

Marriage and Divorce Records

The chart below indicates when statewide and county marriage and divorce record-keeping officially began in each state—that's when counties started to collect marriage and divorce information and possibly report it to state offices. Some counties or towns kept statistics earlier, and some were slow to comply with state laws, so check with ancestors' local government for record availability.

Note: Most states maintain marriage and divorce records at the county level. Even though counties were mandated to keep records, early records are often sporadic and/or unavailable. Many states have marriage/divorce index only despite indications to the contrary. Marriage licenses had to be returned to the issuer by the officiant in order to be legally recorded. Such licenses, issued by the county were valid for the entire state.

State	State Marriage	County Marriage	State Divorce	County Divorce	Notes
Alabama	1936	1818	1950	1864	
Alaska	1913	----	1950	----	
Arizona	1909	1864	----	1864	
Arkansas	1917	1848	1923	1848	
California	1905	1851	1962	1851	
Colorado	1900	1860	1900	1860	State has index only
Connecticut	1897	----	1897	1711	Town records beg 1635
Delaware*	1847	1832	1703	1900	
District of Columbia*	1811	----	1803	----	
Florida	1927	1825	1927	1825	
Georgia	1952	1800	1952	1835	
Hawaii	1842	1905	1849	1905	
Idaho	1947	1865	1947	1865	
Illinois	1962	1813	1962	1813	Marriage license required after 1877
Indiana	1958	1811	----	1853	
Iowa	1880	1836	1906	1838	
Kansas	1913	1832	1951	1832	
Kentucky	1958	1797	1958	1809	
Louisiana*	1948	1808	----	1818	
Maine	1923	----	1892	1738	See town records beg about 1653
Maryland	1950	1640	1961	1829	Marriage License required aft 1777; minister returns aft 1865
Massachusetts	1841	1636	1952	1738	See also towns for records beg 1620
Michigan	1867	1805	1897	1857	
Minnesota	1958	1842	1970	1842	State has index only
Mississippi	1926	1836	1920	1859	
Missouri	1881	1816	1948	1808	
Montana	1943	1883	----	1883	State has index only
Nebraska	1909	1855	1909	1855	
Nevada	1968	1861	1868	1861	
New Hampshire	1901	----	----	1774	See town records beginning 1639

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New Jersey	1848	1795	1850	1743	Most county 1795; some town records beginning 1699
New Mexico	1920	1850	----	1850	
New York*	1847-65 1881	1848, 1908	1963	1787	County marriages, most 1908 (not all)
North Carolina	1962	1669	1958	1814	
North Dakota	1925	1872	-----	1872	
Ohio	1949	1789	1949	1852	Copies of state records not available
Oklahoma	1908	1890	----	1907	
Oregon	1906	1847	1925	1853	
Pennsylvania	1885	1852, 1885	1946	1804	May have 1852-1854 records. Marriages most counties 1885 (not all)
Rhode Island	1853	----	1644	1749	See town records beg in 1636
South Carolina	1950	1836	1962	1949	Divorce illegal until 1949
South Dakota	1905	1873	1905	1873	
Tennessee*	1945	1786	----	1797	
Texas	1966	1837	1968	1841	State records copies not available by mail
Utah	1887	1887	1978	1851	Copies of state records not available
Vermont	1955	----	1860	----	See town records beg in 1760
Virginia	1853	1646	1853	1848	See also vestry records
Washington	1968	1852	1968	1889	
West Virginia	1964	1754	----	1848	
Wisconsin	1907	1823	----	1823	
Wyoming	1941	1864	1941	1864	

***New England states:** most early records kept at the town level

***New York:** State records do not include New York City boroughs, or Albany, Yonkers, or Buffalo before 1914; see also town and city records from the 1640s.

Bibliography

<http://www.familytreemaqazine.com/upload/images/pdf/vitalrecords.pdf>

Schaeffer, Christina Kassabian, *The Hidden Half of the Family*, Genealogical Publishing Co., 1999, pp.35-37.