

# **AIDS FOR FINDING EARLY Pennsylvania ANCESTORS**

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## **THE PENNSYLVANIA BIRTHS SERIES**

The *Pennsylvania Births Series* is a comprehensive index to the extant birth and baptismal records found in southeastern Pennsylvania's early church registers. It was designed to facilitate easy access to many early, mostly unpublished church records for one of this country's oldest and most important states. It gives genealogists an ability to find and locate records of birth for some of America's oldest families with relative ease.

Each volume is organized alphabetically by surname and then by the name of the infant. Each entry provides the researcher with--the name of the infant or person baptized, the date of birth or baptism, the names of the father, and the mother. A number in the extreme right column of each entry identifies the church record where that birth information can be found--as numbered in the preface of each volume. If the mother's maiden surname is given in the church record that information is included as well.

Any genealogist searching for individual births or for family names can find them in short order. A family historian searching for Shaw ancestors, for example, will find within minutes records of birth for members of that family in: Berks, Bucks, Montgomery, Philadelphia, and Delaware Counties.

This twelve-volume series has more than 150,00 recorded births found in 223, church, meeting and pastoral records for an area of Pennsylvania that extends from the Delaware River in the east to the Susquehanna River in the west. This region of Pennsylvania is the oldest part of the state and is historically significant for genealogists who can track their ancestry to the colonial period as Philadelphia was the principal port of immigration into the American Colonies in the eighteenth-century. The results of the constant flow of immigrants were: Pennsylvania became the second most populous province in colonial America and the city of Philadelphia became the second largest city in the British empire--second only to London. For the family historian it means the progenitors of numerous early American families settled in Philadelphia or in the surrounding counties. Later, their sons and daughters--who were born in Pennsylvania--moved into western Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and into the mountains of what would become the states of Tennessee and Kentucky or into Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

The birth records in this series are comprehensive; that is, this series is complete to the extent records are available for research. It contains all of the known records for each county regardless of religious denomination or ethnic origin. The series includes information found in previously published sources and data abstracted from original records. It incorporates information from registers that were not translated prior to the publication of this series. It also includes data from Quaker Meeting Records, a set of ledgers that are among the most sought out by genealogists. This series has birth records from all Friends Meetings in the counties covered and several of those meetings, have birth records from the late-seventeenth century.

Each six inch by nine inch volume in this series is printed on acid free paper in a nine-point Times Roman type face and is Smyth sewn, and case bound with a hard cover.

The Series offers family historians, with Pennsylvania ancestry, significant savings in both time and money. Any genealogist searching for the children of Michael and Catharine Klein who were born in Lancaster County, for example, would spend an exorbitant amount of time trying to find information on that family. First of all, they would have to find and identify what church records were available and then they would have to search those records to find their ancestor. Thirty-one church records were searched to find information for the Lancaster County volumes. The cost of renting thirty-one rolls of microfilm is substantially more than the purchase price of the Lancaster County books.

The geographic boundaries used to define the scope of each volume are the jurisdictional boundaries of each county as they exist today. Several counties in this series were at one time part of another county. To cite some examples: Berks County was separated from Philadelphia County, Lehigh County from Northampton County and Montgomery County from Philadelphia County.

### **Berks County**

Berks County is the seventh-oldest county in Pennsylvania. Two volumes for this county list more than 25,000 births found in 43 extant registers. While the county

was predominately German, as evidenced by the 30 Lutheran and Reformed registers used, immigrants from other parts of Europe did settle here and records were found for those groups. Denominations covered in the Berks County volumes include: Quaker, Catholic, Anglican or Protestant Episcopal, Moravian, German Reformed and Lutheran.

*Pennsylvania Births, Berks County, 1710-1780*  
393 pages, \$30.00

*Pennsylvania Births, Berks County, 1780-1800*  
available Spring 1998, \$30.00

### **Bucks County**

This county was one of the three original counties established by William Penn in 1682. A variety of religious and ethnic groups settled here as is reflected by the registers used for this volume. Records of birth were found in the following church registers: Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, Quaker, and German and Dutch Reformed. Over 12, 200 recorded births were found in 22 church, meeting, and pastoral records.

*Pennsylvania Births, Bucks County, 1682-1800*  
352 pages, \$31.00

### **Chester County**

Chester County was established by William Penn in 1682 along with Bucks and Philadelphia Counties. Surviving Chester County records reveal the early population was predominately Quaker. Ten Monthly Meeting registers were used for this work along with records of birth that were found in German Reformed, Lutheran and Presbyterian registers.

Combined these registers list more than of 9,400 recorded births.

*Pennsylvania Births, Chester County, 1682-1800*  
246 pages, \$27.00

### **Delaware County**

This county was separated from Chester County in 1789. Records for four Quaker Meetings, all established before 1684, were used. Also included are births found in two Anglican or Protestant Episcopal Church registers and combined these registers realized more than 4,500 recorded births.

