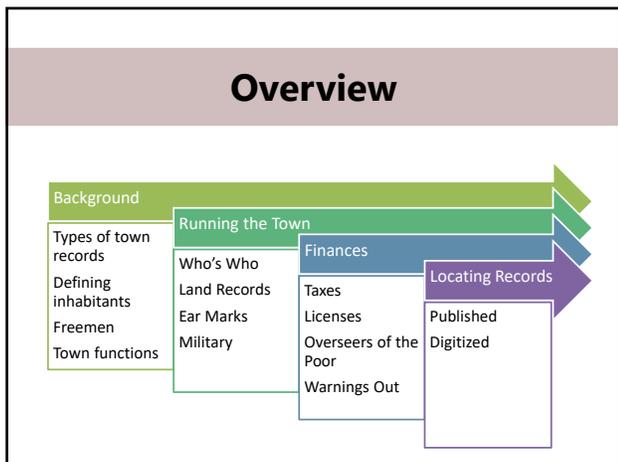
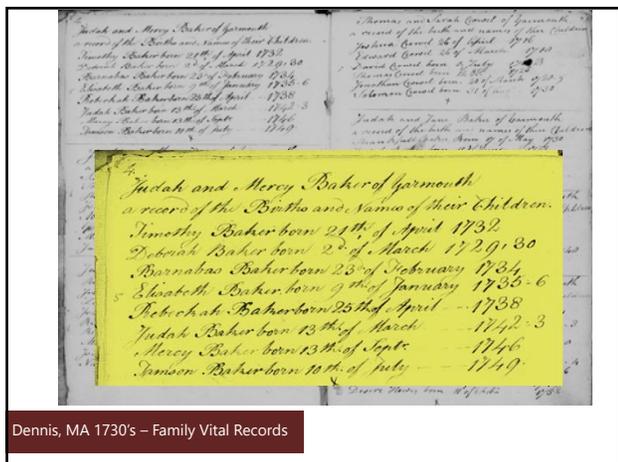




1



2



3

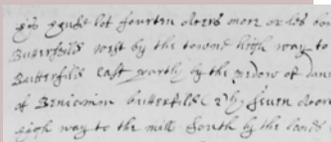
Value of Town Records (cont)

- Best source for impoverished ancestors
- Vital record substitutes
- Help distinguish individuals with same name
- Give context to your ancestor's life
- Provide insight into community

7

Challenges

- Time consuming
- Usually unindexed
- Poor handwriting
- Different formats
- Difficult to access
- Recorded in random order

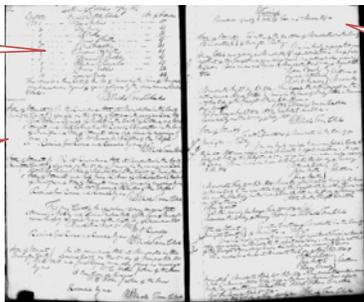


8

Chaotic Record Keeping

Students
by District

Marriage
Records



Warnings
Out

9

Who Was Considered a Town Inhabitant?

- Land owners
- Individuals born in the town
- Apprentices trained in the town
- Newcomers allowed if:
 - Good character
 - Vouched for by existing town inhabitant OR
 - Approved by Selectmen
 - Deemed not become a burden to the town

10

Privileges of Town Inhabitancy



Image from www.revolutionarywarjournal.com

- Land
- Common land for grazing
- Fishing and hunting privileges
- If became indigent, right to be cared for by the town

11

Freemen

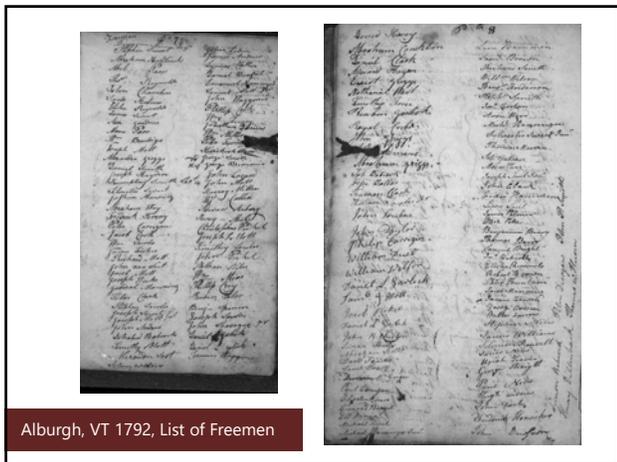
- Applied for privilege
 - Male, usually over 21
 - Church member (varied by Colony)
 - Land ownership (varied by Colony)
 - Good character



Mural at Post Office, Ipswich, MA

- Participate in Town Meeting
- Vote on Town business
- Serve on juries

12



13

Town Government

- Unit of government in New England and other locales
- Elected town officers governed the town
- Freemen voted for elected officials at town meeting

