

Rockingham County Personal Documentation

[Collection Summary](#)

Title	Rockingham County Personal Documentation
Collection Reference Code	Rcpd
Inclusive Dates	1862-1950
Document Creator	Rockingham County Circuit Court
Extent	1.5 linear feet; 12 bound volumes
Language	English
Location	Rockingham County Circuit Court
Access and Restrictions	Portions of this collection have access restrictions based on the Code of Virginia § 63.2-1245. See notations in content list for details.

<p>Bio/Historical Note</p>	<p>The first law on adoption in the US was not passed until 1851. The Massachusetts Adoption of Children Act was not only the first adoption law, but also the first law to protect the interest of the adoptive child. This law marked a fundamental shift in society, as during the mid 19th century novel notions of childhood developed and emphasis on reform of the individual increased. Benevolent Organization's focused on establishing orphanages, were they could work to reform the individual prior to their arrival in a new home. The Civil War brought a halt to most adoptions, which led to the overcrowding of many of these orphanages. The precursor to modern foster care developed out of the need to move children from these overcrowded orphanages. As the century progress, several states instituted legislation on adoption, and further regulated the process. By the 1990s, adoption became a highly regulated system with a degree of openness.</p> <p>Naturalization is defined as, "the admittance of a foreigner to the citizenship of a country." According to the National Archives, prior to September 27, 1906 any court of record could grant United States citizenship. However, after this date the responsibility for naturalization proceedings was transferred to the federal courts. Throughout the early to mid 20th century naturalization was a two-step process. After residing in the US for two years, an individual could file a declaration of intention to become a citizen. After three years, the individual could petition for naturalization. Throughout the twentieth century immigration became a contentious topic. In 1924 the Johnson-Reed Act, or Immigration Act, was enacted. Nationalism and xenophobia fueled concerns of foreign-born peoples taking up residence in the U.S. This reduced the number of individuals allowed into the nation, and as a result, the immigration influx into the area dwindled. Immigration quotas were eventually repealed during the 1960s, yet, even today immigration remains a hotly debated topic.</p> <p>Historically, couples interested in marrying were required to fulfill several prerequisites before the State allowed them to enter into matrimony. Each party had to be of a certain age, must prove their identity, and provide evidence for the potential to provide for their family. It has been argued that such measures were attempts made by the State for political and social regulation and power. In determining eligibility for marriage, the State could effectively police unwanted unions and enforce adherence to their definition of "acceptable" unions. The process for marrying could be quite arduous, requiring the individual to obtain petitions to obtain marriage licenses, certifications of their age/date of birth, and written consent from their families.</p>
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<p>Scope and Content</p>	<p>The following collection is broken down into five series: Adoption Records 1892-1950; Citizenship Records; Register of Births 1862-1894; Marriage Records; Register of Death 1870-1894. The Adoption Records contain completed adoption case files from 1892-1950. Within each file, one can find the birth name of the adopted child, information on who the birth mother and/or father was, as well as information on the adoptive parents. Files also contain character witness statements and social worker reports, all related to determining the suitability of the potential adoptive parents. Due to the code of VA section 63.2-1245, these records are not eligible for use or view by the general public and are only to be made available to attorneys of record, social service officials, court officials, and to such other persons as the circuit court shall direct in specific cases by order of the circuit court entered in accordance with § 63.2-1246.</p> <p>The second series, Citizenship Records, is further divided into two subseries; Petitions for Naturalization and Declarations of intent, based on the provenance of these records. Typically, an individual wishing to gain citizenship during the 20th century would first fill out a Petition for Naturalization, then the Declaration of Intent. Petitions typically listed the full name of the petitioner, their present address of residence, occupation, date of birth, the date on which they emigrated, the country from which they emigrated, where they arrived and on what vessel, a list of any children they had and finally, from what government they wished to renounce citizenship. Within this volume there are but two completed petitions, both of which are dated 1909. Declarations of Intent list similar information, however, they do provide detailed descriptions of physical characteristics of said person, including; skin color, complexion, height, weight, hair color, eye color, and any visible marks. In the entire volume, there is but one form completed, which is dated 1909.</p> <p>There are eight books containing Birth records housed by the circuit court. The first is a general index to all births recorded for the county of Rockingham from 1862-1894. This book provided the name of the child, date of birth, and what book and page their birth</p>
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had originally been recorded in. The courthouse retains both an original and typed edition of birth records for 1862-1870. The typed edition was likely produced some time in the late 1890s or early 1900s. In both books, one can expect to find the name of the child born, the date, their race, sex, place of birth, father's name, father's occupation, father's residence, mother's name, the number of children at birth, any deformities, and the name of the person providing birth information. The next two books are the original handwritten records recorded by the Commissioner of Revenue for each district for the years 1870-1894. The same information can be found in here as in the 1862-1870 volume. The two final books are typed editions of all birth records from 1870-1894.

Marriage Records are divided into four subseries; Petitions to Obtain Marriage License 1875-1905, Certifications of Age 1872-1899, Consent to Grant Marriage License 1853-1901, and miscellaneous Marriage Records. Note that the Circuit Court also houses a copy of all marriage applications/licenses for the county of Rockingham from 1778-1912. These are available for viewing on our in-house records system, accessible to the public Mon-Friday 8:30 am-5pm.

There are two Registers of Death, both dated 1870-1894. The first is the original handwritten documentation filled out each year by the district Commissioner of Revenue. Here, one can find the full name of the deceased, their race, sex, date of death, place of death, cause of death, age, name of parents, where they were born, occupation, name of spouse, and name of the person providing death information. The forms are arranged chronologically and by district. The second book, which also dates from 1870-1894, is simply a copy of the original, likely produced some time in the late 1890s or early 1900s. These are typed rather than handwritten.

Arrangement	All series and subseries are arranged chronologically.	
Subject	Adoption--1890-1900--1910-1930--1930-1940, Citizenship, Naturalization--1910-1940, 20th-century America, Marriage--1760-1820--1830-1880--1890-1900, Vital statistics.	
Processing Information	Processed by Kayla Heslin, April 2020.	
Contents		
Series I	Adoption Records *restricted access	Location

Box I	1892-1943	D.006_003_001
Box II	1944-1947	D.006_003_001
Box III	1948-1950	D.006_003_001
Series II	Citizenship Records	Location
Subseries	Petition for Naturalization	D.006_001_002
Vol. 1	1909	
Subseries	Declaration of Intent	D.006_001_002
Vol. 1	1909	
Series III	Register of Births	Location
Book I	General Index 1862-1894	Q.001_001_001
Book II	1862-1870 (Original)	Q.001_001_002
Book III	1862-1870 (typed ed.)	Q.001_001_002
Book IV	1870-1883 (Original)	Q.001_001_003
Book V	1884-1894 (Original)	Q.001_001_004
Book VI	1870-1894 A- K (typed ed.)	Q.001_001_005
Book VII	1870-1894 L-Z (typed ed.)	Q.001_001_005
Series IV	Marriage Records	

Subseries	Petitions to Obtain Marriage License	D.006_003_001
Box IV	1897-1905	
Subseries	Certification of Age	D.006_003_001
Box IV	1872-1899	
Subseries	Consent to Grant Marriage License	
Box IV	undated, 1853-1901	D.006_003_001
Subseries	Misc. Marriage Records	
Box IV	1848-1910	D.006_003_001
Series V	Register of Death	Location
Book I	1870-1894 (original)	Q.001_001_006
Book II	1870-1894 (typed ed.)	Q.001_001_006