

Marriage License

In amidst all the lists, invitations, bills and receipts which accompany any marriage preparations, is the all important marriage license. The purpose of this document is to prove that you are legally free to marry. In certain countys, marriage licenses also serve the purpose of ensuring that couples are not just acting on a whim and rushing into a marriage, as the application for a marriage license entails a waiting period before it is officially issued.

As stated before, the main purpose of the marriage license is to prove that you are legally free to marry to marry your partner. The license stipulates that the persons concerned are not already married, or if previously married, that they are legally divorced and therefore free to marry again. Some states even require blood tests to accompany the marriage license application, as proof of identity and state of health. Once the marriage license has been issued, the person performing the marriage must recive a copy of the documentation before he performs the ceremony otherwise the marriage is not legal.

Few people realise, that a marriage license is a matter of public record. All applications for a marriage license are listed in the newspapers - the presumed purpose thereof is to validate the information received on the marriage license application form, and for any queries or judgements against the marriage license application to be dealt with ahead of time. Once issued, a copy of the marriage license is stored in the relevant County courthouse archives indefinitely.

These records are available for public scrutiny, and therefore may provide a means for people or private investigators to access information and obtain details of your whereabouts, simply by requesting a copy of the marriage license. Whilst this sounds rather ominous, it is in fact a wonderful way for genealogists, or future generations, to piece together their ancestral family trees. Marriage licenses may contain valuable clues and information often forgotten between generations.

With the rapid advance in computer technology, it may be possible to find lists of old and new marriage licenses online, but in most cases it may still be necessary to go to the courthouse to receive a copy of the marriage license itself.