

Court Records

- [Court Records in the USGenWeb Archives for Somerset County](#)

History of Courts in Pennsylvania

A Brief History of PA Courts, follows, outlines the development of the Pennsylvania Court system - good information on what court records to search for genealogical information.

For general information including how to obtain copies of court records, specifically: Orphan's Court (1682 to present), Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace (1722 to present), and the Court of Common Pleas (1722 to present), please contact the Somerset County Court House. Note: For information on obtaining records prior to 1795 - see the [Bedford County, PAMGenWeb](#) website.

Somerset County Court House
111 East Union St.
Somerset, PA 15501

Orphan's Court: [Family Search: Adoption Info Link](#) / Pennsylvania

Courts in PA

Date	Name of Court	Description
1682 - 1722	County Courts	Original three counties - later called the provincial court. Dealt with equity and estate issues, civil and criminal matters - no capital crimes. The justices of the court also oversaw the orphan's court proceedings.
1682 to Present	Justice of the Peace courts	Justice of the peace courts were established for each township. They no longer exist in some counties. Types of records: Marriage
1682 to Present	Orphan's Courts	Dealt with orphan, guardianship and estate issues.
1684-1722	Provincial Court	Dealt with appeals from inferior courts, civil matters and criminal issues.
1697-1789	Admiralty Court	Dealt with issues of navigation and trade. In 1789 was turned over to federal courts.
1700 - 1780	Court for Trial of Negroes	Established in each county. Tried cases dealing with Negroes accused of committing crimes. Court was abolished in 1780.
1720 - 1735	Court of Chancery/Equity	Short lived court - little records exist.
1722 - Present	Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace	Criminal case entries, roads, appointment of civil officials, and tavern and peddler license issues.
1722 - Present	Court of Common Pleas	Countywide jurisdiction over criminal and civil cases including real estate, bankruptcy, tax collection, naturalization, and divorce.
1722 - Present	Supreme Court	Replaced the provincial court. Divided into districts for eastern, middle, northern, and western areas.
1811 - 1873	District Court	Essentially a court of the common pleas. Abolished in 1873.
1895 - Present	Superior Court	Intermediate Appellate court.
1903 - Present	Juvenile Court	Established in 1903 to administer offenses committed by children under the age of 16.

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Somerset County portion of the [PA GenWeb](#)