



FAITH OF OUR FATHERS: CHURCH RESOURCES IN GENEALOGY

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RELIGION

- A significant part of Human existence
 - Since ancient times
- System of beliefs
 - Purpose of Life
 - Man's relationship to the Universe
- Creates communities of common minded people
 - Bound by culture, belief system, morality, etc.
 - Becomes an identity
- Becomes a big part of genealogy
 - As these religious communities create records



SIGNIFICANTLY VAST AND RICH RESOURCE

- As vast as the number of churches
- As vast as the number of denominations
- Extensive variety of records
- Extensive availability
- Difficult accessibility
- Historical complexity
 - Splits, mergers, demise

VARIABLE FACTORS TO ACCOUNT FOR

- Denomination
 - Understand some of the beliefs and traditions
 - Learn the hierarchical structure and terminology
 - Learn type of records kept and where kept
- History
 - Local / regional religious history
 - State Church
 - Separation of church and state
 - Religious revivals
 - Local church history
- Regional considerations
 - More better records northern states
 - Fewer poorer records southern states

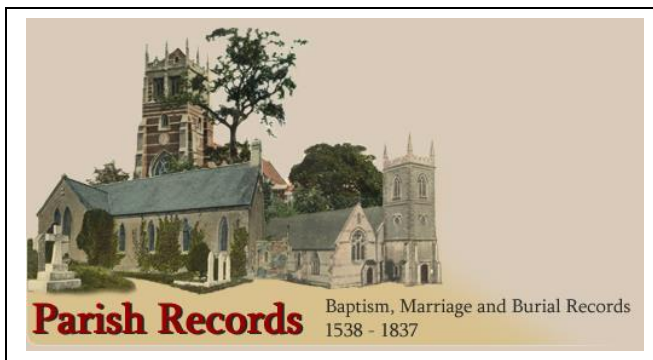


TYPES OF CHURCH RECORDS

- Vital Records
- Membership Records
- Meetings Records
- Religious observances

VITAL RECORDS

- Earliest form of Vital Records
 - Predate civil records
- Deliberate or implied
- Birth or christening / baptism
- Marriage
- Death or burial



MEMBERSHIP RECORDS

- Church Rolls or Census
 - Directories
- Arrival or departures of member(s)
 - Admissions and removals
- Sunday school lists

MEETINGS RECORDS

- Administrative and Business meetings
 - Operations and finances
- Mediations
- Disciplinary actions and fines
- Publications

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

- Confirmations
- Communions
- Bar or Bat mitzvah
- Specially recognized dates
 - Festivals or feasts



RESEARCH STRATEGY

- Discover ancestor's religious affiliations
 - Catch 22
- Look for clues in your ancestors' records
 - Family traditions
 - National origins
 - Scandinavian usually equals Lutheran
 - Italy, Germany, Spain, France mostly Catholic
 - British Isles either Anglican/Episcopalian or Presbyterian
- Learn the local churches
 - Locality religious history
 - County history
- Learn local cemeteries
- Study the neighbors most involved with your ancestors
 - What was their religious affiliation?
- Newspaper
 - Obituary
 - Church News and events
 - Specific religious affiliation of the newspaper

KNOW ABOUT THE DENOMINATION

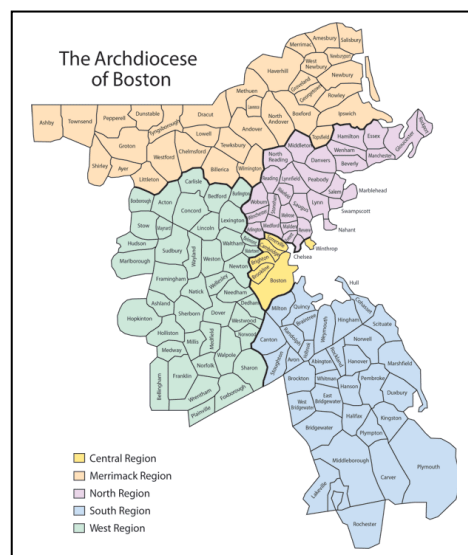
- Be aware of history
 - General and locality specific
- Be aware of religious views and traditions
- Learn the type of records kept
 - Learn nature of records
- Learn what records exist
- Learn where records kept

LOCATING CHURCH RECORDS

- Housed directly at the church
- Each Denomination has a:
 - State Archives
 - National Archives
- Possibly donated or deposited
 - Local libraries
 - Historical Societies
- Copied onto microfilm
 - Available special genealogy libraries / local history collections
- Transcribed into publications
- Internet
 - FamilySearch

INVENTORIES AND ASSESSMENTS

- WPA Church Records
 - Nationwide survey of church histories and records holdings
 - State by State, County by County