14

Religion and Town Government

- Earliest New England settlers brought English governing tools with them
 - Laws
 - Record keeping
 - Officers
 - Freemen could vote on town matters
- Massachusetts Bay made church participation a condition for Freeman status
- Connecticut Colony (but not New Haven Colony) allowed all men to apply for Freeman status

15

Typical Functions of NE Towns

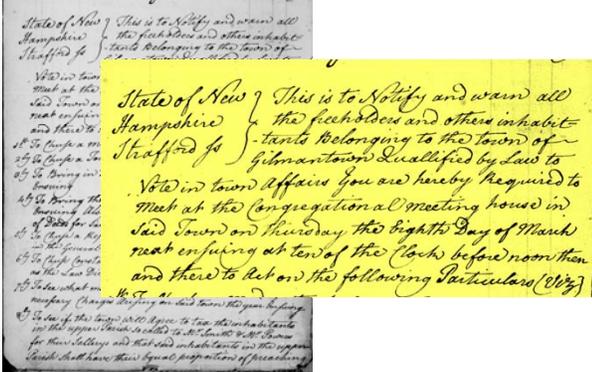
- Assess and collect taxes
- Record land transactions
- Build and maintain roads
- Maintain law and order
- Care for indigent members of the community
- Maintain schools

16

The Town Meeting

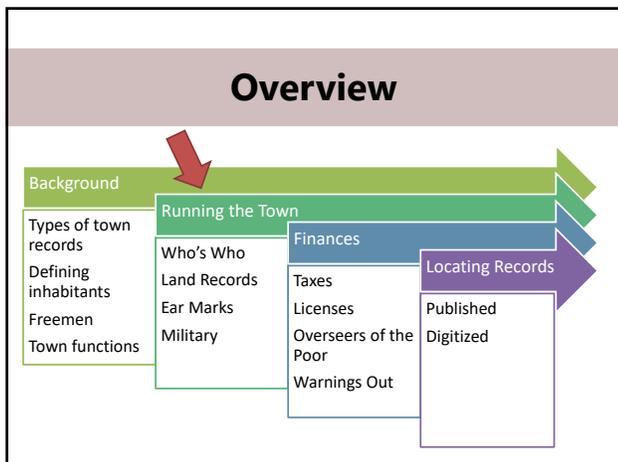
- Notice posted to townspeople
- Led by a moderator
- Often required attendance
- Election of town officials
- General town business

17



Town Records – Gilmanton, NH

18



19

Town Officers

- Key Officers
 - Moderator
 - Town Clerk
 - Selectmen(Town Councilors – RI)
 - Constable
 - Treasurer
- Depending on the size of the town, some offices seemed “semi-hereditary”

20

Tip

Use the Town Officer Lists to Place Your Ancestor in Place and Time

21

Town Clerk

- Keeper of vital records
- Documented votes, resolutions, and orders
- Recorded the meeting proceedings
- Administered oaths and affidavits
- Certified licenses

25

Selectmen

- Generally elected to a one year term
- Managed the affairs of the town
- Performed many tasks
 - Created slate of jurors
 - Divided town lands
 - Judge offenses against town laws and orders

26

Constable

- Posted notice for town meetings
- “Policeman” of the town
 - Conduct
 - Illegal activity
- Acted as tax collector if specific position did not exist
- Warned out strangers

27

Treasurer

- Managed town's finances
- Presided over reimbursements
 - Military service
 - Care of poor
 - Services by townspeople (constructing and repairing roads, building school house, etc.)

28

Other Town Offices

- Fence Viewers
- Hog Reeves
- Listers and Collectors
- Surveyor of Highways
- Jurors
- School Superintendent
- Fire Wardens

29

Fence Viewers

- Reviewed fences and property boundaries
- Responsible for moderating boundary disputes
- Important position in establishment of new communities

30

Hogreeves

- Responsible for catching stray livestock
- Fined owners for straying animals
- Generally newly married or younger men
 - Can be helpful for estimating age

31

Listers, Collectors, and Tythingmen

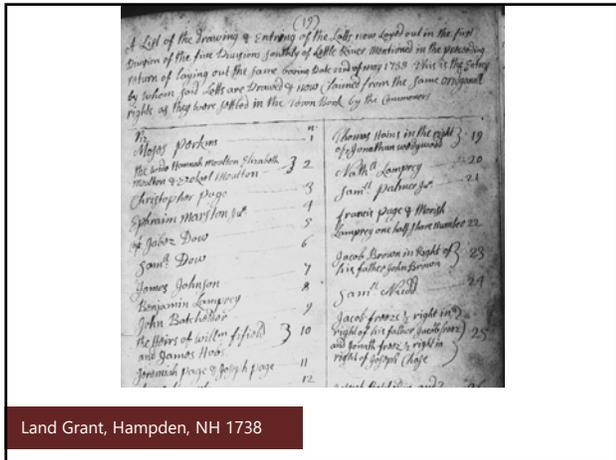
- Listers – wrote down list of inhabitants and their taxable property
- Collectors – two types
 - Collected taxes on male citizens and land
 - Collected contributions to meetinghouse and salary of minister
- Tythingman
 - Kept order in church
 - Maintained the observance of the Sabbath

