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### **Where do I find vital records?**

The Rhode Island State Archives holds statewide filings of birth and marriage records that are over 100 years old and death records over 50 years old. Birth and marriage filings less than 100 years old and deaths less than 50 years old are held by the Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Vital records (<http://www.health.ri.gov/chic/vital/index.php>) and the city or town where the event was initially recorded (<http://www.health.ri.gov/chic/vital/clerks.php>).

### **Which census records are available for research?**

The State Archives holds the 1774 colonial census, the 1777 military census, and federal censuses from 1790 through 1860. State census records available include 1865 through 1885 and 1905 through 1935.

### **Where do I find naturalization records and passenger lists?**

Naturalization records may be found at the following repositories:

Supreme Court Judicial Records Center  
Five Hill Street Pawtucket, R.I. 02860  
(401) 721-2640

<http://www.courts.ri.gov/JudicialRecordsCenter/default.aspx>

National Archives - New England Region  
380 Trapelo Road, Waltham, Ma 02154  
(781) 663 - 0130

[www.archives.gov/northeast/waltham/waltham.html](http://www.archives.gov/northeast/waltham/waltham.html)

Passenger Lists are held by the National Archives and those from the New England Region are located at the Waltham branch. New York passenger lists are at the National Archives branch in Pittsfield, Massachusetts

<http://www.archives.gov/frc/pittsfield/> Passenger lists for the Port of Providence are held by the Rhode Island Historical Society

<http://www.rihs.org/Passenger.htm>

### **Where do I find land evidence and probate records?**

Land evidence records and probate records are maintained at the individual city and town halls in Rhode Island.

<http://sos.ri.gov/rihrab/direct.html>

### **Where do I find information on cemeteries?**

Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission

<http://www.historicalcemeteries.ri.gov/>

Rhode Island Cemetery Transcription Project Master Index

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~rigenweb/Cemetery2/cemindex.html>

Rhode Island Veterans Cemetery

<http://www.vets.ri.gov/>

Catholic Cemeteries

<http://www.diocesepvd.org/departments/catholic-cemeteries/>

### **Where do I find legislative records?**

#### **PUBLIC LAWS, RESOLUTIONS AND LOCAL ACTS**

Public Laws from 1638 to the present, resolutions from 1728 to the present and local acts from 1790 to the present (except the two most recent legislative sessions) are held by the Rhode Island State Archives. Public Laws passed during the two most recent sessions are maintained at the Secretary of State's Public Information Division in the State House, Room 38.

#### **FAILED LEGISLATION**

Failed legislation from 1899-present is available at the Rhode Island State Archives. Additionally, a copy of all legislation introduced during the years 1989 to the present is available at the State Library on the second floor of the State House.

## VETOED LEGISLATION

Vetoed legislation for the years 1950 to the present (except the two most recent legislative sessions) is held by the Rhode Island State Archives. Legislation vetoed during the two most recent sessions is maintained at the Secretary of State's Public Information Division in the State House, Room 38.

## PROCLAMATIONS

The Rhode Island State Archives hold Governor's proclamations from 1902 to 1994.

## Who holds Rhode Island divorce records?

Divorce records commencing in 1749 are maintained by the Supreme Court Judicial Records Center in Pawtucket, R.I. You may contact them at 401-721-2640 or <http://www.courts.ri.gov/JudicialRecordsCenter/default.aspx> Other court records are also held by this repository.

## Where can I find adoption records?

Adoptions are governed by Rhode Island General Law §15-7  
<http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE15/15-7/INDEX.HTM>

The administration of adoptions were done by municipal probate courts from 1866 to 1944. After that, adoptions were handled by Family Court.  
See 1944 Chapter 1484

## Where would I find military records?

Personnel records of all federal military units may be found at:

Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)  
9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132  
(314) 538-4987/fax-(314) 538-4988  
<http://www.archives.gov/research/military/veterans/>

Records of state militias and regiments raised for specific conflicts from the French and Indian War up to World War I may be found at the Rhode Island State Archives. Discharge records of individuals may be found, if filed, in the individual city and town halls. The Rhode Island National Guard maintains the personnel files of its members from 1917 to the present. For records of discharged personnel call 401-275-4179.

## Does the Rhode Island State Archives have obituaries?

No. Obituaries may be found in various newspapers that we do not have in our holdings. The Providence Journal on microfilm is available at some public

libraries throughout the State of Rhode Island. The Providence Public Library holds microfilm copies of the Providence Journal beginning in 1829.

<http://www.provlib.org/node/108>

Additionally, the RI Historical Society is a source for Rhode Island newspapers <http://www.rihs.org/refnews&per.htm>.

### **How did Rhode Island get its name?**

An explanation is found on the web page of the Rhode Island State Library at <http://sos.ri.gov/library/history/name/>

### **I have discovered a spoon attributed to the Count de Rochambeau. What is its value?**

Information about this item may be found on the web site of the Rhode Island Historical Society at [http://www.rihs.org/museums\\_faq\\_objects.html](http://www.rihs.org/museums_faq_objects.html)

### **I have discovered what appears to be a 1780 bill from the State of Rhode Island. What is this currency worth?**



While the “bill” is quite interesting from a historical perspective, the General Treasurer and Attorney General concluded in 1995, that such bills do “not constitute a valid claim for payment by the State”. The only value the note would have, therefore, is as a curiosity, or to a collector. You could check with a dealer in coins and early paper currency for a value.

You may be interested to know that the Rhode Island government issued these instruments as bills of public credit, which at the time were redeemable as legal tender. Other colonies and states also produced similar emissions during the period of the Revolution. In July 1780, the Rhode Island General Assembly also passed legislation that any person convicted of counterfeiting, or knowingly passing counterfeits of these bills, was to “be adjudged a felon, and suffer death,

without benefit of clergy". In addition, anyone who altered the bills to increase the denomination or passed the altered bills, was to "be sentenced to the pillory, and have both his or her ears cut off, and nailed to the pillory; and be publicly whipped thirty-nine lashes on his or her naked back, well laid on". Moreover, anyone who altered the bills was to pay 500 pounds; half to be used by the State and the other half for the use of the discoverer; and the offender to pay double damages to the aggrieved party, plus all the costs of prosecution and conviction. Finally, if the offender did not have the money to pay the penalties, then the offender was to "be sold as a servant, for any term not exceeding seven years".

### **When did Rhode Island adopt an anchor as its seal?**

In 1647, the General Court of Election held at Portsmouth, May 19 – 21 declared that "*the Seale of the Province shall be an Anchor.*"

(Rhode Island Colony Records, 1646 - 1669, Part II, p. 213, mms. 163)

A sketch of a shield bearing an anchor appears at the end of the entry and is presumed to have been drawn by William Dyer, General Recorder.

