

Hello and good evening!

My name is Maureen Mead, a volunteer Assistant State Coordinator for the CTGenWeb Project, as well as the County Coordinator for Fairfield County, CTGenWeb Project. (www.rootsweb.com/~ctgenweb). Although I live on the other side of the country, I've spent time in New England--specifically, Fairfield County, CT, researching the local records and in the CT State Library in Hartford. I began in 1996 to serve the CTGenWeb Project, but prior to that, I was the host and leader of the New England SIG in the Genealogy Forum on AOL. I love volunteering to help others because along the way, I always learn more as I share with other researchers. It's always a new adventure of discovery and learning.

If you have Connecticut ancestry, you are blessed. Connecticut is a treasure-trove of genealogical information, as is the rest of New England. The early Puritans believed that the world was created to give glory to a perfect God of purpose, plan, and ORDER. And in creating an orderly, godly community of believers, the community bore witness by demonstrating order and organization. The Town Proprietors set up the town so that records of births, marriages and deaths were kept since the town's founding, usually by the Town Clerk, a key job in the town.

Although the quality of these records were dependent on the local Town Clerk and varies from town to town, these records can be valuable finding aids. Following the Revolution, as the towns grew, the state of Connecticut began imposing state standards upon the local Town Clerks. In 1870, a State Board of Health was created. By 1897, Town Clerks were required to send copies of their vital records to the Connecticut Board of Health. But there was a gap in connecting the previous records.

ENTER THE BARBOUR COLLECTION OF VITAL RECORDS. In 1914, a man by the name of Lucius Barnes Barbour, Connecticut Examiner of Public Records from 1911-1914, began a project to organize and centralize the state vital records. The enormous task involved examining the original records and abstracting the entries onto sheets of paper and preparing an easy-to-use, statewide index. Barbour's project was mostly finished by 1926. Today, the papers are archived in little drawers which now line the wall of the CT State Library in Hartford, Connecticut. These slips have also been microfilmed and books published from the records. From the filmed and published records, transcriptions have also been published on the Internet.

Recent efforts to advance Barbour's work, by collecting information between 1850-1900 have been done, but there is no statewide index for these additional records. Also, records from private sources, such as abstracted from other sources such as diaries and personal manuscripts are included, in part, with the Barbour Collection and, in part, with the Church Records Index, at the CT State Library in Hartford.

Barbour's statewide index consists of over a million individual entries, listed and indexed alphabetically by surname. After the Index is a bound volume of abstracts for each town, along with a brief description of the collection for each town. While some records of individuals born after 1870 are also included, the bulk of the records are from each of the 137 towns and go up to the year 1850. Information contained in the Barbour Collection birth index, where provided, includes the name of the child, the relationship (son or daughter), birth date, birth location, and parents' names. For the marriage index, where provided, is listed the name of the bride or groom, residence, the name of the person married, and the name of the bride's or groom's parents. The death index may include a variety of listings, but begins, again, with the

surname, then first name--and can include, where provided, the relationship to survivor(s), place of death, residence at time of death, and birth and death dates. In the early years, slaves may also be indexed in the vital records.

PUBLISHED VOLUMES: The most popular editions seem to be those published by Genealogical Publishing Co./GPC, in 55 volumes. However, some of the volumes are out of print. I sometimes see them offered at online used book stores and at Ebay.com

As the CT State Library cautions, be aware that as you move further and further away from the original town records (which themselves are subject to error), the potential exists for compounding errors. I suggest that you use the published records found as clues to the originals, not as the final "facts." They can be a great place to target your ancestor in time and to search for other local records which assist in your research.

Films of the original town records are available at the CT State Library and via your local the LDS FHC (www.familysearch.org).

You can access its card catalog here:

www.familysearch.org/Eng/Library/fhlcatalog/supermainframeset.asp?display=titledetails&itleno=295370&disp=Barbour+collection%20%20&columns=*,0,

There are 98 films in the LDS FHC collection, which include a general surname Index and then the collection of town vital records.

The catalog lists index entries such as:

General index Aa - Alk

General index All - Andr

and so forth. . .

The index of records by township are preserved on 17 films.

Dick Eastman reported on a new CD, which is a compilation of the Barbour Collection, called The Ricker Compilation of Vital Records of Early Connecticut - Based on the Barbour Collection of Connecticut Town Vital Records and Other Statistical Sources, compiled and edited by Jacquelyn Ladd Ricker.

source: http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2006/09/the_ricker_comp.html

Other sources are the CT Society of Genealogists publication, "The Nutmegger," which has printed selections of the Barbour Collection.

Subscription-based sites sometimes have the records online, such as www.ancestry.com.

If you would like to access some FREE Barbour Collection abstracts, the following volunteers have generously shared their time and data with anyone with an Internet connection:

Jane Devlin's New England Genealogy Site:

http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~jdevlin/0_ct-index.htm. (Thanks to Coralynn Brown who has transcribed many of the records and volunteered them to various sites.)

Ray Brown's NY/New England Genealogy: <http://www.rays-place.com/>

The CTGenWeb Project: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~ctgenweb>

You may find more by using www.google.com, www.dogpile.com, or another search engine to find additional online transcriptions.

TIPS:

1. The Revolution affected some town's records. Some town halls were attacked and some records were taken away and may have been lost.

2. Be sure to check the "genealogy" of the towns in which you are searching. Since the vital records of the towns were kept at the town's founding--if a town emerged from a parent town, say in 1820. . .you need to know from which town that child town emerged, in order to access vital and court records. And in some cases, you may have to go back through the genesis of several towns. An essential source for the history of the towns and the key contacts for the towns, is a small book published by the CT Society of Genealogists, called, "Connecting To Connecticut." Look for this book at your local library.

3. It's important to have a township map and to be aware of the boundary lines for a given time. I can't advise which book is best, but there were several at the library I visited and it was helpful for me to view where the boundaries were laid. The final boundary line between CT and NY was not officially decided until the late 1880's.

4. S-p-e-l-l-i-n-g DOESN'T COUNT when it comes to genealogy. Deliberately try to misspell the name and search all variants. Although the Barbour Collection does not list the variants in their original slips of papers, the spelling variants are listed in the published volumes so that you can search more efficiently. I do not think it was so much an issue of MISSPELLING, as literacy was high in the New England colonies. There were no hard and fast spelling rules, prior to Webster's Dictionary, which happened *after the Revolution. I've viewed records of ancestors' deeds and other filmed records, which uses various spellings for the same man within the same document. They did not seem to care or it was acceptable to do so.

Thanks to the diligence of the CT Town clerks and the work begun by Lucius Barnes Barbour, researchers tracing families in CT have a fantastic resource for targeting pre-1850 family history. Just remember to use the collection as a finding aid and a pointer to original documents. Look for other records, which may have also been abstracted, indexed, collected and stored in the towns and the CT State library. They may also have been subsequently filmed, transcribed in a variety of media and available from a variety of published sources, including the Internet.

Thanks for attending this talk. If you have any questions, I don't promise to have all the answers. But if I can't answer you right away, I'll try to find the answer in the next few days.

Sources:

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3. The New England Historic Genealogical Society. Connecticut Microfilms at NEHGS, by Barbara Jean Mathews, CG. online:
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