*Pennsylvania Births, Delaware County, 1682-1800*  
117 pages, \$18.50

### **Lancaster County**

Lancaster County, established in 1729, is the fourth oldest county in Pennsylvania. Two volumes for this county list over 25,000 recorded births found in thirty-one church, pastoral and meeting registers. This county has some of the oldest Lutheran Church records to be found anywhere in the U.S. While this county was predominately German, records for several religious denominations representing a variety of immigrant groups were used. They include: Quaker, Anglican or Protestant Episcopal, Catholic, Moravian, Lutheran and German Reformed.

*Pennsylvania Births, Lancaster County 1723-1777*  
397 pages, \$29.00  
*Pennsylvania Births, Lancaster County, 1778-1800*  
398 pages, \$29.00

### **Lebanon County**

Lebanon County was formed in 1813 from parts of Dauphine, Lancaster, and Berks Counties. Surviving church registers for this county reveal the early population was predominately German. Over 7,500 recorded births were found in 18 Lutheran, Moravian, and German Reformed Church records.

*Pennsylvania Births, Lebanon County, 1714-1800*  
267 pages, \$26.50

### **Lehigh County**

Settlement in Lehigh County, which was separated from Northampton County in 1812, commenced *circa* 1730. The majority of early Lehigh County settlers were Germans who were members of one of three church denominations: German Reformed, Moravian, or Lutheran. Over 11,000 births were found in 28 church and pastoral records.

*Pennsylvania Births, Lehigh County, 1734-1800*  
327 pages, \$29.50

### **Montgomery County**

Originally part of Philadelphia County, Montgomery County, which was established in 1784, has some of the oldest church records in the state. Over 18,200 records of birth were found in 28 church, meeting and pastoral records. Information for this volume was found in Quaker, Reformed, Presbyterian, and Lutheran registers.

*Pennsylvania Births, Montgomery County, 1682-1800*  
536 pages, \$39.50

## **Northampton County**

This county, the eighth oldest, was founded in 1752 when it was separated from Bucks County. The majority of Northampton County's early settlers were Germans who were members of one of three church denominations: Moravian, German Reformed or Lutheran. Over 7,700 recorded births were found in 14 church and pastoral registers.

*Pennsylvania Births, Northampton County, 1733-1800*  
239 pages, \$25.00

## **Philadelphia County**

Philadelphia County was one of the three original counties established by William Penn in 1682. The city of Philadelphia, located within Philadelphia County, became America's preeminent eighteenth-century city and its principal port of immigration. Two volumes for Philadelphia list over 34,600 recorded births found in 21 church registers representing an array of religious beliefs. Those denominations include: Quaker, Anglican or Protestant Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, Moravian, German Reformed, and Lutheran.

*Pennsylvania Births, Philadelphia County, 1644-1765*  
567 pages, \$39.00

*Pennsylvania Births, Philadelphia County, 1766-1780*  
570 pages, \$39.00

## **Understanding and Using Baptismal Records**

An analysis of records for various families, like family Bibles and estate records, reveals many church records are incomplete. Frequently records of birth can be found for only some of the children in the family. Someone searching for Othaniel Sands, for example, will not find his record of birth in any church register in southeastern, Pennsylvania. But the genealogist who uses this series to find information on the Sands family will soon discover where the Sands family was located – and that information can lead to a successful resolution of the research problem.

In this instance information on the Sands family was found in the Berks and Bucks County volumes. A check of Berks County wills shows Othaniel Sands was a son of John and Catharine Sands. The Berks County volumes disclose these parents had several other children baptized at St. Gabriel's Protestant Episcopal Church. Thus, information on Othaniel's siblings was recorded but for some reason his birth was not.

Deficiencies in church registers can be attributed to any number of things but among them are the congregations inability to acquire record books and ministers. Another issue is the one of location--birth and baptismal records that were not recorded in the register of the church were the family attended, but were recorded elsewhere. Evidence found in Pennsylvania's early church records also shows because ministers were scarce many parents had to seek out a pastor of another denomination and the record of that baptism, if one was made, was recorded in the registers of a different faith.

These kinds of problems are discussed in detail in *Understanding and Using Baptismal Records*. This critically acclaimed book provides the family historian, with a background on baptismal practice that is essential to scholarly genealogical research. *Understanding and Using Baptismal Records* offers valuable hints for rewarding exploration into the mysteries of baptismal records-where to look-what you should expect to find-why sometimes you can't find what you are "sure" should be there.

- "Humphrey presents a very detailed, accurate, and readable account of the theology and baptismal practices of the major denominations in the original colonies – a knowledge . . . which is essential for good genealogical research."

**Paul Milner**

*National Genealogical Society Quarterly*

- "The variety of baptismal records in America together with their meanings is the subject of . . . *Understanding and Using Baptismal Records*. . . . It is important to know a denomination's position on who can be baptized and who can serve as godparents."

**Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck**

*The Dallas Morning News*

- "This book . . . belongs on the shelf of all those researching colonial church records."

**Clara Harsh**

*Palatine Immigrant*

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