

VIRGINIA & WEST VIRGINIA

One state becomes two. Based on Ohio County Was in Virginia? The Record Trap Hiding Your Ancestor.

ALWAYS ASK WHERE WAS THE PLACE, AND WHEN?

THE BIRTHPLACE TRAP

IF HE WAS BORN IN...	BEFORE	HE WAS BORN IN
The Kentucky country	June 1, 1792	Virginia. See Kentucky to Ohio, Episode 1
The western counties, now West Virginia	June 20, 1863	Virginia
Those same western counties	After 1863	One census may say "Virginia," the next "West Virginia." Neither answer is wrong.

KEY DATES

DATE	WHAT HAPPENED
1738 · 1745	Augusta County created (1738) and organized (1745) from Orange County; the whole western frontier
1776	Declaration of Rights and constitution (June); District of West Augusta split into Monongalia, Yohogania, and Ohio counties
1782 · 1788	Personal property and land tax lists begin · Virginia ratifies the U.S. Constitution as the 10th state (June 25, 1788)
1853	Virginia counties begin birth and death registers (coverage varies)
Apr 17, 1861	Virginia convention votes to secede
May – June 1861	Wheeling Conventions; Restored Government of Virginia under Gov. Francis Pierpont
1862 · 1863	Lincoln signs the statehood bill Dec 31, 1862. June 20, 1863: West Virginia becomes the 35th state; Arthur Boreman first governor. Berkeley and Jefferson join later in 1863 (upheld by the Supreme Court, 1871). 55 counties today

THREE NAME TRAPS

Ohio County, Virginia, is not the state of Ohio. Created by Virginia in 1776 and named for the river, it is now in West Virginia (seat: Wheeling). "Born Ohio County, 1790" means Virginia.

Yohogania County mostly became Pennsylvania once the Virginia and Pennsylvania boundary was settled. A family in "Virginia" in 1778 and "Pennsylvania" in 1785 may never have moved.

Before 1745, look in Orange County, the parent of Augusta.

STEP 1 KNOW WHERE THE RECORDS WENT

- ☐ **County records stayed put.** When West Virginia separated, no counties were divided, no names changed, and each county kept its own records. A Monongalia County deed from 1820 is still with Monongalia County.
- ☐ **State-level records are in Richmond.** Pre-1863 Virginia land office grants and Northern Neck grants are at the Library of Virginia.
- ☐ **In the FamilySearch Catalog,** search the county under West Virginia and state-level records under Virginia. You will often need both.

STEP 2 WORK THE RECORD CHECKLIST

- 1 Frontier families:** start with Augusta County and *Chalkley's Chronicles*, abstracts of Augusta County court records, 1745–1800.
- 2 Land:** Library of Virginia Land Office patents (1623–1774) and grants (1779 on). For the Shenandoah Valley and eastern panhandle, check the separate Northern Neck grants (1690–1874).
- 3 Lost records:** about 40 Virginia localities lost major records, including in the Richmond evacuation fire of April 3, 1865. Look for surviving volumes, state-level records, and neighboring counties. For West Virginia counties, check each county's own loss history.
- 4 Tax lists as a census:** the 1790 and 1800 Virginia census schedules are lost, and published "1790 censuses" are reconstructions. Read the personal property and land tax lists (from 1782) year by year. A first appearance, a disappearance, or a widow listed in his place all tell a story.
- 5 Civil War, both sides:** search Union and Confederate, West Virginia and Virginia (early Union units were raised as Virginia regiments under the Restored Government), and Ohio regiments across the river in the *Roster of Ohio Soldiers in the War of the Rebellion*.
- 6 Births and deaths from 1853:** West Virginia's Vital Research Records site is free and often shows the original register page, decades before Ohio's statewide registration began in 1908.

CHECK BOTH SIDES OF THE RIVER

WHEELING
National Road crossing

MARIETTA
& Parkersburg

POMEROY
& Mason

GALLIPOLIS
& Point Pleasant

Families moved back and forth, and some couples crossed the river just to marry. When an Ohio record vanishes, check the West Virginia side. When a West Virginia family disappears, check the Ohio side.

WHERE TO SEARCH

Library of Virginia · Land Patents and Grants guide	lva-virginia.libguides.com/land-grants
Library of Virginia · Lost Records Localities	lva-virginia.libguides.com/lost-records
West Virginia Vital Research Records (free)	archive.wvculture.org/vrr
FamilySearch Wiki · West Augusta District, Virginia	familysearch.org/en/wiki/West_Augusta_District,_Virginia

MORE OHIO AND MIGRATION RESEARCH GUIDES: BRICKWALLSBUCKEYES.COM

Keep pushing past your brick walls.