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Pittsburgh Genealogy 101: A Guide to Researching in the Steel City  
Presented by Kate Townsend

## VITAL RECORDS

### BIRTH AND DEATH RECORDS - 1906 TO PRESENT (CERTIFIED COPIES)

Birth certificates and death certificates from 1906 to the present are maintained by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Health Statistics. The records began to be compiled statewide in Pennsylvania in 1906.

Certified copies of birth certificates and death certificates from 1906 to the present may be requested online using the following link: <https://mycertificates.health.pa.gov/>. The price for a certificate is \$20.00 regardless of the quantity ordered. If ordering online, a \$10.00 processing fee is required. Please note that there are restrictions regarding who can order either a birth or death certificate. Check the website for details.

### BIRTH RECORDS (1906 TO 1915) AND DEATH RECORDS (1906 TO 1970) (NON-CERTIFIED COPIES)

Non-certified copies of birth certificates from 1906 to 1915 and non-certified copies of death certificates from 1906 to 1970 are available through the Pennsylvania State Archives (350 North Street, Harrisburg, PA 17120-0090). These records can be accessed in person by visiting the Pennsylvania State Archives at the aforementioned address. The Pennsylvania State Archives is open Wednesday thru Friday from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. In addition, records can be requested via a mail-in request form available on their website: <https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/Research-Mail-Email.aspx>.

Indices for birth records in Pennsylvania from 1906 to 1915 are available online: <https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/Birth-Indices.aspx>.

Pennsylvania Birth Certificates from 1906 to 1913 are also available online via Ancestry.com's collection: [Pennsylvania, U.S., Birth Certificates, 1906-1913](#).

Indices for death records in Pennsylvania from 1906 to 1970 are available online: <https://www.phmc.pa.gov/Archives/Research-Online/Pages/Death-Indices.aspx>.

Pennsylvania Death Certificates from 1906 to 1968 are also available online via Ancestry.com's collection: [Pennsylvania, U.S., Death Certificates, 1906-1968](#).

## BIRTH AND DEATH RECORDS - PRIOR TO 1906

Prior to 1906, birth and death records were not required to be registered with Pennsylvania. If birth and death records were maintained, they were recorded at the county level. Beginning in 1893, birth and death records were required to be maintained with the County.

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh maintains the following collection of birth and death records applicable to Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania:

Record Type	Location	Dates
Birth	Pittsburgh*	1870 to 1905
Birth	Allegheny City**	1885 to October 1907
Death	Pittsburgh***	1870 to 1905
Death	Allegheny City****	1885 to May 1907

The records can be accessed by emailing [padept@carnegielibrary.org](mailto:padept@carnegielibrary.org). The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Pennsylvania Department (genealogy and local history) is presently not open to the public due to Covid-19.

\*Pittsburgh birth records are available online via FamilySearch.org's collection: [Registration of births in the city of Pittsburgh, 1870-1905](#).

\*\*Allegheny City birth records (inclusive of an additional time period of 1878 to 1885) are available online via FamilySearch.org's collection: [Registration of births in the city of Allegheny, 1878-1907 and index 1882-1907](#).

\*\*\*Pittsburgh death records are available online via FamilySearch.org's collection: [Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh City Deaths, 1870-1905](#).

\*\*\*\*Allegheny City death records (inclusive of an additional time period of 1876 to 1885) are available online via FamilySearch.org's collection: [Registration of deaths in the city of Allegheny, 1876-1907](#).

It should also be noted that there was a short period of time where Pennsylvania attempted to maintain Vital Records on a County level from 1852 to 1854.

Birth Records for Allegheny County, Pennsylvania are included in the following database on Ancestry.com: [Pennsylvania, U.S., Births, 1852-1854](#)

Death Records for Allegheny County, Pennsylvania are included in the following database on Ancestry.com: [Pennsylvania, U.S., Deaths, 1852-1854](#)

## MARRIAGE RECORDS

Since 30 September 1885 marriage records have been issued by the Clerk of Orphans Court in Pennsylvania. Marriage Records for Allegheny County, PA are available in the Marriage Office located at the following address:

Wills/Orphans' Court  
City-County Building  
414 Grant Street, First Floor  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-2469  
Phone: 412-350-4180  
Hours: 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM (Monday to Friday)

These records can also be requested online at the following link:

<https://dcr.alleghenycounty.us/Marriage/Search/MarriageLicenseSearch.aspx?Welcome=true>. Certified copies are \$10.00 per copy. Non-certified copies are \$4.00 per copy. The records will be mailed to the purchaser.

