

## Netherlands, Civil Registration Birth 1811-Present

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### Guide

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#### Introduction

Beginning in 1811, the government required civil registrars to keep birth records.

For more information on civil registration birth records, see Background.

#### What You Are Looking For

The following information will usually be found in a birth entry:

- The name of your ancestor.
- The date of your ancestor's birth.
- The name of your ancestor's parents.
- The names, ages, occupations, and residences of the witnesses.
- The relationships of the witnesses to your ancestor.
- The place of your ancestor's birth.
- The residence of the parents.
- The age and occupation of the parents.
- Whether your ancestor was of legitimate or illegitimate birth.

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### Steps

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These 5 steps will guide you in finding your ancestor in the Netherlands civil registration records.

#### Step 1. Find the year of your ancestor's birth record.

To find the birth records available at the library, look in the Family History Library Catalog. Go to **What to Do Next**, select the **Family History Library Catalog**, and click on the tab for **Town Records** to see if your ancestor's town is listed.

When looking for your ancestor's birth record, remember:

- Birth records are arranged chronologically.
- Birth records were kept by the civil registration office in the municipality where your ancestor lived.
- Yearly indexes and 10-year indexes to the birth records exist.

If you don't know which municipality your ancestor lived in, see the Netherlands gazetteer *Van Goor's aardrijkskundig woordenboek van Nederland*. Instructions for using this gazetteer are found in *How to use the Netherlands Gazetteer*.

## Step 2. Find the entry for your ancestor.

Use the index first. Look for the last name, and then look for the given name. Record the date of registration and entry number. Next locate the entry.

If you do not know the names of your ancestor's parents, you may have to check further to make sure you find the correct entry:

- Find the entries for all the children with the same given name and last name as your ancestor. Start with the year when you think your ancestor was born. Then check the entries for five years before and five years after. You may find several entries for children with the same name but with different parents.
- Eliminate the entries that contradict what you know about your ancestor. Check death records to see if any of the children died before your ancestor did. Check marriage records to see if any of the children married someone other than your ancestor's spouse (but remember that your ancestor may have married more than once).
- Try to make sure the birth entry is of your direct line ancestor. Because names are so common, you must be sure you have the correct entry.

For more help in finding the record entry, see Tip 1.

For help in reading the record entry, see Tip 2.

For help in verifying that you have the correct record entry, see Tip 4.

## Step 3. Find the entries for each brother and sister of your ancestor.

Once you have the entry for your ancestor, find the entries for your ancestor's brothers and sisters:

- Search the birth records for entries of your ancestor's brothers and sisters.
- Search local death records or the birth records from surrounding municipalities, especially if there are gaps of 3 or more years between the birth of siblings. Gaps of 3 or more years may indicate there was another child.
- To make sure you have found entries of all the family members, search death records and birth records of surrounding municipalities for any additional children.
- Search for children born before the parents' marriage. Children may have been born under the mother's maiden name. Sometimes the father's name is not given.

For help in finding the entries for the ancestor's brothers and sisters, see Tip 3.

## Step 4. Copy the information, and document your sources.

If you can, photocopy the record. If you can't, be sure to copy all the information in the entry, including:

- All the people listed and their relationships to each other. (Remember, witnesses are often relatives.)
- All the dates in the entry and the events they pertain to. (Sometimes corrections to a birth record were added in the entry's margin.)
- All the localities in the entry and who was from the places listed.

On the copy, document where the information came from. List:

- The type of source (a paper certificate, a microform, a book, an Internet site, and so forth).
- All reference numbers for the source. Carefully record any microfilm, book, or certificate numbers or the name and Internet address of the site you used.

## Step 5. Analyze the information you obtain from the birth record.

To effectively use the information from the birth record, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this the birth entry of my direct line ancestor? Because names are so common, you must be sure you have the correct record.
- Did the civil registrar identify both parents, and is the mother's maiden name given?
- Did more than 3 years pass since the birth of the last child? If so, another child may have been born in a neighboring municipality.
- Did you search 5 years without finding any earlier birth entries of children? If you find no other entries, then begin looking for the parents' marriage record.

For help in verifying that you have the correct record entry, see Tip 4.

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## Background

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### Description

Birth records may go back to the 1790s, when they began during the time of the French occupation.

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## Tips

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### Tip 1. How do I find the entry of my ancestor?

In some indexes, only the first letter of the surname is in alphabetical order.

For help with name variations, see the "Names, Personal" section of *The Netherlands Research Outline*.

### Tip 2. What if I can't read the record?

Civil registration records are written in Dutch. The language used in the record may also be affected by:

- Invasions by foreign countries.

For publications that can help you read the languages, see the *Dutch Word List*, *French Word List*, and the "Handwriting" section of *The Netherlands Research Outline*.

### Tip 3. How do I find the record for each brother and sister?

Remember, within the family, one or more children may have the same given name(s).

When more than one set of parents has the same given names and surnames (for example two John and Mary Smiths), use the following identifiers and records to separate the families:

- The place of residence of the family.
- The father's occupation.
- The witnesses.
- Other sources like census and population registers that list family members as a group.

## Tip 4. How do I verify the birth of my direct-line ancestor?

Often more than one family in an area has the same family name. Because the same children's given names are used in every family, several children with the same given and family names could be born within a few years of each other. To identify the correct direct-line ancestor and his or her parents:

- Check 5 years on each side of the supposed birth year, and copy the entry of every child with the same given name and surname as the ancestor.
- If one or more entries exist, check civil registration death records to eliminate those entries of children who died before your ancestor.
- If you are not able to eliminate all of the possible entries, check marriage records to eliminate those who married someone other than your ancestor's spouse.
- Be aware that Dutch parents usually named their first four children after their own parents, and other children after their brothers and sisters.
- If you eliminate all the possibilities, check the surrounding municipalities, and repeat the above process until you find the birth entry for your ancestor.

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## Where to Find It

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### Family History Centers

Many Family History Centers can borrow microfilms of birth records from the Family History Library. There is a small fee to have a microfilm loaned to a Family History Center.

Family History Centers are located throughout the United States and other areas of the world. For the address of the Family History Center nearest you, see Family History Centers see Family History Library Services and Resources.

### Family History Library

The Family History Library has microfilmed nearly all of the civil registration birth records of the Netherlands that are not protected by laws of privacy. There is no fee for using these microfilms in person.

You may request photocopies of the record from the library for a small fee. You will need to fill out a Request for Photocopies—Census Records, Books, Microfilm, or Microfiche form. The Family History Library microfilm number is available from the Family History Library Catalog. Send the form and the fee to the Family History Library.

See *Family History Library Services and Resources* for information about contacting or visiting the library.

### Civil Registration Offices

If the Family History Library has not microfilmed the birth records for your locality, you will need to write to the archive or civil registration office where the records are kept.