



WORKBOOK

Birth Records

BY SHELLEY BISHOP

☛ **THE ROAD TO** discovering your ancestor's past is often gated by the need to answer essential questions about his or her beginnings: When was he born? Where was her birthplace? Who were his parents? The key to unlocking that gate often lies in birth records. This workbook will look at what you might find in a birth record, what types of records that exist for different places and time periods, and how to access the records. Because birth records aren't always available, we'll identify other resources you can utilize as alternatives. You'll also find a worksheet to help track your search and squeeze every detail from the records you discover.

Clues in birth records

Birth records are prized sources to genealogists because the informant was often a parent, doctor or other witness to the birth. As a result, a birth record generally contains primary (firsthand) information.

The two main types of American birth records are certificates and registers. A birth certificate, usually issued by the state, is a document naming an individual child. A birth register, frequently created by a city or county, lists many births occurring over a period of time. While both types of records tend to be trustworthy, registers are more prone to error because they may have been recorded later, when an informant reported the birth to a clerk. In a typical birth record, you might find statements about:

- date of birth
- place of birth
- child's sex and race
- child's name
- mother's first (and possibly maiden) name
- father's name
- parents' residence
- parents' occupations
- parents' ages and/or birthplaces

Not every record will include all of these details. And because any record can contain errors, you should compare

what you find with other sources. A baptism record, draft card or death certificate might confirm a birth date. Sometimes these later records conflict with information in the birth record. In that case, look at all the evidence to determine which answer is best supported by reliable sources.

The clues in a birth record can boost your research in many directions. The date and place of birth can help you follow a family in census records. The birthplace gives you a location to dig for more information. The golden nugget that keeps genealogists panning for birth records, though, is identifying the child's parents. Not only does this yield names for your pedigree chart, it provides hard-to-find evidence of relationships between people who lived long ago. If you're lucky enough to find the mother's maiden name, you've opened up a whole new branch on your tree. Details about the parents' ages and birthplaces may forge connections with even earlier generations.

Birth record coverage

Today we depend on birth certificates as identification for driver's licenses, passports and other documents. But the idea of a birth certificate for every child is a relatively modern concept. Until the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many states lacked clear regulations for birth records. Learning when registration laws took effect where your ancestor was born is the first step to a successful search.

The towns of New England win the prize for the earliest birth registers. Connecticut, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island town records date from the 1600s, with Vermont and Maine right behind. Some town records list all the children in a family together. Many larger cities, including New Orleans, Philadelphia, Boston, New York and Baltimore, began keeping vital records in the 1800s.

Eventually, most states passed laws requiring counties to collect birth and death information, but the laws were often difficult to enforce. Kentucky counties began recording births in 1852, but stopped 10 years later. Even when the law

stuck, compliance frequently lagged. In Ohio, which initiated county records in 1867, the job of collecting information typically fell to busy doctors or tax assessors, so many births went unrecorded.

Massachusetts was the first to mandate birth registration at the state level in 1841. New Jersey followed in 1848. By 1912, most states required births to be recorded. The last states to enact statewide birth registration laws were Georgia in 1919 and New Mexico in 1920. See a list of years statewide birth records started in each state at <familytreemagazine.com/info/recordreferences>.

Inconsistent birth records created problems when the Social Security Act was passed in 1935. Thousands of people born in the late 1800s and early 1900s found they lacked documentation needed for a Social Security card. This led to a rising number of delayed birth certificates issued in the 1940s. People often requested delayed birth certificates where they lived at the time, rather than where they were born, so search in both places. Delayed birth certificates are usually filed separately from infant certificates.

You also might find an amended birth certificate, with information added or corrected at a later time. If a certificate didn't originally contain the child's name, or the name was changed, a form attached to the original certificate may clarify it. The supplement becomes part of the official record.

Due to privacy concerns, some states limit access to birth records. Every state sets its own rules for issuing copies. At

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one end of the spectrum are states with open access, including North Carolina, Washington, Ohio, Kentucky and Vermont. Other states permit access to older records, but restrict more recent ones. Arizona, Illinois and New York are among those that regulate copies of birth records fewer than 75 years old. Virginia and many others set the limit at 100 years. At the opposite end of the spectrum, all Nevada, Iowa and Colorado birth records are closed to the public.

Researchers requesting restricted records may need a government ID, proof of close kinship to the individual and/or a notarized signature. A few states, such as California, Texas and Wisconsin, offer uncertified informational copies or abstracts (Texas calls them "verifications") for genealogical use. Fortunately, there are bright spots on the accessibility front. Pennsylvania, previously a "closed" state, recently passed a law opening records 105 years after the birth.

