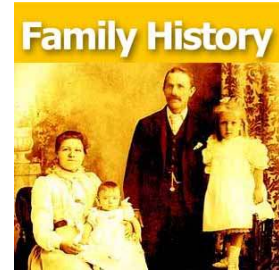


Family History: Genealogy Made Easy

with Lisa Louise Cooke

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Welcome to this step-by-step series for beginning genealogists—and more experienced ones who want to brush up or learn something new. I first ran this series in 2008-09. So many people have asked about it, I'm bringing it back in weekly segments.

Episode 25: Using Civil Birth Records in Family History Research

In our last episode we covered marriage records. As promised in this week's episode, we finish up vital records by going back to the beginning: birth records. Just like with marriage records, there a variety of records to track down. There are two major categories: civil and church records. Today I'm bringing in professional genealogist Arlene H. Eakle, PhD, who will helps us to see the challenges we face and the success we can have locating civil birth records. In the next episode, Arlene will join me again to walk us through the world of church birth records.

Here are some take-away tips from our discussion in this episode:

- When you start researching in a new area, learn when government birth records began to be kept. Every state and some cities began birth registration at different times. Today, in some states you order records before a certain date from the local government and more recent ones from the state vital records office. Do your research! Start here with this Vital Records Chart from Family Tree Magazine:
<http://www.familytreemagazine.com/upload/images/PDF/vitalrecords.pdf>
- In the U.S., most government birth records were kept by the county, except in New England and independent cities. In the 20th century, the state took over jurisdiction of vital records in most states.
- Birth records often have the names of parents and child and the place and date of birth. You may also find parents' birthplaces, marital status of parents and even the date of marriage.
- A single locale may have logged births in multiple sources, for example, for those who lived in or outside the city limits, or segregated records for blacks.
- The actual birth record may have been logged as part of a list of names on a columned form. Birth *certificates* are a modern thing!
- Some records have been digitized and indexed or microfilmed. Check the Family History Library catalog on FamilySearch.org first. If they have birth records, they'll tell you whether they've been digitized or indexed on their site, or whether they're available on microfilm.
- Of course, many birth records are also available on subscription websites like Ancestry.com, FindMyPast.com, MyHeritage.com and more. If you are a subscriber, check their online holdings, too.
- When ordering a birth record from a government office, they may type up a certificate to send you. That's nice, but also ask for a photocopy of the original birth entry or record.

There's often more on the original record than the certificate—and you'll minimize errors by looking at the real record.

Arlene H. Eakle, Ph.D., is the president and founder of The Genealogical Institute, Inc. and a professional genealogist since 1962. She holds both MA and Ph.D. in English History and an Associate degree in Nursing. Find her at www.arleneeakle.com.