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The Death Notice
as a source for genealogical research in South Africa

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Welcome to . . .

Death Notices: good, bad, indifferent
. . . and downright dangerous

Delia -

. . . is a journalist to keep the roof over her head

. . . a researcher and analyst by inclination and
experience, and

. . . does genealogy to satisfy the inclination

Getting to know you . . .

Now its your turn to introduce yourselves . . .

Please give your name and say a few words about your genealogical research and how long its been since the bug bit you . . .

Our subject - the Death Notice

Understanding the Death Notice and its importance and usefulness to the genealogist. And, we won't overlook its drawbacks.

P What it is, where to get it, and what to do with it when you've got it

Do you know . . .

. . . when the first estate was filed at the
Cape and whose it was?

The year - 1684

P The person . . .

P Johannes DE GREVENBROUK

What is a Death Notice?

P "Founding document in an estate file

P "The death notice is a formal communication (notice) of the death to the Master of the High Court whose office has jurisdiction over estates

P "Don't confuse with Death Certificate which has different purpose and legal status

What is its purpose?

P to inform the Master of the High Court of the death and to provide the names of next-of-kin i.e. potential heirs -whether or not there is a will

P to inform the Master whether the deceased had assets, property or possessions to be passed on to heirs or other claimants such as creditors

P to inform the Master where the deceased resided at the time of death

P to inform the Master whether the person reporting or communicating the death is indeed in a position to do so

Where do you get it?

Depending on the date . . .

P Master's offices in the various jurisdictions, i.e.
Pretoria, Cape Town, Bloemfontein,
Pietermaritzburg, Grahamstown

P Archive depots - ditto

P On film through the Family History Center of
the LDS at Parktown, Johannesburg

Significance as source for genealogists

P It is easy to get hold of

P It potentially contains a great deal of biographical and genealogical data - including the names and addresses of the deceased's parents and children

P In most cases it contains more information than the death certificate

P It is part of the estate file - itself a potentially rich source of genealogical information and leads to other areas of research

Its status as a research document?

- P** It should be considered a primary source only for the date and place of death
 - P** It is at best a secondary source for all of the other information it contains, including the name(s) of the deceased - whomever signs it
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Is it reliable?

That depends on . . .

P who signs it

P her/his knowledge of deceased, nearest and dearest, life of deceased and family

P her/his tendency to be thorough/accurate

P her/his emotional state at time

P probably half a dozen more factors

What do you do with it?

- P** Cite the death notice as a source for each item of data i.e. name/event/date/place you record from it
 - P** If your genealogy programs allows it, apply a reliability rating each time you cite it
 - P** The reliability rating can vary from DN to DN and in each DN for each item of data recorded from it
 - P** Attempt to obtain a primary source for every item of data contained in the DN
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What does it look like?

DEATH NOTICE

PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS CONTAINED IN "THE ADMINISTRATION OF ESTATES ACT, 1913"

1. Name of the deceased: _____
2. Birthplace and Nationality of the deceased: _____
3. Names and Addresses of the Parents of the deceased { Father: _____
Mother: _____
4. Age of the deceased: ____ years ____ months ____ days.
5. Occupation in the life of the deceased, or, if a woman, of her husband: _____
6. Ordinary place of residence of the deceased, or if a woman, of her husband: { _____

7. Married or unmarried, widower or widow: _____
 - (a) Name of surviving spouse (if any), and whether married in community of property or not. { _____

 - (b) Name or Names and approximate date of death of pre-deceased spouse or spouses : { _____

 - (c) Place of last marriage: _____
8. The day of the decease: _____

9. Where the person died: { House: _____
Town or place: _____
District: _____

10. Names of the children of the deceased, and whether majors or minors: { _____

State separately the children born of different marriages, and give the date of birth of each minor. Names must be written out in full. If there are no children, and either or both parents be dead, then give the names and addresses of the brothers and sisters of the deceased.

{ _____

11. Has the deceased left any movable property? _____
12. Has the deceased left any immovable property? _____
13. Is it estimated that the estate exceeds £300 in value? _____
14. Has the deceased left a will? _____

Dated at _____ the _____ day of _____ in the year _____.

Signature: _____
Capacity: _____

(State in what capacity and whether at the time at or near the place of death)
This notice must be filled up and signed by the *Nearest Relative or Connection of the deceased*, who shall, at the time, be at or near the place of death - or in the absence of such near *Relative or Connection*, by the person who, at or immediately after the death, shall have the chief charge of the house in, or the place on, which the death occurred, and must be sent either to the Master, or, if the death occurred in a district wherein a seat of provincial government is not situate, the Magistrate of the District, in duplicate, within fourteen days of the death.

Interpreting the archival codes . . .

P KAB: Cape Town Archives Repository

P NAB: Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository

P SAB: National Archives Repository (Public Records of Central Government since 1910)

P VAB: Free State Archives Repository

P TAB: National Archives Repository (Records of the former Transvaal Province and its predecessors as well as of magistrates and local authorities)

P TBE: Port Elizabeth Archives Repository

. . . interpreting continued

P MOG: Master of the High (Supreme) Court,
Grahamstown.