Accessing birth records

Now that you know your ancestor's birth record might have been created at the city, county or state level, how do you find it? A good starting point is the FamilySearch US Research Wiki <www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States>. Click the Vital Records link and scroll to the link for your state. On the state page, scroll down for a description of birth record availability, links to online databases and finding aids, and places where records are held. At subscription site Ancestry.com <ancestry.com>, browse the Family History Wiki Vital Records listings (under Learning Center, select Family History Wiki, and then click the Vital Records link). Another valuable finding aid, Cyndi's List <cyndislist.com/births>, provides links to birth and baptism records. Depending what you discover, you may be able to get the record:

■ **ONLINE:** FamilySearch.org <www.familysearch.org> has numerous free databases of birth and baptism records. To find them, click on United States at the bottom of the main Search page, and enter births in the Filter By Collection Name box. Some databases include digital images of older birth registers. Because additions are still being made to many of these collections, if you don't find your ancestor's record, look for more information about the years and localities covered.

Popular subscription genealogy sites have birth and baptism collections as well. Search Ancestry.com's Birth, Baptism and Christening collection <search.ancestry.com/search/category.aspx?cat=123>, which has indexes and/or

FAST FACTS: BIRTH RECORDS

- **EARLIEST STATEWIDE REGISTRATION:** Massachusetts, 1841
- **LATEST STATEWIDE REGISTRATION:** New Mexico, 1920
- **LOCATION OF OFFICIAL RECORDS:** State department of health or vital statistics, state archives, county courthouse, town hall
- **PRIMARY SOURCE DETAILS:** child's name, date and place of birth; parents' names, residence and occupations
- **SECONDARY SOURCE DETAILS:** parents' ages and birthplaces
- **SEARCH TERMS:** name of state, county or town plus birth records genealogy
- **FIND IT IN THE FAMILYSEARCH CATALOG:** In the Places search box, enter the state name, followed by county. In the results, scroll down to Vital Records.
- **ALTERNATE AND SUBSTITUTE RECORDS:** baptism records, Social Security files, Bibles and home sources, marriage records, censuses, death records, obituaries, tombstones, military records, immigration and naturalization records

AT A GLANCE:

BIRTH CERTIFICATE

N. B.—In case of more than one child at a birth, a SEPARATE RETURN must be made for each, and the number of each child, in order of birth, stated

PLACE OF BIRTH County of <u>Franklin</u> Township of <u>Marion</u> or Village of _____ or City of _____		STATE OF OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH DIVISION OF VITAL STATISTICS CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH 11273	
Registration District No. <u>392</u> File No. _____		Primary Registration District No. <u>4596</u> Registered No. <u>999</u>	
No. <u>85</u> <u>Keane Ave.</u> St. _____ Ward _____ (If birth occurred in a hospital or institution, give NAME instead of street and number)			
FULL NAME OF CHILD <u>William Steele</u>		[If child is not yet named, make supplemental report, as directed]	
Sex of Child <u>Male</u>	Twin, triplet or other? <u>-</u> (To be answered only in event of plural births)	Number in order of birth <u>-</u>	Legitimate? <u>yes</u>
Date of birth <u>Feb 2</u> 19 <u>31</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)			
FATHER FULL NAME <u>Homer Steele</u>		MOTHER FULL MAIDEN NAME <u>Emma Scheibel</u> 1	
RESIDENCE Including P. O. Address <u>85 Keane Ave.</u>		RESIDENCE Including P. O. Address <u>85 Keane Ave.</u>	
COLOR or RACE <u>White</u>	AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>37 yr.</u> (Years)	COLOR or RACE <u>White</u>	AGE AT LAST BIRTHDAY <u>36 yrs</u> (Years)
Birthplace (city or place) <u>Cheshire, Ohio</u> 2		Birthplace (city or place) <u>Columbus Ohio</u>	
OCCUPATION a. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as spinner, sawyer, bookkeeper, etc. <u>Shipping clerk</u>		OCCUPATION d. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as housekeeper, typist, nurse, clerk, etc. <u>Housewife</u>	
b. Industry or business in which work was done, as silk mill, sawmill, bank, etc. <u>International Island Co.</u>		e. Industry or business in which work was done, as own home, lawyer's office, silk mill, etc. _____	
c. Date (month and year) last engaged in this work <u>Feb 2</u> 19 <u>31</u>		f. Date (month and year) last engaged in this work <u>Feb 2</u> 19 <u>31</u>	
g. Total time (years) spent in this work <u>14</u>		h. Total time (years) spent in this work <u>18 yr</u>	
Number of children of this mother (At time of this birth and including this child)		(a) Born alive and now living <u>5</u>	(c) Stillborn <u>0</u>
		(b) Born alive but now dead _____	Is child congenitally deformed? <u>no</u>
			Was Prophylactic against Ophthalmia Neonatorum used? <u>yes</u>
If stillborn, period of gestation _____ { months or weeks		Cause of stillbirth _____	
		{ Before labor _____	
		{ During labor _____	
CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN OR MIDWIFE			
I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child, who was <u>alive</u> at <u>2:48 A.</u> m. on the date above stated. (Born Alive or Stillborn)			
When there was no attending physician or midwife, then the father, householder, etc. should make this return.		5	
Given name added from a supplemental report _____		(Signed) <u>Andrew Rogers</u> M. D.	
(Date of) _____		or <u>Theresa M. P.H.</u> Midwife	
		Address <u>187 E. State St.</u>	
		Filed <u>F. W. Kropp</u>	
REGISTRAR		REGISTRAR	
FEB 3 1931			

