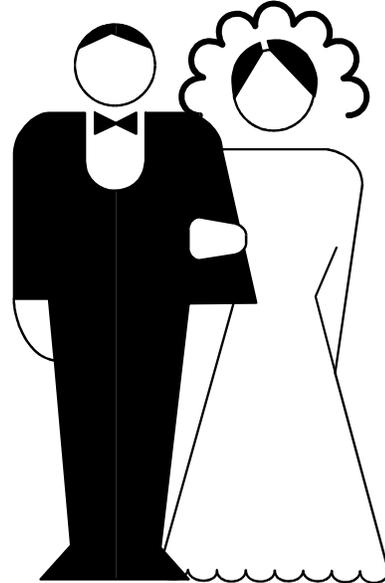


Marriage Records

So Many Ways to Say "I Do"

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I. Family Records

1. Marriage Certificates
2. Family Bibles
3. Bridal Books

II. Civil Records

1. County Records
 - a. Consent – Required when the bride or groom is underage. May be verbal or written.
 - b. Bond – A pledge of security that the marriage is lawful. Posted by the groom alone or with a second person, usually the bride’s father or brother.
 - c. License – Legally authorizes the marriage to be performed.
 - d. Certificate – Certifies that the marriage has taken place. Completed by the person performing the ceremony.
 - e. Marriage Register – Clerk’s record of marriage licenses issued and/or marriage certificates returned to the courthouse for recording. Licenses and returns are often recorded together in one register, but are sometimes recorded in separate registers.
 - f. Application – Although very informative, applications have come into use only within recent generations.

2. New England Town Records
 - a. Intentions – “Published” or posted in a public place and recorded in the town records. Announces an intended marriage so that others may object if the marriage is not lawful.
 - b. Marriage Returns – Clerk’s record of marriages that have been returned to the Town Hall for recording.
3. Marriage Contracts – Widely used in colonial Louisiana, otherwise uncommon unless wealth is involved.
4. Common Law Marriage – A mutual agreement between a man and woman to live together as husband and wife without a marriage ceremony. Legally recognized in some states, but rarely recorded. Three requirements: 1) mutual agreement, directly stated, to be husband and wife, 2) cohabitation, 3) reputation in the community as a married couple.

III. Church Records

1. Banns – An announcement of an intended marriage read in church, usually on three consecutive Sundays. Similar to marriage intentions, except that banns are church records and intentions are civil records.
2. Minister’s Books – Minister’s record of marriages he has performed. May be held by the local church, a church diocese, historical society or archives, or in manuscript collections.
3. Quaker Meeting Records – Many published in William Wade Hinshaw’s *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy, 7 volumes* (1936-1950 Reprint; Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1991-1999).

IV. Other Sources

1. Military Pension Files – May contain marriage certificates, Bible records, and other proofs of marriage. Especially likely to be found in pension applications filed by widows.
2. Newspapers – Announcements of engagements, marriages and wedding anniversaries.

