

COURSE VIDEO



## Uncovering Hidden Histories: Compiling Biographies of People Omitted from Written Record

An online conversation course

*Perspective from  
Newbury Street Press  
Genealogist  
Meaghan E.H. Siekman*



# Historical Bias

# Bias

- particular tendency, trend, inclination, feeling, or opinion, especially one that is preconceived or unreasoned
  - illegal bias against older job applicants;
  - the magazine's bias toward art rather than photography;
- unreasonably hostile feelings or opinions about a social group; prejudice

# Bias in History

## Bias of the Historian

- selecting just those causes or themes which the historian has an interest in highlighting and ignoring others of equal significance

## Bias of the Source Creator

- societal norms or laws of the historical period that affected the bias of the person creating the record





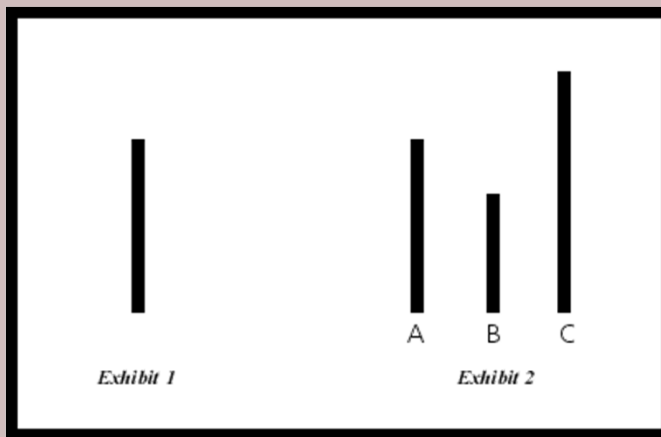
## Example: Columbus “Discovered” the New World

# Textbook Bias

- Invisibility
- Stereotyping
- Imbalanced perspective
  - Removing agency from underrepresented
  - Western centric
- Rose Colored Glasses
  - Glossing over unpleasant realities
- Fragmentation
  - i.e. Boxing out achievements of women in science
- Language Bias
  - i.e. Native groups as “roaming,” etc.



# Conformity Bias



When an individual who doesn't know this is a test gives the correct answer is then informed that the rest of the group has said Line B, in 75% of cases the individual changes their own opinion in favor of the groups' opinion.

- How might conforming to societal norms effect the way historians write history?
- How might this affect the way documents are recorded?

# Confirmation Bias

- When we look for things in events or people that confirm what we already believe to be true about them.
  - Not seeking out objective facts
  - Remembering details that uphold your belief and ignore information that challenges it.
- Example: Left-handed people are more creative than right-handed people.

# Historians Confronting Bias

## Questions good historians ask of their work:

- Are there other viewpoints of this event/place/person?
- Have I neglected to acknowledge a group of people or an influence on an event?
- What aspects of this past are uncomfortable to me?
- Is there someone else that could offer input to what I have researched/written so far?

# Bias and your Ancestors

Have they been left out of the historical narrative?

Do records of your ancestors reflect the bias of their time?

Is your own bias affecting what resources you include in your search?





Acknowledge your own bias!

# Address Your Own Bias

## Ask Yourself:

- Is there an aspect of my ancestor's experience I have not explored?
- Do any aspects of my ancestor's past or identity make me uncomfortable?
- Have I only been looking at resources from a known and comfortable source?

# Address the Bias of the Historian

## Ask Yourself:

- What other works has this author published?
- What are the common methods in their approach to history?
- What methods do they typically ignore in their work?
- Are there other authors that fill those gaps?

# Address the Bias of the Source Creator

## Ask Yourself:

- Who wrote/compiled/transcribed this record?
- What is their relationship to the ancestor/s I am researching?
- What outside influences may have affected how the document was created?
- Did the source creator neglect to include individuals in the record?

# Examples of Bias in Records



# Challenging modern records

🕒 December 10, 2018 📁 American History, Family Stories, Research Methods, Technology 📌 African American Research, Critical Analysis, Serendipity 👤 Christopher C. Child



*A record generated for Meghan Markle's great-grandmother.*

<https://vitabrevis.americanancestors.org/2018/12/challenging-modern-records/>



**CERTIFICATION OF DEATH**  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

No 327122

This is to certify that the person named on this certificate died on the date and at the place shown. This record of death was filed with the Registrar of Vital Statistics of this Registration District.

DISTRICT NUMBER 0272	REGISTRATION NUMBER 18
NAME Sylvia M. Botsford	
DATE OF DEATH April 28, 1887	DATE OF FILING Unknown
PLACE OF DEATH (COUNTY) Allegany	(CITY, TOWN OR VILLAGE) Rushford

Father - :Unknown  
Mother - unknown

Rita M. Hunt REGISTRAR OF VITAL STATISTICS      Rushford DISTRICT      2-14-2009 DATE

**WARNING: Any alteration voids this certification**

DOH: 2825 (11/98)

**CERTIFICATION OF DEATH**

**STATE OF NEW YORK**

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

This is to certify that the person named on this certificate died on the date and at the place shown. This record of death was filed with the Registrar of Vital Statistics of this Registration District.

