



Jennifer Dunn

writerjenniferdunn@gmail.com

<https://copperminegenealogy.com>

Where to Find Tax Records

Go here for video instructions: <https://youtu.be/DTJXw2VqtRM>

FamilySearch (Start here)

1. FamilySearch.com > Click “Search” on top navigation bar
2. From dropdown, click “Catalog”
3. Enter [state] then [county] (and [city] if applicable) and click “Search”
4. Scroll down or ctrl/cmd-F to find the “Taxation” section

Note that searching for “tax records” on MyHeritage generally leads to records hosted on FamilySearch.

Ancestry

1. Ancestry.com > Click “Search” on top navigation bar
2. From dropdown, click “Card Catalog”
3. Option 1: Search by Keywords(s). This option is often nitpicky and doesn’t return what you’re looking for unless keywords are precise
4. Option 2: Filter. Under the “Filters” header on the left navigation bar, choose “Court, Land, Wills & Financial” > A new menu will open beneath the first. Choose “Tax Lists.” From here you can further filter by country and state

State Archives and Libraries

1. Locate the archive or state library (or both) for the state in which you are searching for tax records
2. Use their online catalog or finding aids to find out what tax records are available

Note that these records are often only viewable at the repository, though some are now digitizing records and offering them online. Each repository will have their own instructions for ordering copies.

Historical/Genealogical Societies, Universities, etc.

Local records have been known to end up all over the place. Dig around and find out where the county’s tax records might have ended up. They may even be in a museum or private collection.



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Methodology for Evaluating Tax Records

1. Read the research aid or finding aid. These can generally be found where you viewed the tax record, including:
 - a. Websites
 - b. Archives (on-site or online)
 - c. Card catalogs
 - d. In the keen minds of library, archive, or repository staff

Keep in mind that courthouse clerks have another job to do, though you may get lucky and find one who is knowledgeable about the records you are looking at.)

2. Read the underlying law
 - a. Look for [State] tax law digests, which can often be found online at:
 - i. Hathi Trust
 - ii. Internet Archive
 - iii. Google Books
 - iv. FamilySearch
 - b. Keep in mind that laws change. Ex: Don't apply 1790s law to 1890.
3. Examine the entire record first. Ensure you understand:
 - i. How is the record organized?
 1. By county then militia district?
 2. By plot of land? (Meaning some land owners may appear in more than one place.)
 3. In alphabetical order?
 - ii. Who is included in the record?
 1. Defaulters?
 2. Free people of color/freedmen?
 3. Widows and their agents?
 4. Only people under 60?
 5. Are any occupations excluded from tax?
4. Transcribe all information in the record
5. Analyze and correlate with other information about your research subject!



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Other Tax Resources for Genealogists

Special thanks to Gail Jackson Miller, CG of KYTNResearch.com for sharing her vast knowledge of tax records

Online Resources:

Beidler, James M. "Genealogy Workbook: Tax Records." *Family Tree Magazine*.
<https://familytreemagazine.com/records/other/genealogy-workbook-tax-records/> : 2024.

"FamilySearch Research Wiki." *FamilySearch*.
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page : 2024.

- Pro tip search for state of interest plus taxation (Ex: Georgia +taxation)

"Taxes." *Cyndi's List*. <https://cyndislist.com/taxes/> : 2024.

- For US taxes, choose "Locality Specific: United States."

Books:

Note: When reading books, especially popular histories, about as topic as divisive as taxes, it's especially important to keep author bias in mind when consulting each source. Carefully check each assertion and determine whether it is based in fact or opinion.

Adams, Charles. *Those Dirty Rotten Taxes: The Tax Revolts that Built America*. (New York: The Free Press, 1998.)

Bond, Beverly W., Jr. *The Quit-Rent System in the American Colonies*. (Yale University Press, 1929.)

Fisher, Glen W. *The Worst Tax? A History of Property Tax in America*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996.)

Keen, Michael and Joel Slemrod. *Rebellion, Rascals, and Revenue*. (Princeton University Press, 2021).

Peters, Joan. *The Tax Man Cometh: Land and Property in Colonial Fauquier County Court Clerk's Loose Papers (1759-1782)*. (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, Inc, 2008.)