

Kentucky Probate Records

Probate Records:

County Records

*varies by county

Wills 1780s – Early 2000s
Order Books 1780s – Early 2000s

Other sources may include appraisements, inventories, settlements, guardians lists or books, executor books, and/or administrator books.

Circuit Court

*varies by county

Order Books 1780s – Early 2000s
Case Files 1780s – Early 2000s

Probate Cases

*varies by county

Background:

Probate is a term often used in reference to any records dealing with the settlement of an estate. This could include wills, appraisements, estate inventories, estate settlements, guardian lists, executor or administrator records, etc... These records were often filed apart from one another and may require some knowledge from one source to find another source.

Probate records are filed with the county court of the individual's residence. While usually beginning with a Will found in the first court session following the date of death, the Will can occasionally be filed much later than the date of death would lead you to expect. County Court Order Books will often include references to probate files that will help you navigate and discover other records.

In many instances, the settlement of an estate was contested and would lead to cases with the Circuit Court. These equity cases can be valuable sources of information with depositions and other court files that provide a much greater degree of context and information for the researcher. Review of Circuit Court Order Books can help determine if these cases existed. Circuit Court case indexes can also be referenced to help in their discovery.

Access

Records can include wills, appraisements, estate inventories, estate settlements, guardian lists, executor or administrator records, circuit court case files, and county and circuit court order books. These may be together or filed separately and not all documents will likely be available for all individuals. Will books and County Order books are sometimes available on Family Search and serve as a good starting point to begin your search. Occasionally equity or probate indexes also exist on Family Search though these do not always match the files they reference in our collections. No statewide index exists for wills or probate records. Wills and associated

probate files are recorded and searched for at the County level, with availability and holdings by county varying. To determine what years records are available for a given county refer to our online resources at kdla.ky.gov or contact staff at 502-564-1770. Wills and their associated probate records at KDLA are kept on microfilm and are available for use in the Research Room. For remote access, or to place an order for records from this collection refer to our website at kdla.ky.gov.

Probate records after 1977 are filed together by the courts and more easily located. However, these records are in their original format and are often kept offsite. It is highly recommended that you contact staff first if conducting research into probate records after 1977.

Other Sources

Consider any of the following institutions for more information when researching Probate Records in Kentucky.

- **Kentucky Historical Society:** resources include printed biographies and family histories, access to unique genealogical materials including Bible records, surname collections, and cemetery and church records. *Contact: (502) 564-1792*
- **Regional Historical and Genealogical Groups:** valuable organizations for their familiarity with local history. Can find collections or records of local families, churches, or other institutions that can facilitate the discovery of genealogical information.
- **Local Library:** often include a reference or special collection of local history or interest. Knowledgeable staff can direct research inquiries or lead to discoveries in local newspapers or records preserved as part of their collections.