In addition, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh maintains the following collections that can be used to document marriage:

Marriage Notice Index (1786-1910, based on notices published in local newspapers)  
Minister's Returns, City of Pittsburgh (Feb. 1875-June 1886, miscellaneous months)  
Index to Allegheny County Marriage Licenses Volumes 1-14 (1885-1925)  
Marriage License Docket Volumes 1-70 (1885-1905)

These records can be requested using the following link: <https://www.carnegielibrary.org/research-overview/genealogy/marriage-record-request/>. The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Pennsylvania Department (genealogy and local history) is presently not open to the public due to Covid-19.

From 1852-1854, marriage records were briefly recorded on the County level in Pennsylvania. The records for Allegheny County, Pennsylvania can be accessed using the following database on Ancestry.com: [Pennsylvania, U.S., Marriages, 1852-1854](#).

## DIVORCE RECORDS

The index to divorce records can be found in the Ejectment & Miscellaneous Index (1788-) located in the Department of Court Records – Civil/Family Division. Copies of divorce records can be ordered from the Civil/Family Division desk. Some older records might be in storage and need to be ordered from an offsite storage site.

Court Records – Civil/Family Division  
Mezzanine Level, City County Building  
414 Grant Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-2471  
Phone: 412-350-5729  
Hours: 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM (Monday thru Friday)

### FEDERAL COURT RECORDS

An index to federal criminal cases (1933 to 1994) and federal civil cases (1949 to 1992) is located at the following address:

Old Post Office Building  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
700 Grant Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Records of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania and the U.S. Circuit Court (both of which are federal courts with criminal and civil records) for the Western District of Pennsylvania (encompassing Pittsburgh) are housed at the National Archives in Philadelphia located at the following address:

14700 Townsend Road  
Philadelphia, PA 19154-1096  
Phone: 215-305-2044  
Email: [philadelphia.archives@nara.gov](mailto:philadelphia.archives@nara.gov)  
Website: <https://www.archives.gov/philadelphia>

Bankruptcy records of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania are housed at the National Archives at Kansas City located at the following address:

400 West Pershing Road  
Kansas City, MO 64108  
Phone: 816-268-8000  
Email: [kansascity.archives@nara.gov](mailto:kansascity.archives@nara.gov)  
Website: <https://www.archives.gov/kansas-city>

Copies of federal court records can be ordered from the National Archives and Records Administration using the following link:

<https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline/start.swe?SWECmd=Start&SWEHo=eservices.archives.gov>

## STATE CIVIL RECORDS

Civil records are available from the Department of Court Records, Civil/Family Division located at the following address:

Department of Court Records, Civil/Family Division  
City-County Building  
414 Grant Street, First Floor  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-2469  
Phone: 412-350-5729  
Hours: 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM (Monday to Friday)

Indexes are not comprehensive. Civil files and dockets must be requested from an off-site storage facility, if available.

Civil records from 1995 to the present can be accessed online using the following link:

<https://dcr.alleghenycounty.us/Civil/LoginSearch.aspx>.

Indices for *some* civil records prior to 1995 are available using the following link:

<https://dcr.alleghenycounty.us/indices/indices.html>.

## STATE CRIMINAL RECORDS

Criminal records are available from the Department of Court Records, Criminal Division located at the following address:

Department of Court Records, Criminal Division  
City-County Building  
436 Grant Street, Room 220  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-2469  
Phone: 412-350-5323  
Hours: 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM (Monday to Friday)

Indexes are not comprehensive. Criminal files and dockets must be requested from an off-site storage facility, if available.

In addition, records of the Allegheny County Workhouse (1873 to 1971) which includes records of criminal offenses are included in the following collection available from Ancestry.com: [Pennsylvania, U.S., Prison, Reformatory, and Workhouse Records, 1829-1971](#).

