Genealog

Wills & Probate on Ancestry

Wills and probate records are rich sources of information for family historians. Ancestry and FamilySearch have numerous collections of records in this category. This handout will focus on what you can find and how to find them on Ancestry.com

Remember, if a person died without a will, that is called "intestate." That does not mean there is not a probate package to find.

If the ancestor owned land (look at census records to see if they had a land value or owned land), they likely have a probate package.



What is in a Probate Package?

Here is what probate records might contain for your ancestor:

- Wills If there was a will, it is typically found within the package.
- Family Relationships: Wills often mentions relatives like spouses, children, and siblings, confirming family ties.
- Property and Assets: These documents detail the deceased's belongings, providing insight into their wealth and lifestyle.
- Debts and Obligations: Any debts owed by the deceased and promises made are usually recorded.
- Executor and Witnesses: The will names someone to conduct its instructions and often lists witnesses, giving clues about the deceased's social circle.
- Guardianship of Minor Children: If the deceased had children, the will may designate guardians.

These documents detail the legal process of managing the deceased's estate, providing more information on assets and debts. This process can go on for years. Be sure to document a timeline, putting the documents you find in chronological order. This will help you to understand the ancestors story.



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Finding Wills & Probate on Ancestry

Once logged into your Ancestry account go to:

- Search, Card Catalog, choose Court, Land, Wills & Financial, then Wills, Estates & Guardian
- From there you can add **filters** to drill into your location, and time.
- Next **sort by record count** in the upper right corner.

Filters

✓ Court, Land, Wills & Financial

Often these records are held at the state level in the U.S., so, you might not need to drill into the county level.

Card Catalog

Searchable listing of all record collections

■ West Virginia, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1724-1985

English Origins of American Colonists

Fifty Puritan ancestors, 1628-1660 : genealogical notes,

Collections for a genealogy of the noble families of Henzey, Tyttery, and Tyzack (De Hennezel, De Thiétry, and Du Thisac)

■ Records of the Halls of Wallingford and the Buckinghams of Wills, Estates & Guardian Records
Milford

American Wills and Administrations

Search entire "Wills, Estates & Guardian Records" Category

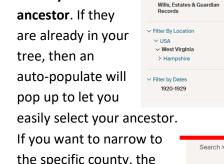
Category

By sorting by record count, it raises the biggest collection to the top, often the state level records we want. In this case it is West Virginia, U.S. Wills and Probate Records, 1724-1985.

Results 1-25 of 26

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- **Drill into the** record set you want.
- Here you can **fill in** the information about your ancestor. If they tree, then an auto-populate will pop up to let you



- the specific county, the right side collection filter may help you. Try it both ways, with and without this filter.
- Do not forget to try various spellings of your ancestor.



From there, it is just a matter of playing with the filters to narrow your results.

See this episode to learn more about finding more estate records on FamilySearch with the Full Text Search.

