
BEGINNING COLONIAL/ENGLISH RECORDS

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There is nothing magical about colonial-era or English research. **The key is to know the history of the area and time you are researching.**

England churches began recording baptisms, marriages, burials 70ish years before colonization of America, and the practice came to the Colonies with the settlers. Full compliance did not occur until well into the late 1800s.

If you find a history of strife within the geographic region your ancestor settled, it may be that your ancestor then fled that settlement seeking a quiet life, and further records for your ancestor may not be found. Those who fled the Puritan oppression in America tended to avoid an over-reaching church or local government.

What records are available?

- Research the “usual” records: Census, Wills/Estates, Tax, Deeds/Land, etc.
- Town Records - births, deaths, marriage records are located in the town records
- Passenger lists/ship logs - usually can find date of voyage, Origination→Destination info, list of passengers
- Parish registers/Church records - Baptisms, marriages, and burials can be found in parish registers. (births, deaths not recorded)
- Maps - useful to find a map close to the time frame you are researching
- Newspapers - towns were small, so many happenings made the newspapers
- Historical and genealogical collections - use PERSI (see below)
- Private collections - family papers passed down over time; found in manuscript collections
- Authored works or compiled records - a great place to start... many records have been collected and compiled over the years. Search for books and articles.

How to find each record type for any location (general guidelines)

- A general internet search is recommended for record type + the area/time of your ancestor
- If no suitable records are found, begin searching genealogy sites for databases (look in card catalogs)
- Look for local records online: *FamilySearch* records by location: on homepage, click “Search,” click “Catalog,” under Search by, choose “Place,” and enter location. Click “Search.” On *Ancestry*, use the map on the search page to narrow down your geographical region. *Findmypast.com* has many records.
- Search archives for manuscript collections
- Search PERSI (Periodical Source Index) on FindMyPast.com or at library
- Use locality guides/books like *Research in the States*, *The Source*, *Ancestry’s Red Book* (also available on *Ancestry*, and *Researchers Guide to American Genealogy*
- *American Ancestors* (www.AmericanAncestors.org) by New England Historic Genealogical Society
- Contact area genealogy groups and ask for advice
- Find an expert/professional who specializes in colonial records

Further Education

- *Ancestry Academy*: look under “extras” on your *Ancestry* account. Webinars of every subject available to users.
- *Legacy Family Tree Webinars*: <https://familytreewebinars.com/>; new webinars free for 1 week; some are always free. Monthly subscriptions available. Cheapest strategy is to pay for a month and watch as many as possible.
- Internet search for “Colonial genealogy research” to find thousands of free articles.