- 1** A mother's maiden name is a valuable find. Now you can search marriage records and earlier census records of Columbus, Ohio, for Emma Scheibel in her parent's household.
- 2** The father's age and city of birth suggests where to look for him in birth records. Determine the name of the county, then search county registers.
- 3** Occupational clues provide interest for your family history. This Depression-era record names the glass factory where the father worked.
- 4** The number of children born to the mother indicates William had four older siblings, helping you reconstruct the family.
- 5** Issued one day after the birth and signed by the attending physician, this original record contains primary (firsthand) information prized by genealogists.

CITATION FOR THIS RECORD: Ohio Department of Health, birth certificate 11273 (1931), William Steele; Division of Vital Statistics, Columbus.

AT A GLANCE:

REGISTER OF BIRTHS

1

Register of Births, within the District of *Washington*

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Lines Numbered.	Date of Birth.	Name of Child if Named.	White.	Colored.	SEX.		BORN.		Place of Birth.	Father's Name in full.	Father's Occupation.
					Male.	Female.	Alive.	Dead.			
239	Decr 12	George H. S.	1		1		1		Mason Co	Lewis Richard	Lanman
240	Nov 26	Francisco	1		1		1		"	Ambrose Roush	"
241	Decr 16	Leordelia	1		1		1		"	John B. Rayburn	"

2

3

For the County of *Mason* in the year ending 31st December, 1868

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Father's Residence.	Mother's Name in full.	How many at a birth.	Deformity or any circumstances of interest.	SOURCES OF INFORMATION.	
				Name of Person giving information of birth.	Relation of Informant to Person born, whether of kindred and its degree, head of a family, friend, neighbor, mid-wife, &c.
Mason Co	Elizabeth Richard	1		Lewis Richard	Father
"	Susan Roush	1		Ambrose Roush	"
"	Sarah J. Rayburn	1		J. B. Rayburn	"

4

5

1 Get the full record: Many registers span two pages, so check for a second page. If your entry of interest is near the bottom, also copy column headings across the top.

2 The year of birth isn't stated on Francisco's entry line. To find it, see the title at the top of the second page.

3 Read other entries on the page to interpret ditto marks; here, they indicate Francisco was born in Mason County.

4 This register identifies mothers by their married names. You could follow up by searching Mason County marriage records for Ambrose Roush with a bride named Susan.

5 Because the informant was Francisco's father, you know this record contains trustworthy primary information.



TIP: When birth records are available from both county and state offices, counties often can fill your request faster and for a lower fee.

CITATION FOR THIS RECORD: West Virginia Archives and History, "Vital Research Records Project," index and images, West Virginia Division of Culture and History (<http://www.wvculture.org/vrr> : accessed 11 December 2013), Birth Records search, entry for Francisco Roush (1868).

record images for various states and time periods. World Vital Records <www.worldvitalrecords.com> also has a number of birth indexes. If you have New England roots, explore the early town records available at <www.americanancestors.org>.

Several states, counties and even large cities have created online birth record indexes or begun digitizing older records. West Virginia has added thousands of births prior to 1913 to its database at <www.wvculture.org/vrr>. Arizona births before 1937 are at <genealogy.az.gov>. The Washington State Archives offers county birth returns at <www.digitalarchives.wa.gov>. The Minnesota Historical Society maintains a birth certificates index at <www.mnhs.org/genealogy>. For Chicago-area birth certificates from 1872 to 1939, see <www.cookcountygenealogy.com>. Search online for the locality and the words *birth records genealogy*.

