

Does My Court Record Exist?

Where To Find Out What County Court Records Exist and Then Read Them For Yourself

by Paula Gammell

So you need a marriage record – or will, or deed, or whatever – but you don't know whether those types of records even exist in your county.

What to do, what to do?

Folks, its not difficult to determine whether the county record you seek exists – in fact, its quite easy!

All you do is go here: <http://tn.gov/tsla/preservation/microfilmindex.htm>. You will see a list of all the Tennessee counties. Click on yours.

This brings you to a listing of *all* the records for that county (well, at least 99% of them), including marriages, wills, deeds, administrations, various court minutes, and so forth.

So, let's say you wonder whether Jefferson County has any marriages, say, pre-1800. Just click on Jefferson, then scroll down to Marriages, and you will see:

“Marriages Dec. 1792 – July 1881 Roll #23 35mm”

Yes, Jefferson County marriages *do* exist pre-1800; in fact they begin in December, 1792.

Now what?

Every one of the volumes you see listed has been microfilmed. In our example, those Jefferson County marriages are on Reel #23.

You can easily check this microfilm for yourself – *if* you are willing to spend a little money and/or do a little work. There are two ways you can do this.

1) *You may purchase any of these reels.* We see that Jefferson County Reel #23 is on 35mm film. The price for 35mm film (as of this writing) is \$25. You can go here for information about purchasing microfilm: http://tn.gov/tsla/preservation/microfilm_order.htm.

2) *You might be able to borrow the microfilm through inter-library loan.* Not all of those reels are available to loan, but many are. A list of the available ones is here: <http://tn.gov/tsla/history/county/ill-list.htm>. And we see that, yes, Reel #23, Jefferson County Marriages Dec. 1792 – July 1881, can be borrowed through inter-library loan. Specifics of the inter-library loan process are:

Loans can be made to any public or academic library in North America. The loan period is thirty days, and borrowers are limited to five rolls of film. Loans are made to a public or academic libraries [sic] for use on their premises only. There are no loan fees, but the borrower may be responsible for return postage.

So you now know: yes, Jefferson County marriages do exist for the time period you are interested in, and, yes, the reel containing those marriages is available through inter-library loan. You initiate the inter-library loan process at your local library. (Presumably your library will have a microfilm reader you can use.)

Is there anything else you should know? Well, remember that not all volumes are indexed within themselves – some may be; others won't be, particularly deeds. If there's a master index you'll need it, too.

So, remember these three sites:

- 1) To see what records exist for your county: <http://tn.gov/tsla/preservation/microfilmindex.htm>
- 2) To see whether the microfilm reel you need may be borrowed: <http://tn.gov/tsla/history/county/ill-list.htm>
- 3) To see how to purchase the microfilm: http://tn.gov/tsla/preservation/microfilm_order.htm

Now: *all* your questions should be answered regarding what records exist for your county! Study the list, print it out for future reference – and if you'd like to see the record for yourself, get going on inter-library loan or purchase.

Later we'll discuss other options.