32

Surveyor of Highways

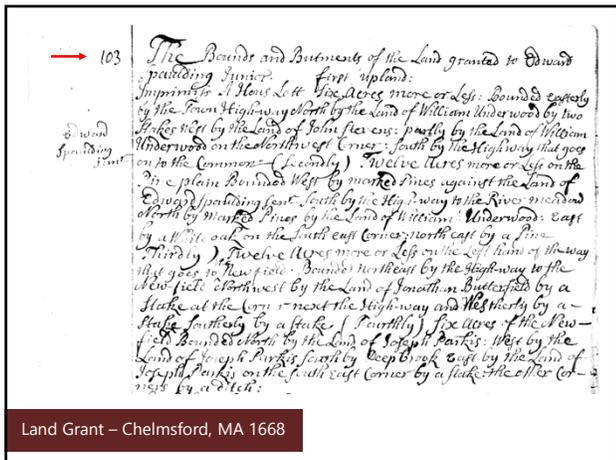
- Inspected town roads
- Hired townspeople to repair roads
- Determined when and where new roads would be constructed
- Could alter landscape as they saw fit

33



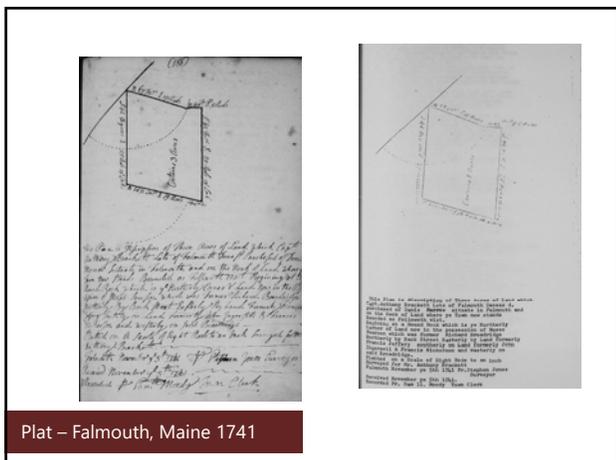
Land Grant, Hampden, NH 1738

43



Land Grant - Chelmsford, MA 1668

44



Plat - Falmouth, Maine 1741

45



Tip
Read the first pages!

46

Read the first pages!

- Always read the first pages of the earliest town record books
- Hold important information about **WHO** settled the town and **WHEN** town was founded
- New communities founded with neighbors

47

Medfield, November 3rd 1729; at the house of Mr Joshua Morse. The Associates of William Ward & Joshua Morse Associates granted of a Tract of land lying between Ox-ford Brookfield Bridgford and the prouiner line. Granted by the great and General Court of this province, 1729; Being advertised and here pursuant to a Notification given under the hand of William Ward who was authorized and empowered by the said General Court to attend the above & granted and to be as Mediator in said Meeting, by virtue of which Notification it appeared under of hand of said William Ward and Joshua Morse that they had notified of said Associates and granted to meet at the Time & place above mentioned.

Said Associates granted being met at the Time and place as above said a list of their Names was read to the Number of Twenty Two; as followeth

McLain's Bournesst	Joseph Baker	Abraham Harding	of John Dought
William Ward Esq	James Boulton	Moses Harding	of John Bayson
Ezra Bourn	Thomas Nelson	Peter Ellic	of Joseph Clark
Abraham Gorum	Moses Nelson	Peter Clark	Nathan Morse
Thomas Leashed	Jonas Nelson	Ezra Clark	James Dought
Nathan Fisk	Joshua Morse	Lamuel Ellic	Joseph Clark
Henry Fisk	Joseph Plympton	David Ellic	
of Gentleman Leonard	Nathaniel Smith	Francis Mayant	
Nathan Ward	Samuel Clark	Henry Adams	
Grasham Keyes	Timothy Hamant	Shades Harding	
Zerubbab Eager	William Plympton	John Plympton	
John Asherman	Ephraim Partridge	Ysack Ansgy	

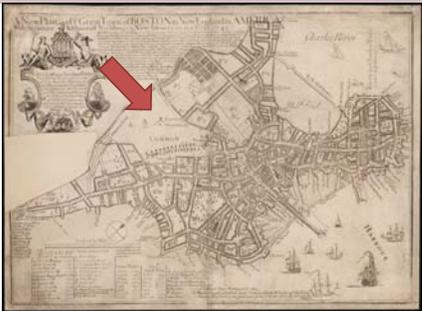
Town Records - Sturbridge, Mass.