■ **MICROFILM:** If you can't get the record you need online, it may be available on microfilm through FamilySearch's online catalog <www.familysearch.org/catalog-search>. Enter the state and county (such as *Illinois, Cook*) in the Place search box. Scroll to the Vital Records heading. For a small fee, you can order the film for viewing at your local FamilySearch Center.

■ **CITY AND COUNTY OFFICES:** Because most early birth records were created at the local level, requesting the record from a local office can be one of your best strategies. The originals might still be at the town hall, probate court, orphan's court or county clerk's office. To find the right office, search online or consult a published guide such as *The Family Tree Sourcebook: Your Essential Guide to American County and Town Sources* (Family Tree Books). It's a good idea to contact the office before mailing in a request for your ancestor's record, to confirm the address and make sure you've included the correct payment.

■ **STATE OFFICES AND ARCHIVES:** You'll typically find state-held birth records at the department of health or vital statistics. Google *Tennessee vital records*, for example, or consult the list of links to state offices at <www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm>. Alternatively, if the health department has turned its older records over to the state archives or historical society, you could find the record there. Some state archives have birth records or indexes online, so check the archives' website or the FamilySearch Wiki for information.

Most offices explain their request policies and restrictions on their websites, offering mail-in and/or online ordering where allowed by law. Fees vary, ranging from a few dollars up to about \$30. You'll need to provide information such as the child's name, birth date, birthplace and at least one parent's name, although some offices will do searches for an extra fee. For speedier but costlier service, you can order certificates from VitalChek, <www.vitalchek.com>. VitalChek can't bypass the rules for restricted records, but it can expedite the ordering process. Once you locate the record, write down where you found it. Citing the source now saves frustration later, and validates your research. For citation tips, see <familytreemagazine.com/article/now-what-cite-seeing>.

Websites

- **American Ancestors** <www.americanancestors.org>
- **Ancestry.com: Birth, Baptism and Christening**
<search.ancestry.com/search/category.aspx?cat=123>
- **Ancestry.com: Family History Wiki**
<ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=Category:U.S._Birth,_Marriage,_and_Death_Records>
- **Arizona Genealogy Birth and Death Certificates**
<genealogy.az.gov>
- **Colorado Historical Records Index Search**
<www.colorado.gov/pacific/archives/archives-search>
- **Cyndi's List: Births & Baptisms** <cyndislist.com/births>
- **FamilySearch US Birth Records Wiki**
<www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Birth_Records>
- **Linkpendium** <www.linkpendium.com>
- **Massachusetts Vital Records Search (1841-1910)** <www.sec.state.ma.us/vitalrecordssearch/VitalRecordsSearch.aspx>
- **Minnesota Birth Certificate Index** <people.mnhs.org/bci>
- **Missouri Birth and Death Database, pre-1910**
<www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/birthdeath>
- **Mocavo** <www.mocavo.com/records>
- **One-Step Web Pages** <www.stevemorse.org>
- **Oregon Historical Records Index** <genealogy.state.or.us>
- **South Dakota Birth Records Search** <apps.sd.gov/applications/ph14over100birthrec/index.aspx>
- **USGenWeb Project** <usgenweb.org>
- **VitalChek** <www.vitalchek.com>
- **Washington State Digital Archives**
<www.digitalarchives.wa.gov>
- **West Virginia Birth Records Search**
<www.wvculture.org/vrr/va_bcsearch.aspx>
- **Where to Write for Vital Records**
<www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm>
- **Wisconsin Genealogy Index**
<www.wisconsinhistory.org/vitalrecords>
- **World Vital Records** <www.worldvitalrecords.com>

Publications and Resources

- *Courthouse Research for Family Historians* by Christine Rose (CR Publications)
- *International Vital Records Handbook*, sixth edition, by Thomas Jay Kemp (Genealogical Publishing Co.)
- *The Family Tree Sourcebook: Your Essential Guide to American County and Town Sources* by the editors of *Family Tree Magazine* (Family Tree Books)
- *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy*, third edition, by Val D. Greenwood (Genealogical Publishing Co.)
- *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy*, third edition, edited by Loretto D. Szucs and Sandra H. Luebking (Ancestry)

Put It Into Practice

1. What three levels of government may have recorded an ancestor's birth?

2. Birth records typically provide:

- a. evidence of parent/child relationships
- b. primary information about where and when the birth occurred
- c. names of the child's siblings
- d. a and b

EXERCISE A: Go to FamilySearch's database of Massachusetts Births (1841-1915) <www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1536925> and search for Elouisa Barnum. View the record for the child born in Monterey, Berkshire County.

