

Kentucky County Court Records

Court Records:

County Court 1780s – Present

County Court Records:

Order Books / Minute Books

**Availability varies by county, though typically begins with the creation of the county and runs to the 1970s or later.*

County Clerk:

**County Clerks maintain originals of Order Books and County Court records and can be contacted for possible loose files or other records not included in KDLA collections.*

Background:

Kentucky's court system has been organized in multiple ways under the state's various constitutions. The most consistent courts throughout the state's history have been the local court, the circuit court, and the court of appeals. The local court has generally been referred to as the County Court. For a more thorough review of the courts, the records they've created, and their navigation consult the Court Records Research Guide.

Local Court:

Local matters of administration, supervision, and regulation of county affairs were the primary responsibility of the County Court.

They exercised little civil or criminal authority. County affairs included probate, public buildings, elections, roads, poorhouses, education, military, and land boundaries. The County Court was replaced by the New Fiscal Court and the New District Court in 1978.

County Courts recorded the disposition of small claims cases, misdemeanors, and other activities in order books. The books also include orders for the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, mills, dams, and ferries, appointments of road overseers' committees to determine road sites, mill sites, and the location of public buildings. Probate records were accepted, licenses were given, lunacy inquests were posted, and charges for tippling houses and inns were also included. Orders and bonds dealing with the care of the poor and orphans could also be recorded in County Court order books, along with naturalizations.

The order books are not the only record of the County Court. Various books detailing the specific actions ordered by the court on topics of probate, lunacy, and guardianship also exist.

Access

County Court records at KDLA are primarily comprised of Court Order Books. The administrative actions of the courts recorded in the books are often further detailed in topic-specific minute books and registries. Order Books are often indexed individually, though some counties created indexes that covered multiple years and books. Where available the indexes are

the best place to begin a search of the order books. They are indexed by name of the individual associated with the order. The indexes are not comprehensive or always available. Order Books are arranged chronologically. If a date of the record in question is known they can be browsed by date to attempt to find the reference.

No statewide index exists for the books. They are kept on microfilm and available for use in the KDLA Research Room. For remote access, or to place an order for records from this collection refer to our website at kdla.ky.gov.

Other Sources

Consider any of the following institutions for more information when researching County Court records in Kentucky.

- **County Court Clerk:** Clerks maintain the original records of the County Court. They will sometimes have loose files or other records not included in KDLA collections. Contact information is available online for each clerk.
- **FamilySearch:** many of the County Court order books are available online for free. An account must be created to access the digital scans.