenced by the practices of the European colonists. Local churches and governments maintained records. In the early United States, vital record keeping continued at the state and local levels, with varying levels of organization and standardization.

19th Century and National Governments: As the 19th century progressed, national governments around the world recognized the need for standardized vital record keeping. Civil registration systems were established in many countries, including the United States, during this period.

20th Century and Modernization: The 20th century saw further modernization and standardization of vital record keeping. Technology, such as typewriters and computers, streamlined the process of record creation and maintenance. Many countries created central repositories for vital records, making them more accessible to the public.

Evolution of Vital Recordkeeping (3)

Digital Age and Online Databases: With the advent of the Internet, vital records have become increasingly digitized and accessible online. Genealogical societies, government agencies, and private companies have created databases that allow researchers to search for and access vital records from around the world.

Privacy and Data Protection: In more recent times, concerns over privacy and data protection have led to restrictions on access to more recent vital records, particularly those involving living individuals. Death records are more readily available than Birth records.

Contemporary Practices: Today, vital record keeping continues to be a vital part of government administration and genealogical research. Practices and regulations vary from country to country, but the importance of recording and preserving vital records remains constant.

Birth records

Birth records are typically created by the government authority in the place of birth, such as a hospital, birthing center, or at home with a midwife. The attending healthcare professionals, parents, or guardians are often responsible for providing the necessary information. This information is then submitted to the local (town, city, or county) or state government office responsible for vital records, like a Department of Health.

Marriage records

Marriage records are usually created when a couple applies for and is granted a marriage license. The ceremony is performed by an authorized officiant, such as a minister, judge, or civil celebrant. They are responsible for completing the marriage certificate and returning it to the appropriate government authority, often the county clerk's office or a similar agency.

Death records

Death records are generated when someone passes away. A medical professional, such as a doctor or coroner, is typically responsible for certifying the cause of death. The funeral home or a family member often assists in completing the death certificate, and it is submitted to the local or state vital records office. In the U.S. deaths must also be reported to Social Security.

Divorce records

Divorce records are created when a couple legally ends their marriage through divorce proceedings. These records are maintained by the court where the divorce was granted.

Adoption records

Adoption records are created when a child is legally adopted. The court overseeing the adoption process is responsible for maintaining these records.

Name change records

Name change records are created when an individual registers a name change. The court overseeing the process is responsible for maintaining these records.

When a woman marries and wants to take her husband's last name, she must sign her marriage certificate with her new name. The marriage certificate serves as proof of the changed name, which she can use to change her name with Social Security, creditors, businesses, and other entities.

Religious institutions

In some cases, particularly in the past, religious institutions such as churches may have been responsible for recording vital events like births, marriages, and deaths. However today, these records are often maintained alongside or transferred to government authorities.

Marriage intentions, baptisms, christenings, etc.

Who is responsible for vital records?

Vital records are typically created and maintained by government authorities or other authorized entities responsible for recording and preserving these important life events. The specific responsible entity can vary by country, region, and even sometimes by type of vital record.

In many countries, a government agency or department, such as a Department of Health or a Vital Records Office, is responsible for collecting, storing, and maintaining all vital records. These agencies ensure the proper registration and archiving of birth, marriage, and death records.

Indexes and Registers

Vital records indexes or registers are typically created and maintained by government agencies responsible for recording and managing vital events such as births, marriages, divorces, and deaths. These agencies are usually at the state or regional level, and the specific names of the agencies can vary from one country to another.

In some locales, historical and genealogical societies have created compilations.

Transcriptions errors can creep into any of these.

What's in a vital record?

- Identification of parents through vital records
- Documentation of life events
- Date and place information
- Name variations and changes
- Relationships and family connections
- May contain individual's info such as occupations, residences, religious affiliations, and more

Looking at Vital Records

- They are legal and official records
- They give proof for inheritance and property records
- Vital records are important for immigration and naturalization processes.
- Vital records can be used for census data verification

Accessing Vital Records

- Public vs. restricted records.
- Where to find records: government archives, libraries, online databases, and more.
- Tips for accessing records in different locations

Caveats

Errors

Missing records

Name spelling variations

Ethical considerations

Keep in mind privacy concerns in using living individuals' records