48

Keeping Track of Property

49

Earliest Colonial Settlements



<https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:9s161952m>

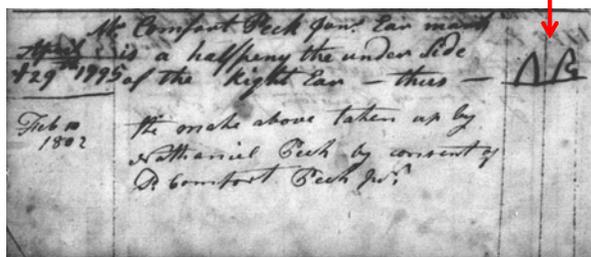
50

Ear Marks

- Cattle and sheep were grazed on common lands
- Important that each animal had identifying mark
- Marks recorded by town clerk
 - Transfer of ear marks from person to person can prove parentage or relationships

51

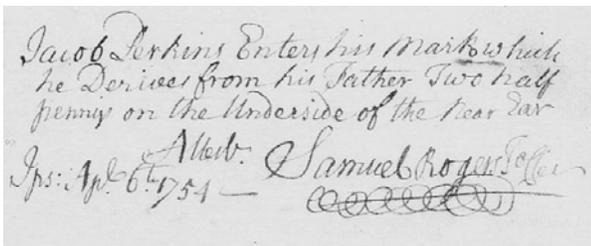
Ear Marks



Ear Mark - Rehoboth, Mass.

52

Ear Marks



Ear Mark - Ipswich, Mass.

53

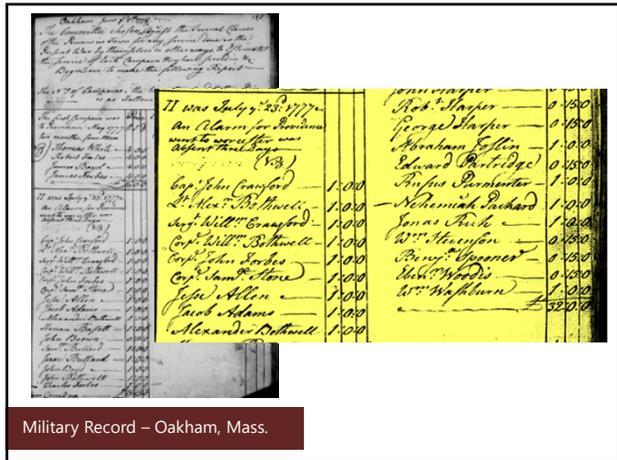
Military Records

54

Military Records

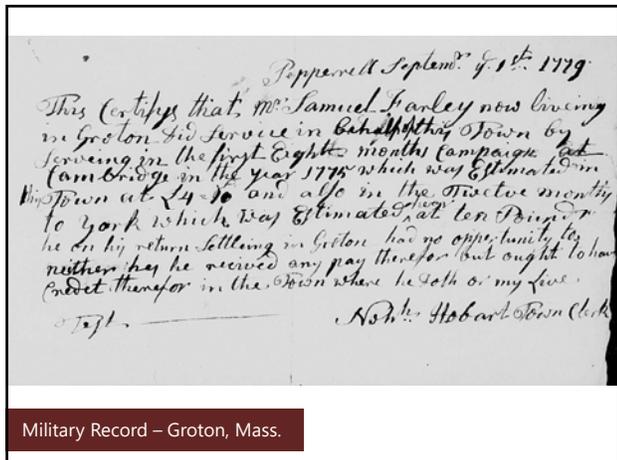
- Militia Rolls
- Payment for military service
- Patriotic service
- Can provide insight into service
 - Company, Regiment, Battles

55



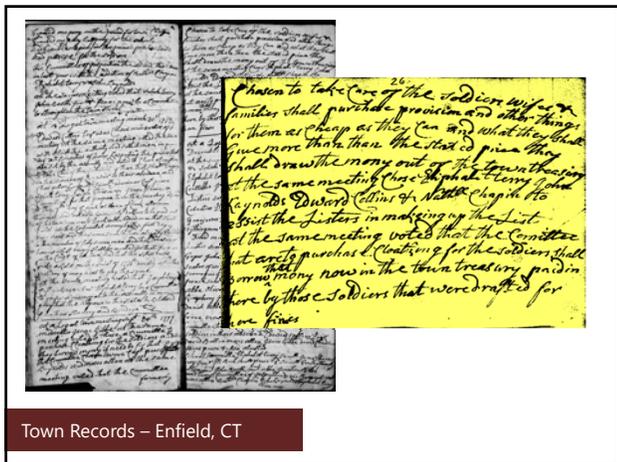
Military Record – Oakham, Mass.