## PROBATE

Probate records from 1788 to the present are available from the Department of Court Records, Wills/Orphans' Court located at the following address:

Department of Court Records, Wills/Orphans' Court  
City-County Building  
414 Grant Street, First Floor  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-2469  
Phone: 412-350-4180  
Hours: 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM (Monday to Friday)

FamilySearch.org also maintains the following collections of Allegheny County, PA probate records:

[Estate index 1788-1971 ; Proceedings index 1788-1971](#)

[Orphans' court dockets, 1789-1905](#)

[Powers of attorney, 1851-1901](#)

[Will books, 1789-1917](#)

[Will packets or files, 1789-1917](#)

Ancestry.com also maintains the following collection which includes probate records from Allegheny County, PA:

[Pennsylvania, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1683-1993](#)

## REAL ESTATE RECORDS

Property deeds from 1788 to the present are available in The Department of Real Estate of Allegheny County. There are two sets of index books the Deed Direct (organized by grantor) and the Deed Absectum (organized by grantee). In addition, mortgage records from 1788 to the present are available in The Department of Real Estate of Allegheny County.

Department of Real Estate  
County Office Building  
542 Forbes Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
Phone: 412-350-4226

Records can also be requested via the mail using a form available online from the following link: <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/real-estate/obtaining-copies.aspx>. Records cost \$10.00 per copy (payment via money order).

Allegheny County deed and mortgage records from 1986 to the present are available online: <https://pa.allegheny.uslandrecords.com/palr/>.

Furthermore, FamilySearch.org also maintains the following collection of Allegheny County deed records: [Deeds, 1788-1901; index, 1788-1904](#).

## NATURALIZATION RECORDS

Physical Repository		
Court	Years	Repository
Common Pleas Court and Quarter Sessions Court Records	1799 to 1906	Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Genealogy Department Pennsylvania Room 4450 Forbes Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15213
U.S. District Courts and Circuit Courts for the Western District of Pennsylvania (index only)	1906 to present	Clerk's Office U.S. Post Office & Federal Court Building 7th Avenue & Grant Street Room 829 Pittsburgh, PA 15243
U.S. District Courts and Circuit Courts for the Western District of Pennsylvania	1906 to present	National Archives at Philadelphia 14700 Townsend Rd Philadelphia, PA 19154
Online		
Court	Years	Repository
Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County	1799 to 1906 (docket) and 1883 to 1906 (declarations of intention)	<a href="#">Naturalization docket, 1799-1906, and declarations of intentions, 1883-1906 at FamilySearch.org</a>
District Court of Allegheny County	1798 to 1910	<a href="#">Naturalization declarations of intention and petitions, 1798-1910 at FamilySearch.org</a>
U.S. Circuit Court for the Western District of PA	1910 to 1911	<a href="#">Naturalization petitions and records, 1910-1911 at FamilySearch.org</a>
U.S. District Courts for the Western District of PA	1820 to 1935	<a href="#">Naturalization records (Pennsylvania: Western District), 1820-1935 at FamilySearch.org</a>
U.S. District Courts and Circuit Courts for the Western District of PA (index only)	1906 to 1990	<a href="#">Pennsylvania, Allegheny, Pittsburgh, Naturalization Card File Index, 1906-1990 at FamilySearch.org</a>
U.S. District Court and the Circuit Court, for the Western District of PA	1820 to 1930 (U.S. District Court) and 1820 to 1911 (U.S. Circuit Court)	<a href="#">Naturalizations - PA Western at Fold3.com</a>



## NEWSPAPERS

The following newspapers based in Pittsburgh are available via [Newspapers.com](https://www.newspapers.com):

Newspaper	Years of Coverage
<i>Pittsburgh Daily American</i>	1841
<i>Pittsburgh Daily Post</i>	1842 to 1926
<i>Pittsburgh Dispatch</i>	1889 to 1892
<i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i>	1877 to 2014
<i>Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph</i>	1927 to 1959
<i>Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette</i>	1786 to 1923 (some gaps in years)
<i>The Pittsburgh Commercial</i>	Six years between 1846 and 1877
<i>The Pittsburgh Courier</i>	1911 to 1977
<i>The Pittsburgh Daily Commercial</i>	1863 to 1876
<i>The Pittsburgh Gazette</i>	1834 to 1866
<i>The Pittsburgh Post</i>	17 years between 1868 and 1896
<i>The Pittsburgh Press</i>	1884 to 1992

The [University of Pittsburgh - Oakland Campus](https://www.library.pitt.edu/) maintains a collection of numerous Pittsburgh newspapers covering various time periods on microfilm. Requests for access can be sent to the following email address: [ULS-HillmanMicroformandMapRequests@pitt.edu](mailto:ULS-HillmanMicroformandMapRequests@pitt.edu).

