

## What Northamptonshire wills are available?

A surprising number of early wills have survived, and it is not uncommon to find for most villages a dozen or so wills that pre-date the introduction of parish registers in 1537/8. For some fortunate communities, there may be even be one or two wills available for the mid/late 1400s.

The significance of this to family tree researchers will be immediately obvious, as a means of carrying them further back into a time not covered by parish registers; and as a data-source for those researching the history of buildings, wills may also be of great value - especially wills of the 1600s and afterwards, where a probate inventory is also available with details of the testator's goods and chattells, often including much useful information about the testator's house and its outbuildings.

The wills stored at the Northamptonshire Record Office cover a period from the earliest times up to 1858 (ecclesiastical courts), and from 1858 to about 1941 (civil probate courts), though there are some exclusions; for a more detailed statement of what specific wills are held at the Northamptonshire Record Office, [follow this link ...](#)

However, it should be noted that where a testator held land in more than one archdeaconry, the will is probably archived among the 'PCC' (Prerogative Court of Canterbury) section at The National Archives in Kew. Wills held at Kew can be searched for electronically via the Internet, and downloaded in PDF format for a standard fee (currently about £3-50 per will). [Follow this link ...](#)

Wills held at the NRO can only be searched at the NRO - initially via a card-index of names, then via microfilm photographs of the specific wills, which may be photo-copied for a standard charge.