What sources can I use to learn when my ancestor

- *was born?*
    - Birth certificate or death certificate
    - The census
    - Baptismal record
    - Obituary
    - Gravestone
    - Military draft card
    - Military pension file
    - SS-5
    - And more…
- *was married?*
    - Marriage certificate
    - Church marriage record
    - Obituary
    - Newspaper wedding announcement
    - Military pension file
- died?
    - Death certificate
    - The census
    - Church burial record
    - Obituary
    - Gravestone
    - Military pension file
    - Probate file

What is/are…?

- <u>Birth, marriage, and death certificates?</u> Sometimes called vital records (US) or civil registration (Europe), these are the records of birth, death, and marriage created by the government. Depending on the location, they may be managed on the town, state or regional, or national level. These records can exist as early as the 1600s, but they didn't become standard until the 20th century. Access and storage will depend on the locale. *See your handouts for guidelines in the states of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.*
- <u>The census?</u> Governments took census enumerations to learn more about their citizens. The dates and access to these census enumerations will depend on the locale. In the US, the census has been taken every 10 years since 1790 and becomes accessible after 72 years. The 1900 census lists month and year of birth; the mortality schedule (which was taken from 1850-1885) lists all deaths in the year preceding the census enumeration date. *See the census handout for details.*

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- Church records?: Religious denominations generally keep some records of their members. Catholic and Anglican Churches record infant baptism, marriage, and burial. Some denominations baptize later in life or keep no records of marriage or burial. Determining your ancestor's denomination will be key to locating relevant records. *FamilySearch* has digitized church records for many locales.
- Newspapers?: In the US, death and marriage notices were posted in the newspaper beginning in the early 1800s. By the late 1800s, obituaries began to appear. In the 20th century, families also posted birth notices. The public library for the town in which your ancestor lived can often help you determine the correct paper.
- Gravestones?: Graves are recycled in much of Europe, so this resource is of most help for researching American families. In addition to the date of death, gravestones may list dates of birth, spousal relationships, and more. Websites *Find A Grave* and *Billion Graves* can help you locate photos of gravestones. Don't forget to check local resources as well: in Connecticut, we have access to the Hale Collection.
- Military draft cards?: The US began drafting soldiers during the Civil War. Draft cards are available online for World War I and World War II. Depending on the format of the card, the card may list the soldier's date and place of birth. Check *FamilySearch* and *Fold3* (available with a state library card) for access.
- Military pensions?: Soldiers in the American Revolution through the Spanish American War were eligible for pensions for their service, as were widows if their husbands had died and minor children. To receive these pensions, anyone eligible had to prove their identity. These records can include birth dates of the soldier, the spouse, or their children; the soldier's marriage date; and the soldier's death date. *Fold3* has digitized Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and early Civil War widow's pensions.
- SS-5?: The SS-5 form is the form used to apply for a social security card. As many of the earlier applicants were born before civil registration, it can provide a way to document date and place of birth. SS-5 forms can be requested online at https://www.ssa.gov/foia/request.html. Be sure to follow the guidelines for requesting a deceased person's application.
- Probate file?: The family of an ancestor who died with assets may have had to file with the probate court to have those assets legally redistributed. The records of the court should provide an approximate date of death. Probate court systems vary widely by locale. Be sure to review local guidelines and practices.

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