

25 Reasons to Research Probate Records and Wills

Does the thought of locating and searching through old probate records and wills turn you off, because you will need to go through some court's smelly basement, where you have to pore through dusty old files of records? Let me tell you, whether you have to find them that way or online, they are incredibly valuable sources of terrific information about the deceased. They are often well documented and provide a ton of details about the deceased's life activities, relationships, relatives, friends and acquaintances.

Here is a list of just some of the information available in Probate Records and Wills:

- **Full Name** - often the middle name is a challenge to find while researching, but it likely is found in either the will or probate documents
- **Date and Location of Death**
- **Name of Spouse** - and likely ex-spouses if they were a parent of your children
- **Children's Names** - and possibly their birth date and location
- **Children's Spouses' Names**
- **Grandchildren's Names**
- **Siblings**
- **Other Heirs** - may be nieces or nephew, but also close friends or associates, and if the deceased had home workers
- **Occupations**
- **Businesses Owned** - if a partnership business arrangement, the names of the partners
- **Citizenship Status** - and possibly naturalization information
- **Residences** - this may include old residences and possibly those of their children
- **Real Estate Property Owned** - including their locations and value
- **Deaths of Other Family Members** - possibly including siblings and children, or parents, depending on the age of the deceased
- **Adoptions and/or Guardianships**
- **Inventory of items Owned by the Deceased**
- **Debts of the Deceased**
- **Household Items**
- **Executor/Trustee for the Estate** - and alternates should the Trustee be deceased
- **Guardianship of Minor Children** - should both parents be deceased
- **Deceased's Signature** - if on a will.
- **Witnesses to the Signing of the Will**
- **Feelings of the Deceased toward Family Members** - this can be deduced if not stated explicitly, by the amount of the estate that is bequeathed in relation to that of others.
- **Specific Bequests** - if not to a person specifically; may be to a charity, or church, or other organization. May also specify an amount for care of a minor child.
- **Wills of Slaveholders May Name Slaves Owned**

To research online probate records and wills that are available for free for the U.S. please go to The Ancestor Hunt's Probate and Wills page. A curated list of links to over 8,000 free collections are presented by state. Click on [Probate and Wills](#), and select the state you wish to search.