

Why You Should Research Coroner Records and Where to Find Them

Did you know that about 20% of deaths in the United States are investigated by a Coroner or a Medical Examiner? I first got interested when I accidentally found a Coroner's Report for my Great Aunt, who died in 1911. Her cause of death was accidental, and very sad. So I began researching Coroner Reports and Inquests for those ancestors where their death was questionable.

When does a Coroner get involved?

If the death was suspicious, a coroner may be asked to perform an investigation and possibly an autopsy. A suspicious death could be as simple as a person who the relatives or friends hadn't heard from who was found deceased in their home alone. Or it could be the result of an accident, homicide or suicide.

What can we find in these records?

Some reports are short, while others may have more details. The cause of death and any liability or crime that has occurred may dictate a more thorough investigation. Inquest testimony particularly may provide clues to family and friend relationships.

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| • Name | • Address |
| • Date Received | • Place where death occurred |
| • Gender | • Presumable cause of death |
| • Color | • Date and time of death |
| • Age | • Date of Inquest |
| • Nativity | • Verdict |
| • Marriage Status | • Witnesses |
| • Occupation | • Inquest Testimony |
| • Post-mortem findings | • Necrology report (pathology, toxicology) |
| • Medical Examiner | • Date of Examination |

Where can we find Coroner Records?

Always contact the county where the death occurred first to see if there are records or there was an inquest. Generally the files are available to the public, subject to privacy laws in the jurisdiction.

What should we research next?

If the death was indeed suspicious, there might be an article in the newspaper describing the event. Obviously, accidents or crimes would likely be included in an article in the newspaper. But discoveries of people who had passed were newsworthy years ago.

Where can we find Coroner Records Online?

The jurisdiction that you are searching may have online access, but that is doubtful. The best place to find free online coroner report collections and coroner records is at The Ancestor Hunt's [Coroner Records Links Page](#). There are links to about 350 collections that are available online in the U.S.

We spend a lot of our research time trying to find the story of our ancestors' lives. It is also important to discover the story of our ancestors' deaths.

