

## 3. I'll See You in Court (Records!)

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Genealogists often use court records, particularly probate records, to identify family relationships when vital records do not exist. But there are other court records that can be discovered to add context and/or richness to an ancestor's story. Court records may be the *only records* for the very poor, landless ancestor, an unmarried, pregnant female ancestor or a troubled, "black sheep" ancestor in early colonial America. Use clues from other records to determine where these often overlooked and interesting records may be located to learn more about your ancestor.

### Tips:

- **Time period matters.** Understand what court records exist and where they are located by studying the history of the area at the time of your ancestor's life. Remember to check the court records of parent and surrounding counties.
- **Use other records** (census, newspapers, oral and written family histories, etc.) to find possible court appearances.
- **Browse** the first or last few pages of any court book to determine the indexing system used to search efficiently.
- **Learn** common legal terminology used during the time period of study. Consult legal dictionaries for assistance.
- **Search** at a town, county and state level. Federal court records are located at NARA.

**Getting Started Online with Court Record Research** Unless marked with \$, sites are free to use, but may require the user to set up an account to view documents.

- Use your favorite internet browser and type in "\_\_\_\_\_ Court Records" in the search box (in the blank type in the state or county of interest)
- Review County Clerk of Court and/or Archive website(s)
- Websites for Genealogical or Historical Society
- City or district library website(s)
- **Ancestry.com** \$ - [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). Some court records/court packets with images. Use the card catalog with the keyword phrase "court records" and your desired location to determine online records.
- **FamilySearch.org** – FREE record viewing with a free user account. After logging in, under "Search" select "catalog" from the dropdown menu. Then, in the search box, type in the desired location (state, then county and/or city/town), scroll to open "court records". Not all collections are viewable from home, so be prepared to visit your local Family History Center if home access is not available for a given collection (camera icon with key). FamilySearch is also a GREAT starting place to learn what records are available when researching in a new area. Click on "wiki" under "Search" from main screen and type in a location or topic into the search box.
- **AmericanAncestors.org** (New England research) \$ - <https://www.americanancestors.org/>
- **Black Sheep Ancestors** - <https://www.blacksheepancestors.com/>

### **Online Law Dictionary for Legal Terminology**

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Law.com - <https://dictionary.law.com/>

Black's Law Dictionary - <https://thelawdictionary.org/>

### **Helpful Books**

- *Courthouse Indexes Illustrated* – by Christine Rose
- *Courthouse Research for the Family Historians, Your Guide to Genealogical Treasures* – by Christine Rose

### **Current Incarcerated Offenders and Recent Parolees**

Ohio Department of Rehabilitation & Corrections - <https://appgateway.drc.ohio.gov/OffenderSearch>

### **Southwest Ohio County and State Websites for Court/Criminal Record Research**

Butler County, Ohio Records Center & Archives -

<http://www.butlercountyohio.org/records/index.cfm?page=archives>

Butler County, Ohio Clerk of Courts - <http://butlercountyclerk.org/>

Cincinnati Public Library - <https://cincinnati.library.bibliocommons.com>

Greene County, Ohio Clerk of Courts - <https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/394/Clerk-of-Courts>

Greene County, Ohio Public Library - <https://greenelibrary.info/>

Hamilton County, Ohio Clerk of Courts - <https://www.courtclerk.org/records-search/search-by-name/>

Hamilton County Genealogical Society - <https://hcgsohio.org/cpage.php?pt=182>

Montgomery County, Ohio Clerk of Courts - <https://www.mcclerkofcourts.org/>

Preble County, Ohio Public Library Genealogy - <https://preblelibrary.org/genealogy>

[Preble County, Ohio Clerk of Courts - https://www.preblecountyohio.net/](https://www.preblecountyohio.net/)

Warren County, Ohio Records & Archives Center - <https://www.co.warren.oh.us/recordscenter/>

Warren County, Ohio Clerk of Courts - <https://www.co.warren.oh.us/clerkofcourt/>

Ohio History Connection Ohio Prison Records -

<https://ohiohistory.libguides.com/c.php?g=1110058&p=8092325>

University of Dayton Special Collections – Government Documents -

<https://udayton.edu/libraries/research/govdocs.php>

Wright State University Special Collections & Archives -

<https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/localgovernment/>

All URLs were accessible as of 22 December 2021