

Marriages are one of the most important records a researcher can use. Here are some tips.

Do you know the place your family was living when these marriages should have taken place? Ideally you know the state and county where they were living. The census should be able to help you with this. Check the [county formation maps](http://www.mapofus.org/) at <http://www.mapofus.org/> for your state to make sure the county existed when your family was there

Know that most marriages often generated multiple pieces of paper work. There might be:

banns – the notice that a couple is going to marry (usually in New England)

bonds – the groom had to enter into a bond so that if they found out later he was already married etc. he would have to pay a penalty. The bondsman was usually a family member and the bride's father is sometimes given on the bond

certificates – usually show only the bride and groom and minister but sometimes have witnesses

marriage registers – a marriage book where you see the bride and groom, date and minister and in some cases added information

town records – in New England records were returned regarding families vital dates. They often look a lot like a Bible record with the father and mother's birthdates, marriage and a list of children and their birthdates. Sometimes places are included (especially if they returned these to one town but had been born in another town)

minister's returns – in some places in early America ministers were supposed to make a report to the county concerning all the couples they had married and when

marriage returns – look more like a form of questions asking birthplace, parents names, parent's birthplaces, ages, occupations etc.

applications – in some counties they required an application. What is in these depends on how detailed the form was that they gave the couple.

This means when you find one version of a marriage try to make sure there isn't a version that has more information. Many times a marriage has more than one version at FamilySearch.

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<https://sites.google.com/site/annesfamilyhistoryresources/home>