1. When was Elouisa born?

2. What was Elouisa's father's name, and where was he born?

What was Elouisa's mother's maiden name, and where was she born?

4. Write a citation for this record.

EXERCISE B: Pick an ancestor whose birth or baptism record you want to find. Based on his likely year and place of birth, identify three resources to search for his record.

Birth record substitutes

If you don't know your ancestor's birthplace, or he was born before births were recorded, take heart: A variety of records created over a person's lifetime can provide evidence of his birth, including:

■ **BAPTISM RECORDS:** An infant's baptismal record is the next best thing to a birth register. The informants were usually the child's parents and the minister or priest. You'll typically learn the child's name, dates of birth and baptism, parents' names and residence, and godparents or sponsors. Names of the sponsors, who were often relatives, might reveal the mother's maiden name and lead you to extended family.

Baptism records could be in any number of places—at the original church or a church it merged with, a denominational archive or a local archive. Some early church records have been published in books or on microfilm, which you can rent through FamilySearch. If you contact a church directly, remember that the church is under no obligation to supply records. Courtesy and perhaps a small donation go a long way.

■ **SOCIAL SECURITY:** Since the late 1930s, the Social Security Administration has collected birth information on US citizens. It's possible to find Social Security records for people born in the late 1800s. A Social Security application, or SS-5, contains the person's full name, date and place of birth, father's name, mother's maiden name and signature. Because the person had to supply proof of this information, Social Security records tend to be reliable. The Social Security Death Index (SSDI), available on Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org, identifies many people who've died since 1962. To get the most out of a Social Security record, order the SS-5 application online at <<https://secure.ssa.gov/apps9/eFOIA-FEWeb/internet/main.jsp>>.

■ **HOME SOURCES:** If you've found a family Bible record for your ancestors, you're a step ahead on the evidence trail. Notations of births, marriages and deaths in a Bible can fill gaps where few other records exist. Bibles tended to migrate with the family, so check archival collections in all the areas where relatives lived. Find tips on using Bible records in our Spring 2013 *Discover Your Roots* <shopfamilytree.com/discover-your-roots-spring-2013-fmsp13>.

Scrapbooks, baby books, letters, certificates of baptism, hospital souvenirs and the like are valuable sources of birth information. Ask older relatives and cousins if they know of such treasures. You can carefully scan and photocopy the documents and share them with other family members.



TIP: If you find your ancestor's name in an index to birth records—not linked to a record image—note the volume and certificate number so you can request a copy of the record or find it on microfilm.

MORE ONLINE

Free Web Content

- Best US genealogy websites of 2013 <familytreemagazine.com/article/best-us-genealogy-websites-of-2013>
- State Sources: December 2013 podcast <familytreemagazine.com/article/episode67>
- Vital Records Chart downloadable guide <familytreemagazine.com/info/recordreferences>

For Plus Members

- Childbirth practices in the past <familytreemagazine.com/article/we-deliver-for-you>
- Five-step guide to finding vital records <familytreemagazine.com/article/vital-signs>
- Vital records resources <familytreemagazine.com/article/the-facts-of-life-vital-records>

ShopFamilyTree.com

- Researching Your US Ancestors' Births, Marriages and Deaths Online webinar <shopfamilytree.com/vital-records-research-online-recording>
- State Research Guides CD <shopfamilytree.com/state-research-guides-cd-revised>
- Using Birth Records two-week course <familytreeuniversity.com/using-birth-records>

■ **DEATH RECORDS:** Ironically, your best source of birth information might be the records created after someone died. An Indiana woman born in 1840 won't have an official birth record, but there should be a certificate for her 1910 death. Most death records note a date and place of birth, and many also give the parents' names and birthplaces. While this can be a great find, remember that the informant generally had only secondhand knowledge of the deceased's origins. Compare the birth data you find on a death certificate with other records. Official death records are generally available from the same offices as birth records. For more help, see our Death Records Workbook <shopfamilytree.com/genealogy-workbook-death-records-digital-download-t1785>.