56



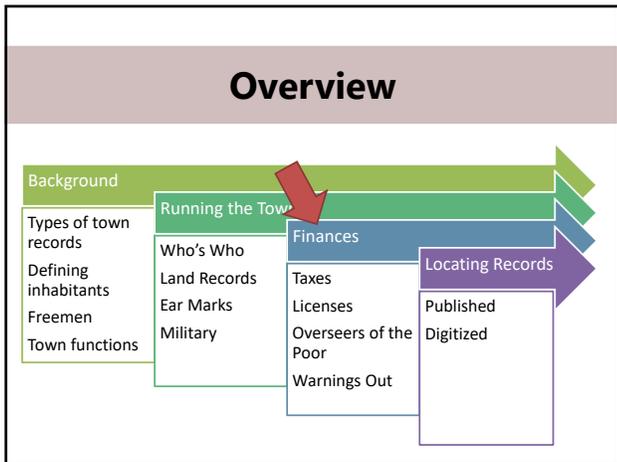
Military Record – Groton, Mass.

57



Town Records – Enfield, CT

58



59

Tax Records

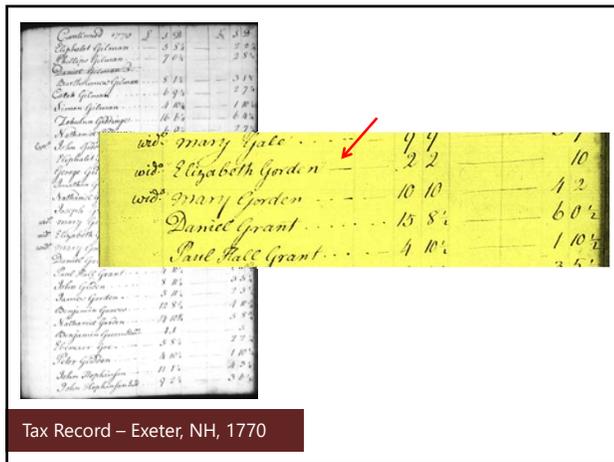
- Recorded by the Assessor or Tax Collector
- Format differs in each town
- Can help determine age
- Serve as a vital record substitute
 - Individual not recorded on tax roll could have died

60

Tax Records

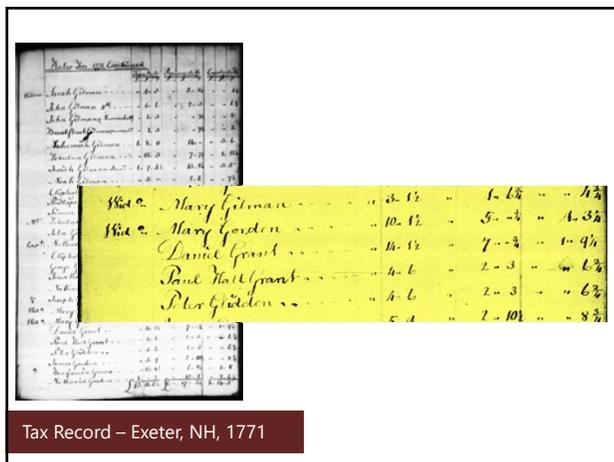
- Elizabeth Dudley of Exeter, New Hampshire
 - Born circa 1697 in Exeter
 - First married in 1725, Simon Gilman; he died 28 February 1749/50
 - Second married Jonathan Gordon; he died in 1767
 - Granted power of attorney to her son Samuel Gilman in 1768
- When did she die?

61



Tax Record – Exeter, NH, 1770

62



Tax Record – Exeter, NH, 1771

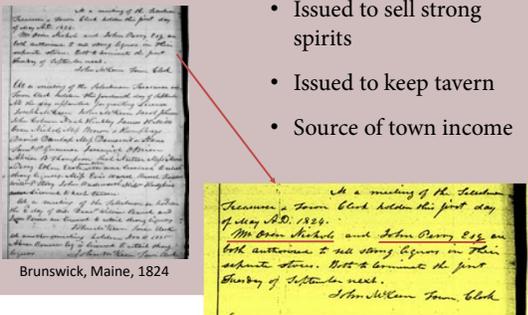
63

Possible Interpretations

- Elizabeth (Dudley) (Gilman) Gordon
 - 1) Moved from Exeter
 - 2) Ceased being head of household
 - 3) Died between 1770 and 1771

64

Licenses



- Issued to sell strong spirits
- Issued to keep tavern
- Source of town income

Brunswick, Maine, 1824

65

Treasurer's Records

66

Treasurer's Records

- Reimbursements to townspeople for services
- Payment to soldiers for service
- Best sources for the poor and women
- Apprenticeships

67

Tools Towns Used to Support the Poor

- Relief in the home
 - Supplies such as food or wood and sometimes cash
 - Called "outdoor relief"
- Binding Out
 - Indentures between town and a community member – often for children, e.g. Pauper Apprenticeship
- Pauper Auction
 - Public auction where the indigent were auctioned to the lowest bidder

68

Outdoor Relief

Town Record Book

Separate Town Treasurer's Book



69

Who Were the Parents of Luther Starbird?

