



Record Group: Atlantic County
Subgroup: Clerk's Office
Series: Marriage Books, 1837-1885 and Index, 1837-1910
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[Content Note](#)

Legislative History

Recording of marriages on the county level was first required in New Jersey by "An Act Concerning Marriages," passed by the General Assembly on 4 March 1795 (see Acts of the Nineteenth General Assembly..., chap. 526, pp. 1004-7). This legislation stipulated that every justice of the peace and ordained minister file, for each marriage he performed, a certificate with the clerk of the county in which the marriage took place. The returns were then to be copied by the county clerk into a book kept solely for that purpose.

This procedure remained the basic method of public recording of marriages in New Jersey until March 1848, when "An Act relating to the registry and returns of births, marriages, and deaths, in the State of New Jersey" was passed into law (P.L. 1848, pp. 155-8). The 1848 legislation required municipal clerks to submit annual returns of vital records to the Secretary of State. It also stipulated that marriage records were to include certain additional vital information, such as the age, occupation, parents' names, and residence of each party, and the place of marriage.

Despite the initiation of state-level recording, direct filing of marriage returns with the county clerk was still required by law for another thirty years. It was not until 5 April 1878, when further vital records legislation was passed, that marriage officiants were relieved of this responsibility. The 1878 law required, instead, that officiants submit marriage certificates to municipal clerks or assessors beginning on June 1st of that year (P.L. 1878, chap. 239, pp. 354-9). The municipal officers, in turn, were directed to file the certificates with the Secretary of State.

Content Note

This series consists of a microfilm copy of both marriage books and their index as well as the original Book No. 2. Book A commenced with the creation of Atlantic County in 1837 and ends in December 1876. Book No. 2 begins with returns filed in January 1875 and ends in 1897. Despite the change of filing requirements in 1878, certain clerks continued recording returns for several years after that time. The index includes a section for each book, arranged by the first letter of the bride or groom's surname. Because the names are listed in page order, not alphabetically, researchers will need to scan the appropriate surname letter in order to find a reference. Knowing the year of the marriage will be useful, since this will typically narrow the search to one book or the other. However, researchers should note that the returns were recorded in the order they were received and many officiants sent in returns covering an entire year or multiple years. Finally, it should also be noted that the index includes references to non-resident marriage applications for the period 1897-1910. These later records are not part of this series, and it is uncertain as to whether the original applications survive.

Atlantic County Marriage Book A, covering the years 1837-1874 is still held by the Atlantic Clerk's Office. Books A

and 2 were published about 1932 as Atlantic County, New Jersey, Marriage Records by H. Stanley Craig (reprinted by Gloucester County Historical Society, 1979).

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