

# RESEARCHING FAMILY HISTORY IN RUSSELL COUNTY, VA

*Russell County was formed in 1786 out of Washington County. Formed out of Russell County in whole or in part were Lee, Scott, Wise and Buchanan Counties. The Russell County Courthouse burned in 1872; the loss of one deed book and one marriage book are attributed to this fire.*

## **Birth Records**

A microfilm copy of the Russell County Birth Registers 1853-1889 is held by Russell County Public Library. Birth records for 1889-1896 are available at the Library of Virginia on microfilm. (Missing: 1863-1964, 1890 & 1895.) Some records are available from the years 1900 to 1927 at the Russell County Courthouse. Between 1896 and June 14, 1912 there was no law for the registration of births. Estimates are that it was 1920 before records were even 90% complete; a copy of birth certificates held by the state can be obtained by writing: VDH, Office of Vital Records P.O. Box 1000 Richmond, Virginia 23218-1000 Phone: 804-662-6200 or visit online at [http://www.vdh.state.va.us/vital\\_records/index.htm](http://www.vdh.state.va.us/vital_records/index.htm)

## **Census Records**

The public library has available federal census records for Russell County 1820-1940, excepting 1890. Some records are available in print while others may be available on CD or microfilm. Census records can be searched online through either Ancestry.com available in the library. Census records from 1790, 1800, 1810, & 1890 were lost or destroyed; some of these have been reconstructed through tax lists and other records.

## **Marriage Records**

Copies of marriage licenses or permissions 1849-1910 are available in digital format at the public library. Indexes by bride and groom are available. Additional years are being copied and will be made available as they are indexed. After May 2000, all marriage records are electronic; no paper licenses are held at the Courthouse for the ensuing years.

## **Death Records**

A microfilm copy of the Russell County Death Register 1853-1896 is held by Russell County Public Library. (Missing: 1863-1864, 1895.) Between 1896 and June 14, 1912 there was no law for the registration of births. Recent death records are kept by the Russell County Health Dept. Records from 1961 to the present are available. Records from earlier years have been sent to Richmond. Copies may be obtained by contacting the Virginia Dept. of Vital Records in Richmond. (Russell County Health Dept. will release death records only to immediate family.) The Social Security Death Index can be searched online through Ancestry.com inside the library.

## **Deeds**

Property deeds are available from 1787 in the Courthouse.

## **Military Records**

Military discharge records are available from World War I and forward in the Courthouse. These records are not complete as it was left up to the individual to file the discharge in his or her county of residence.

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## Records Online:

For Russell County, you may want to search the Genweb site at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~varussel/> Scroll down the page and click the search button. When searching for names, it works best to place the name in quotation marks such as "John Smith". You may need to try various spellings and/or initials to be successful such as, "Jonathan Smith" or "John T. Smith" etc. There are numerous court records, deeds, marriages, deaths, and cemetery records among others, available from this site, as well as links to neighboring counties.

Ancestry is a database available in the library only, allowing searches for census, birth, marriage, and death records, among others. Ask library staff for help to access it, or simply click the link on the library's home page at <http://russell.lib.va.us/>

## Other Court Records available in the Courthouse

Chancery Records from 1948 to present are in the Courthouse. Earlier records are held at the Library of Virginia in preparation for microfilming. Other records include Common law order books, Criminal law order books, civil common law, and General District Court (misdemeanor records are kept only 10 years as required by law.)

## RUSSELL COUNTY CLERK OF COURT

276-889-8023

Monday – Friday

8:30 am – 5 pm

## RUSSELL COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Lebanon Library

276-889-8044

|           |                 |
|-----------|-----------------|
| Sunday    | Closed          |
| Monday    | 10 am – 5:30 pm |
| Tuesday   | 10 am – 8 pm    |
| Wednesday | 10 am – 5:30 pm |
| Thursday  | 10 am – 8 pm    |
| Friday    | 10 am – 5:30 pm |
| Saturday  | 10 am – 3 pm    |

*The Public Library and the Courthouse are both located on Main Street, Lebanon, Virginia.*