- First appears in Greene, Adroscoggin County, Maine in 1850 census with wife Susannah and son Elmer
- 1870 Census, Luther reports his place of birth as Danville



Danville

Greene

1845 Map of Maine by Sidney E. Morse and Samuel Breese. New York: Published by Harper & Brothers, 1845) viewed at David Rumsey Map Collection

70

School	70 Delta Hannah Stearns teacher 7 Oct 1825	14 - 83
Conting	71 Delta Charles W. Keeney, ex officio services 1825	80
Cont 1825	72 Paul Charles W. Keeney her out for 3 services cont going for Dr Brand	5 - 75
"	73 " Journals Dingley Chapin 1825	11 - 16
"	74 " Nathl. S. Angerick Chapin 1825	10 - 45
"	75 " Ebenezer Witham Chapin 1825	13 - 25
"	76 " Richard Larkin Service 1825	8 - 25
"	77 " Frank Downes Constable for 1825	2 - 25
"	78 " Thomas Johnson " " " " " "	13 - 25
Beer	79 " Thomas Johnson for Town Fund " "	7 - 26
"	80 " Solomon Ross for 6 th Street Light House	29 - 42
"	81 " Solomon Ross for Luther Starbird 1825	6 - 76
"	82 " Joseph G. White for 1 st Ward 1825	3 - 64
"	83 " Jonathan Bartlett for 2 nd Ward 1825	25 - 60
"	84 " Amos H. Kidder for 3 rd Ward 1825	8 - 53
"	85 " Amos H. Kidder for 4 th Ward 1825	11 - 34
"	86 " Thomas Johnson for Town Fund 1825	17 - 80
"	87 " Jonathan Sibby for 5 th Ward 1825	30 - 80
School	88 " Amos H. Kidder for 6 th Ward 1825	2 - 75
"	89 " Amos H. Kidder for 7 th Ward 1825	2 - 90
"	90 " Amos H. Kidder for 8 th Ward 1825	4 - 80

Town Treasurer, Danville Maine 1826

71

Doors put off as follows Town

Christian Land fear Child to George Dawsey at L. 1. 5. 17

William Land fear to Caleb Howard at - - - 1. 1. 16

Mary Skillion to William Hopkins at - - - 0. 4. 2

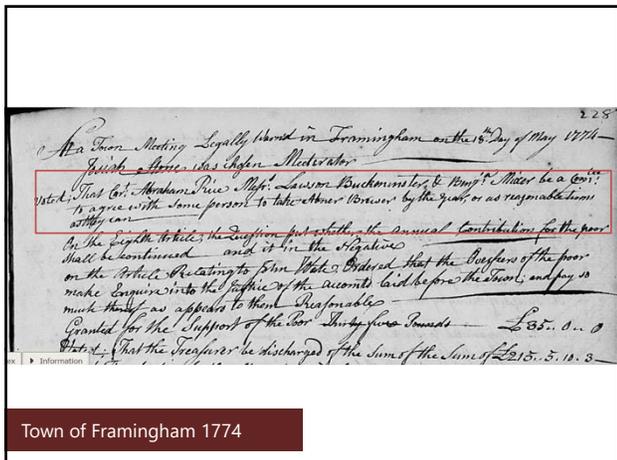
Mary Hopkins to Gideon West - at - - - 0. 4. 0

And this Council be adjourned to the last Monday in January next then to meet at Selma Northons -

Witness Myself Henry Hopkins Secy. of the

West Greenwich, RI Binding Out, 1797

72



73



74

Warnings Out

- Practice in New England until early 19th century
- Non-residents of town examined upon arrival to determine if likely to become a public charges
- Inhabitants of a town had the right to be supported by the town if the inhabitant became unable to support themselves
- Some towns made it a practice to warn out all newcomers
- Warnings did not always mean that the person was escorted to the edge of town.

75

Warnings Out

To John Train Constable of the Town of Clarendon
 In the County of Rutland Greeting You are
 Solely Comanded forthwith to warn Elias
 Anthoni late of hereid. in the County of Westchester
 Common Wealth of Massachusetts to Depart
 Immediately from this Town and if he shall
 Refuse to Depart or Refuse to Depart You

Warning Out – Clarendon, VT

76

John Delany being brought before this Council on Examination saith that
 he was born in Ireland in the Town of Wexford and lived there until he was about
 Twenty Two Years Old and then came to Newfoundland and there stayed six or
 seven Years in the Fishing Voyages and from thence came to Boston and was there
 near One Month and from thence to Roxbury and lived with Robert Pierpont
 Esq. and worked for him making Larch about Nine Months and from
 thence came to the Town of Providence where he has lived ever since as a
 Labourer.