## CITY DIRECTORIES

Select city directories from 1815 to 1930 are available at <https://historicpittsburgh.org/collection/historic-pittsburgh-city-directories>.

Ancestry.com also maintains the following collection which has Pittsburgh City Directories: [U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995](https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1822-1995). The indexing on the City Directories for Pittsburgh in this collection is not comprehensive.

\*Some city directories are available on Microfilm only at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Room.

## HISTORIC MAPS

G. M. Hopkins Company Maps, 1872-1940: <https://historicpittsburgh.org/maps-hopkins>

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map:

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanbornmaps/?fa=location:pennsylvania%7Clocation:pittsburgh>

Pittsburgh Historic Maps Viewing Tool:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=63f24d1466f24695bf9dfc5bf6828126&fbclid=IwAR2J-Q9xeVzJrXBohc0mDclJvHYc0vfqxVZBPvlu4lJeCnzXLYTWac-OQtM>

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### DETRE LIBRARY & ARCHIVES AT THE SENATOR JOHN HEINZ HISTORY CENTER

The [Detre Library & Archives](#) at the Senator John Heinz History Center has a wealth of genealogical information including, but not limited to, the following:

- 700,000 photographs, prints, and negatives
- 40,000 books, pamphlets, and monographs
- 3,500 individual archival collections of families, organizations, businesses, and industries
- 600 periodical titles
- 500 maps and atlases

Detre Library & Archives at the Senator John Heinz History Center

1212 Smallman Street

Sixth Floor

Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Phone: 412-454-6364

Email: [library@heinzhistorycenter.org](mailto:library@heinzhistorycenter.org)

Hours: 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM (Wednesday to Saturday)

### PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT COLLECTIONS AT THE CARNEGIE LIBRARY OF PITTSBURGH

The [Pennsylvania Department Collections at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh](#) maintains numerous genealogical relevant collections including, but not limited to, newspaper clippings, maps, portrait index as well as vital records. It is located at the following address:

4400 Forbes Ave.

Third Floor

Pittsburgh PA 15213

Phone: 412.622.3154

Email: [padept@carnegielibrary.org](mailto:padept@carnegielibrary.org)

It should also be noted that the [Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society](#) maintains a collection of genealogically relevant materials within the Pennsylvania Department of Collections at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. This collection includes materials like published family histories, church histories, morgue records, and cemetery records with a focus on Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

### UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The [University of Pittsburgh Archives & Special Collections](#) maintains historic documents, coroner's records, photographs, maps, newspapers, and rare books among other items pertaining to Western Pennsylvania history. There are two locations:

Oakland Location	Point Breeze Location
320 Hillman Library University of Pittsburgh 3960 Forbes Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15260 Phone: 412-648-8190 Hours: 10:00 AM to 4:45 PM (Monday to Friday)	7500 Thomas Boulevard Pittsburgh, PA 15208 Phone: 412-648-3232 Hours: 9:00 AM to 4:45 PM (Monday to Friday)

## HISTORIC PITTSBURGH

Historic Pittsburgh is an online virtual archive comprising of primary and secondary sources about the greater Pittsburgh region. Resources include, but are not limited to, maps, images, local histories and city directories.

Historic Pittsburgh can be accessed using the following URL: <https://historicpittsburgh.org/>.

## ARCHIVES AND RECORDS CENTER OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

The [Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh](#) maintains parish sacramental records (i.e. birth, marriage, death, confirmation, baptism). Records can be requested by completing this [form](#) and providing payment (\$15.00 per hour of research). The request can be mailed to the following address:

Archives and Records Center  
 Diocese of Pittsburgh  
 1050 Logue St.  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15220

Records less than 70 years old are closed to the public. Records between 70 to 100 years old, are accessible if a proof of death for the individual in question is provided. Genealogical research for records over 100 years old do not require a proof of death.

## PITTSBURGH HISTORY AND LANDMARKS FOUNDATION

[Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation](#) maintains The James D. Van Trump Library which house books, manuscripts, periodicals, historic site survey data among other items relevant to Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

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