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- *The Handybook for Genealogists: United States of America*, 11th Edition, Holly Hansen editor, Everton Publishers, 2006
- *Red Book: American State, County & Town Sources*, 3rd Edition, Alice Eichholz editor, 2004
- *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy*, 3rd Edition, by Val D. Greenwood, Genealogical Publishing Company, 2001
- *The Source*, 3rd Edition, edited by Loretto Dennis Szucs & Sandra Hargreaves Luebking, Ancestry Publishing, 2006
- *A Survey of American Church Records: Major and Minor Denominations Before 1880-1890: Religious Migrations of Some of the Major Denominations (Revised & Enlarged Including Volumes I and II)*, 4th Edition, by E. Kay Kirkham, Everton Publishers, 1978
- *A Religious History of the American People*, by Sydney E. Ahlstrom, Yale University Press, 1972
- *Guide to the Manuscript Collections of the Presbyterian Church*, by Robert Benedetto, Greenwood Press, 1990
- *Our Quaker Ancestors – Finding Them in Quaker Records*, by Ellen T. Berry and David A. Berry, Genealogical Publishing Company, 1987
- *History of the Huguenot Emigration to America*, (Two Volumes in One), by Charles W. Baird, originally published 1885; reprint Genealogical Publishing Company, 1991

INTERNET

USGenWeb -- <http://www.usgenweb.com> is a site of links to information and networking, organized by the states and counties in the United States. This is where you can find information as to what records are available by state or county, who to contact, what organizations exist, history and sometimes records for states, counties and possibly cities.

- **Link to the USGenWeb Archives: Church Records Project**
<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~usgenweb/churches>

Cyndi's List -- <http://www.cyndislist.com> A website that attempts to organize and categorize all genealogy websites by subject, etc. So for example, when you go to her main page scroll down to "Software & Computers" and click to pull up a list of links on genealogy software and other computer related web sites of primary interest to genealogists. Here you can also find extensive links to Italian or Irish genealogy web sites, or learn about Adoption services and records, etc.

➤ **Link to more information about Church Records**

<http://www.cyndislist.com/religion>

Family Search -- <http://www.familysearch.org> is one of the greatest genealogy web sites as it is the famous Mormon Church's extensive database of over 1 billion indexed records, with births or marriages, from the 1500s to the 1920s. A great place to start doing research. Includes various databases, research tips, resources, downloaded genealogies, etc., as well as online catalog of the Family History Library in Salt Lake.

➤ **Be sure to study the Wiki for information on Church Records**

https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Church_Records

Rootsweb -- <http://www.rootsweb.com> is another fantastic web site which not only offers general genealogy information, research tips, etc., but also has some databases to search and links to many other specific subject web sites. There are several databases including the downloaded genealogy databases; plus links to mailing lists and message boards and how to connect or access archives of previous postings; also links to many genealogy websites that are hosted for free by Rootsweb.

➤ **Guide Number 17, Religious Institutions Records**

<http://rwguide.rootsweb.ancestry.com/lesson17.htm>

Ancestry -- http://www.ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=Overview_of_Church_Records
Free wiki page on Church Records.

Find-A-Grave.com -- <http://www.findagrave.com> The name pretty much tells it all. Find the grave for almost anyone anywhere, including by cemetery names (including Churches).

Works Progress Administration (WPA) Historical Records Survey, compiled by Bryan L. Mulcahy, Reference Library for the Fort Myers-Lee County Library, 2011 --
http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~flmgs/articles/Works_Projects_AdministrationMarch2011_BM.pdf Outline of the kind of surveys and inventories of records conducted by the WPA, which includes Church Records, State-by-State.

Internet Archive – <https://www.archive.org> Internet Archive is a non-profit digital library offering free universal access to books, movies & music, as well as 445 billion archived web pages. The Internet Archive is a San Francisco-based nonprofit digital library with the stated mission of "universal access to all knowledge". Great wealth of records, resources and historic published books.

(SOME KNOWN) REPOSITORIES:

American Baptist Historical Society, 1106 S Goodman St, Rochester, NY 14620-2532
<http://abhsarchives.org/for-researchers/genealogy>

American Jewish Archives, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220

The Archives of the Episcopal Church
<http://www.episcopalarchives.org/genealogy.html>

Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, 500 College Ave, Swarthmore, PA 19081

General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church, PO Box 127, Drew University, Madison, NJ 07940

Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Assembly Drive, Montreat, NC 28757

Huguenot Historical Society, Box 339, New Paltz, NY 12561

Presbyterian Historical Society, 425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19147-1516
<http://www.history.pcusa.org/services/reference/genealogy-and-family-history-research>