John Delany

Warning Out – Providence, RI

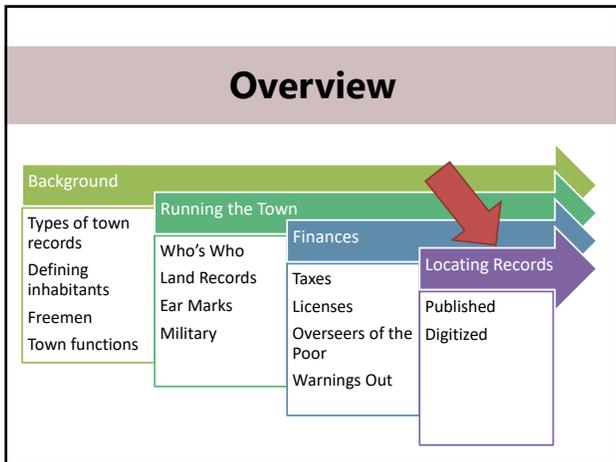
77

To the Constable of the Town of Pownalboro, Me.
 In his Majesty's Name You are Required forthwith to warn
 John William Pickford his wife Elizabeth Pickford
 Paul Owen Pickford his Children under 16 years of Age that
 they immediately depart out of this Town & you are to make due
 notice to them as soon as may be.
 Pownalboro, Me.
 March 25th 1767
 Ben. Williamson } Select Men
 Sam. Garrison }

March 26th 1767
 These Warnings to within Named Persons agreeable to the
 Warrant is given.
 Stephen Marson Constable

Warning Out – Pownalboro, ME

78

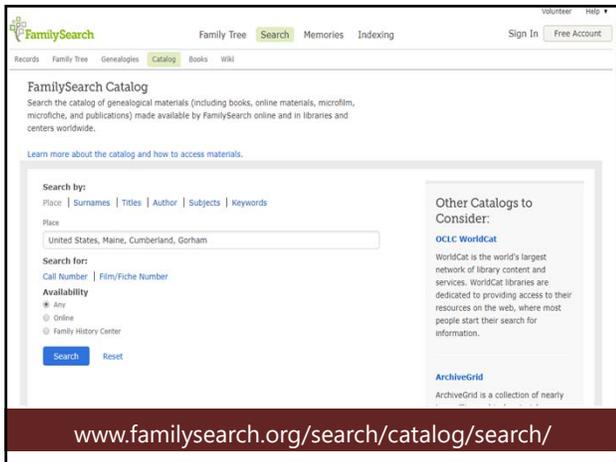


79

Finding Proprietors Records

- Town Halls: Town clerk, tax office or assessor
- County Registry of Deeds
- Libraries and local historical Societies
- Family Search microfilm or online
- Published transcriptions of Proprietor records

80



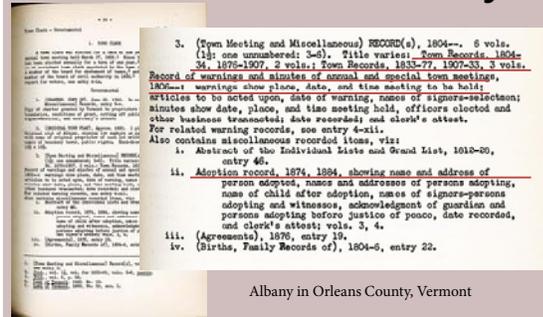
81

Historical Records Survey

- Works Progress Administration
- Survey and index of historical records in local, state, and county repositories
- Guides published for some communities
- Many unpublished guides

85

Historical Records Survey



Albany in Orleans County, Vermont

86

Earlier Work by Public Archives Commission

87

PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CONNECTICUT. 103
TOWN OF DERRY, COUNTY OF NEW HAVEN.

Kind of records.	Volumes.	Years.	Missing.	Indexed.
Town proceedings.....	4	1823-1866	No.....	No.
Land records.....	85	1823-1866	No.....	Gen. index.
Vital statistics.....	9	1862-1866	No.....	Yes.
Substitutes.....	4			

* Prior to 1862 vital statistics were recorded in land and town records.
Land records, vols. 1 and 2, have been copied by Daughters of Revolution.
General index to vital statistics, 1862-1866; since then volume index.

TOWN OF DURHAM, COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX.

Kind of records.	Volumes.	Years.	Missing.	Indexed.
Town proceedings.....	4	1723-1806	All prior to 1738.	No.
Land records.....	23	1688-1806	Yes.....	Yes. ^b
Vital statistics.....	2	1842-1866	Yes.....	Yes.
Department.....	2			
School society.....	1	1756-1862		
Proprietors.....				