P MOOC: Master of the High (Supreme) Court,
Cape Town.

P MHG: Master of the High (Supreme) Court,
Pretoria.

P MSCE: Master of the High (Supreme) Court,
KZN.

P MHG: Master of the High (Supreme) Court,
Orange Free State Provincial Division

Downright dangerous?

- P Potential for fraud - deception
 - P Uncritical use by genealogists
 - P Failure to verify data
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Acronyms, names and contact details.

[From the website of the National Archives –
<http://www.national.archives.gov.za>]

- KAB Cape Town Archives Repository**
Postal address: Private Bag X9025, CAPE TOWN 8000
Street address: 72 Roeland Street, CAPE TOWN
Tel: (021) 462 4050. Fax: (021) 45 2960.
Email: capearch01@hotmail.com
- NAB Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository**
Postal Address: Private Bag X9012, PIETERMARITZBURG 3200
Street address: 231 Pietermaritz Street, PIETERMARITZBURG
Tel: (033) 342 4712. Fax: (033) 394 4353
Email: pmbarch01@hotmail.com
- NFA National Film, Video and Sound Archives**
Postal address: Private Bag X236, PRETORIA 0001
Street address: 698 Church Street East, Arcadia, PRETORIA.
Tel: (012) 343 9767. Fax: (012) 344 5143.
Email: film01@hotmail.com.
- SAB: National Archives Repository (Public Records of Central Government since 1910)**
Postal address: Private Bag X236, PRETORIA 0001
Street address: 24 Hamilton Street, Arcadia, PRETORIA.
Tel: (012) 323 5300. Fax: (012) 323 5287.
Email: arg10@dacst4.pwv.gov.za
- VAB Free State Archives Repository**
Postal address: Private Bag X20504, BLOEMFONTEIN 9300
Street address: 29 Badenhost Street, BLOEMFONTEIN
Tel: (051) 522 6762. Fax: (051) 522 6765
Email: fsarch01@hotmail.com
- TBD Durban Archives Repository**
Postal address: Private Bag X22, GREYVILLE 4023
Street address: Nashua House, 14 De Mazenod Street, GREYVILLE
Tel: (031) 309 5682. Fax: (031) 309 5685
Email: darch01@hotmail.com
- TAB National Archives Repository (Records of the former Transvaal Province and its predecessors as well as of magistrates and local authorities)**
Postal address: Private Bag X236, PRETORIA 0001.
Street address: 24 Hamilton Street, Arcadia, PRETORIA.
Tel: (012) 323 5300. Fax: (012) 323 5287
Email: arg10@dacst4.pwv.gov.za
- TBE Port Elizabeth Archives Repository**
Postal address: Private Bag X3932, PORT ELIZABETH 6056
Street address: 1 De Villiers Street, PORT ELIZABETH
Tel: (041) 54 6451. Fax: (041) 54 6451
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Archival Codes

- MOIB Master of the Supreme Court, Cape Town. Insolvency Branch. Insolvent Liquidation and Distribution Accounts (1787 - 1930) (On NAAIRS until 1910)
- MOIC Master of the Supreme Court, Cape Town. Insolvency Chamber. Insolvent Liquidation and Distribution Accounts (1802 - 1830)
- MOG Master of the Supreme Court, Grahamstown. Estate Papers (1957 - 1961)
- MOH Medical Officer of Health (1894 - 1914)
- MOK Master of the Supreme Court, Kimberley (1871 - 1956)
- MOOC Master of the Supreme Court, Cape Town. Death Notices (1834 - 1916)
- MOOC Master of the Supreme Court, Cape Town. Estate Papers. (Death Notices, Wills and Inventories) (1917 - 1950) (On NAAIRS until 1937)
- MOOC Master of the Supreme Court, Cape Town. Liquidation and Distribution Accounts (1700 - 1936)
(On NAAIRS until 1924)
- MOOC Master of the Supreme Court, Cape Town. Wills (1689 - 1916)
(On NAAIRS until 1874)
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- MHG Master of the Supreme Court, Pretoria. Estates (1873-1976) (On NAAIRS until 1975)
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- MSC Master of the Supreme Court. Insolvent Estates (1840 - 1897)
- MSCE Master of the Supreme Court. Estates (1840 - 1971) (On NAAIRS until 1971)
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- MHG Master of the Supreme Court, Orange Free State Provincial Division (1836 - 1943)
- MHG Master of the Supreme Court, Orange Free State Provincial Division: Insolvent Estates (1839 - 1930) (On NAAIRS until 1904)
- MHG Master of the Supreme Court, Orange Free State Provincial Division: Curatorship Estates (1836 - 1930) (On NAAIRS until 1924)
- MHG Master of the Supreme Court, Orange Free State Provincial Division (1836 - 1930) (Other Archives)

Useful Websites

<http://www.e-family.co.za> – look for the Pathfinder

<http://home.global.co.za>

<http://national.archives.gov.za>