■ **CEMETERIES:** Tombstone photos and transcriptions are increasingly easy to find, thanks to sites like Find A Grave <www.findagrave.com> and BillionGraves <www.billiongraves.com>. A person's tombstone might give a birth date or year, or express age in years, months and days. Subtracting the age from the date of death yields the date of birth (a handy Birthdate Calculator at <www.searchforancestors.com/utility> simplifies the math). Keep in mind that engravers sometimes made mistakes, and the same goes for modern transcribers.

■ **MARRIAGE RECORDS:** Depending on laws at the time, valuable firsthand information such as ancestors' ages, birthdates, birthplaces and parents' names might appear on marriage licenses. Note that a license may be separate from the return that certifies the marriage took place. FamilySearch has microfilmed and/or digitized many marriage records. Originals are usually at the town hall or county courthouse.

■ **NEWSPAPERS:** Birth announcements are uncommon in 19th century newspapers, although you may find one for a prominent family. They became popular by the mid-20th century and generally note the parents' names, baby's gender and date of birth, and the hospital. Obituaries also might mention a date and place of birth, with clues to parents or siblings. The state archives or a local library might have microfilmed local papers and/or birth indexes. Search newspapers at the free Chronicling America <chroniclingamerica.loc.gov> and subscription sites GenealogyBank <www.genealogybank.com> and Newspapers.com <www.newspapers.com>.

■ **CENSUSES:** Federal census records since 1850 give the name, age and general birthplace of everyone in the

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE ANSWERS

- 1 City or town, county and state offices have all created birth records at various times in history. 2 d. 3 True. **EXERCISE A** 1 August 12, 1863. 2 William S. Barnum, born Stockbridge, Mass. 3 Roxanna P. Townsend, born So. Tyringham, Mass. 4 "Massachusetts, Births, 1841-1915," index and images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/FXZS-L3Z>), accessed 10 December 2013), Elouisa T. Barnum, 12 August 1863.

household. The 1900 census goes a step beyond, noting the month and year of birth. Because you seldom know who spoke to the census taker, treat census information as hints to the birth and look for verifying records. Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, findmypast.com <www.findmypast.com>, HeritageQuest Online <www.heritagequestonline.com>, Archives.com <www.archives.com> and MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com> all have indexed US census collections.

■ **MILITARY RECORDS:** If your ancestor served in the military or registered for the draft, another research trail opens. Union Civil War draft lists give the registrant's birthplace and age on a specific date. WWI draft registrations note the person's date of birth, while cards for the WWII "Old Man's Draft" give date and place of birth. All three collections are available on Ancestry.com. Pension records for soldiers and their widows contain a wealth of genealogical information. The subscription site Fold3.com <www.fold3.com> is a good launching point for military research.

■ **IMMIGRATION RECORDS:** Clues to an immigrant's birth date and birthplace might be in a ship's passenger list, declaration of intention or naturalization certificate. Online, Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org and findmypast.com have extensive immigration and naturalization collections. The search forms at <www.stevemorse.org> help you search Ellis Island, Castle Garden and other immigrant ports of entry. Check state archives and courthouses near your ancestor's residence for naturalization papers. You can order certificates issued between 1906 and 1956 from <www.uscis.gov/genealogy>.

The quest to discover the details of your ancestor's birth is exciting and fulfilling. Armed with new knowledge of when and where she was born, you'll be poised to research her parents and extend the branches of your family tree. ■

BIRTH RECORD WORKSHEET

Name of ancestor at birth _____

Other names used _____

Variant spellings _____

Date of birth (exact or approximate) _____

Place of birth (if known) _____

Places of residence later in life _____

State birth registration start _____ City/county birth registration dates _____

Contact to request official record (if existing) _____

Restrictions on record access (if any) _____

Online databases to search _____

Microfilm to order _____

Social Security number (if applicable) _____

Religious affiliation for baptism record (if known) _____

BIRTH EXTRACTION FORM

Source citation: _____

Repository of original: _____

Date accessed: _____

Birth record file number: _____

Child's full name: _____	Father's birthplace: _____	Number of children born to mother: _____
Place of birth: _____	Father's color or race: _____	Number of children living: _____
Date of birth: _____	Father's occupation: _____	Informant: _____
Name of hospital (if given): _____	Mother's name: _____	Informant's relationship: _____
Sex: _____	Mother's age or date of birth: _____	Informant's address: _____
Twin or multiple birth? _____	Mother's birthplace: _____	Date record was filed: _____
Legitimate? _____	Mother's color or race: _____	If supplemental record, name of child: _____
Father's name: _____	Mother's occupation: _____	If supplemental record, other information: _____
Father's age or date of birth: _____	Residence of parents: _____	_____