^a According to Fowler's history of Durham records existed back to 1662, but no trace can be obtained of them.
^b Land records have index of grantors; vols. 1-10 partial record of grantees.
^c Early book of land and proprietors' records contains early vital statistics; some found in town records.
^d Vol. 1, land records, contains early proprietors' records; earlier proprietors' records are missing. (Fowler.)

Miscellaneous records: Joint stock corporations, 1 volume; earmarks and dog register, 1; elections, 1; attachments, 1; stray, 1; accounts with families of vintners, 1; account book of sheep masters of Durham (town book), 1.

Connecticut Inventory - 1906

88

ARCHIVES OF MAINE. 311
VITAL RECORDS.

BRUNSWICK.

The town of Brunswick, originally part of the Pejepscot proprietors' lands, was incorporated in 1738. The early records of the settlement must be sought in the records and papers of the Pejepscot proprietors, in the possession of the Maine Historical Society.

MARRIAGE OR BIRTH RECORDS.

These records are carefully preserved in a safe in the office of the town clerk. With the exception of the first volume, which is damaged and often heavily illegible by reason of the fading of the ink, the records are in good condition.

These books contain not only the minutes of town meetings from 1738 to 1852 but vital records and notices of a town record character, such as deeds of gift, notices of wills, divorces and certain records, records of other towns, notices of school districts, notices of bonds of collectors, town orders, notices of school districts, etc.

Book 11, minutes of town meetings, 1853-1862; vital records, substitution book.

Volume 4, minutes of town meetings, 1738-1762.
Volume 5, minutes of town meetings, 1762-1802.
Volume 6, minutes of town meetings, 1802-1842.
Volume 7, minutes of town meetings, 1842-1862.
Volume 8, minutes of town meetings, 1862 to date.

These records are contained in part in the foregoing volumes and in part in the following, also in the office of the town clerk:
Records of births, deaths, and marriages (disparaging records) are in Book 1 from 1803.
Records of births, deaths, and marriages (disparaging records), 1815-1862, as well as births and deaths, are in Book 11.
Vital records from 1862 to 1868 are scattered through Book 11 and Book 17, with records also substitution records.
Records of marriages and deaths from 1868 to 1862 are in Book 7.
Records of marriages of marriage ministers, of births, and of deaths, from 1862 to date, are kept in separate volumes.

MARRIAGE RECORDS.

The town in the office of the selectmen contains the following:
Records of marriages, 1862 to date.
The books, 1862 to date.
Notice accounts of the board of selectmen, 1862 to date.
School district accounts, 1862-1866.
Book of records for town's part, one volume (small), 1842-1848.
Prize accounts, one volume (small), 1842-1848.
Town rate accounts, one volume (small), 1842-1848.
Prize notices, one volume (small), 1848-1862.
Prize notices, one volume (small), 1848-1862.
Book of 1866, "to show what" one volume.

There are also in this town the following records:
Ministers' minute (minutes of meetings only) four volumes, 1862 to date.
Book of expenses, one volume (small), 1842-1848.
Warrants for school districts, one volume (small), 1842-1848.
Register of calls to town officers, one volume (small), 1842-1848.
Book of dues, one volume (small), 1842-1848.

Maine Inventory - 1908

89

Check the Town Hall

- Understand the collections
- Call the Town Clerk
- Visit Town Hall



90

Other Repositories

- State and Town Historical Societies
- State Archives
- NEHGS Library
– library.nehgs.org

91

Summary

- If your ancestor is not in the Town Vital Records, try other types of Town Records
- Town Records place your ancestor at a place and time and give a glimpse of their status
- Town Records may be challenging to use, but the rewards are great

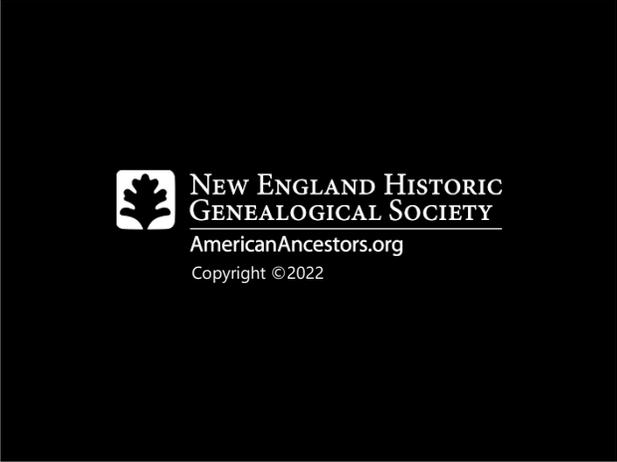
92



93



94



95
