
BEGINNING COLONIAL/ENGLISH RECORDS

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Nothing is magical about colonial research. **The key is to know the history of the area in the timeframe you are researching.**

England churches began recording baptisms, marriages, burials about 70 years before colonizing America. The practice came over with settlers. Full compliance did not occur until the late 1800s.

If your ancestor settled in a region with a history of conflict, they may have fled that settlement in search of a more peaceful life. They also may have purposely avoided being documented thereafter. As a result, records of your ancestor might be scarce or nonexistent. For instance, those who escaped Puritan oppression in America often sought to distance themselves from intrusive churches or overbearing local governments by moving away.

What records are available?

- Research the “usual” records: Census, Wills/Estates, Tax, Deeds/Land, etc.
- Town Records - births, deaths, marriage records
- Passenger list/ship log -can find date of voyage, Origination→Destination info, passenger list
- Parish registers/Church records - Baptisms, marriages, and burials (not births and deaths)
- Maps - maps that represent the time frame being researched help
- Newspapers - towns were small, so many happenings made the newspapers
- Historical and genealogical collections - use PERSI at the library
- Private collections - family papers passed down over time; found in manuscript collections
- Authored works or compiled records - a great place to start... many records are listed.

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, search genealogy sites for databases (check 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 find the region. *Findmypast* has many records as well.
- 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* (AmericanAncestors.org) - New England Historic Genealogical Society
- Contact area genealogy groups and ask for advice or find an expert/professional

Further Education

- *Ancestry Academy*: Webinars of many subjects are available.
- *Legacy Family Tree Webinars*: free the week released; some are always free; subscription.
- Internet search for “Colonial genealogy research” to find thousands of free articles.