District Number – 0272

Registration Number – 18

Name: Lydia M. Botsford

Date of Death: April 28, 1887

Date of Filing: Unknown

Place of Death (County) : Allegany

Town of Rushford

Her age at death was 72 yrs., one month, 26 days

Her father and mother's names were listed as unknown

The medical attendant or other attestant: J.P. Bixby, Fillmore, N.Y.

Rita M. Hunt  
Registrar of Vital Statistics

Rushford -  
District

2-19-2009  
Date

Clerk Omitting Information

80-01

7-224.

TWELFTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES. F 51

State CONNECTICUT Supervisor's District No. 26

County HARTFORD Enumeration District No. 152

Township or other division of county HARTFORD TOWN Name of Institution, HARTFORD CITY

Name of incorporated city, town, or village, within the above-named division, HARTFORD CITY Ward of city, 3

Enumerated by me on the 8 & 9 day of June, 1900, Henry E. Lovland, Enumerator. 80

LOCATION.			NAME	RELATION.	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION.								NATIVITY.			CITIZENSHIP.			OCCUPATION, TRADE, OR PROFESSION.				EDUCATION.				OWNERSHIP OF HOME.	
AN	CITIES.	Street.			of each person whose place of abode on June 1, 1900, was in this family.	Relationship of each person to the head of the family.	Color or race.	Sex.	DATE OF BIRTH.	Age at last birthday.	Whether blind, deaf, or dumb.	Number of years married.	Height in inches.	Weight in pounds.	Place of birth of this person.	Place of birth of Father of this person.	Place of birth of Mother of this person.	Year of immigration to this country.	Number of years in this country.	Naturalized.	Occupation.	Months not employed.	Attended school (in this country).	Can read.	Can write.	Can speak English.	Owned or rented.	Owned free or mortgaged.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
41	100	140	Danahy John	Head	M	M	Jan 1874	26	M	5			Connecticut	Ireland	Ireland				Labourer day			Yes	Yes	Yes	R	H		
			Mary	Wife	W	F	Dec 1875	24	M	2	1		Ireland	Ireland	Ireland	Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes				
			Mary E	Daughter	W	F	Sep 1897	2	S				Connecticut	Connecticut	Ireland													
32	101	141	Cornwall Albert	Head	M	M	Mar 1868	32	M	10			New York	New York	New York				Teamster			Yes	Yes	Yes	R	H		
			Jennie	Wife	W	F	May 1858	42	M	10	2	1	Connecticut	Connecticut	New York							Yes	Yes	Yes				
			Milton Charles	Boys	M	M	Jan 1882	18	S				Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut				Agent			Yes	Yes	Yes				
54	102	142	Brown Henry	Head	M	M	Oct 1852	47	M	13			Florida	Florida	Florida				Labourer day			Yes	Yes	Yes	M	H		
			Mary	Wife	W	F	Dec 1850	49	M	12	1		Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut							Yes	Yes	Yes				
			Alfred L	Son	M	M	Oct 1891	9	S				Connecticut	Florida	Connecticut				at school			Yes	Yes	Yes				
			Archie	Nephew	M	M	May 1891	9	S				Connecticut	Florida	Connecticut				Porter			Yes	Yes	Yes				
			Jessie C	Nephew	M	F	Sep 1877	23	S				Connecticut	Florida	Connecticut				at school			Yes	Yes	Yes				
			Mason Carrie E	Sister	F	F	Apr 1870	30	S		X		Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut							Yes	Yes	Yes				
			W.C. Carter Julia	Grand N	F	F	May 1857	42	M	17	1	1	Maryland	Maryland	Maryland							Yes	Yes	Yes	R	H		
			Amber B	Son	M	M	Apr 1890	10	S				Washington	Washington	Washington				Shoemaker			Yes	Yes	Yes				
			St. Smith Frederick	Head	M	M	Nov 1818	81	M	18			Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut				Cutter			Yes	Yes	Yes	R	H		
			Minnie	Wife	W	F	Oct 1827	72	M	13	7	1	Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut							Yes	Yes	Yes				
			Nora M	Daughter	W	F	May 1897	3	S				Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut				at school			Yes	Yes	Yes				
			Nello Annie	Daughter	W	F	Mar 1895	5	S	3	1		Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut							Yes	Yes	Yes				
			Mildred M. Billings	Nephew	W	F	Sep 1876	24	S				Connecticut	Connecticut	Connecticut				Grand boy			Yes	Yes	Yes				
44	103	143	Paul Maynot	Head	M	M	Oct 1850	49	M	3	2	2	Ireland	Ireland	Ireland	Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes	R	H		
			Catherine	Daughter	W	F	Apr 1890	10	S				Connecticut	New York	Ireland				at school			Yes	Yes	Yes				
			John J	Son	M	M	Jan 1891	9	S				Connecticut	New York	Ireland				at school			Yes	Yes	Yes				

1900 US Federal Census, Hartford, Hartford, Connecticut.

# Census Takers and Race



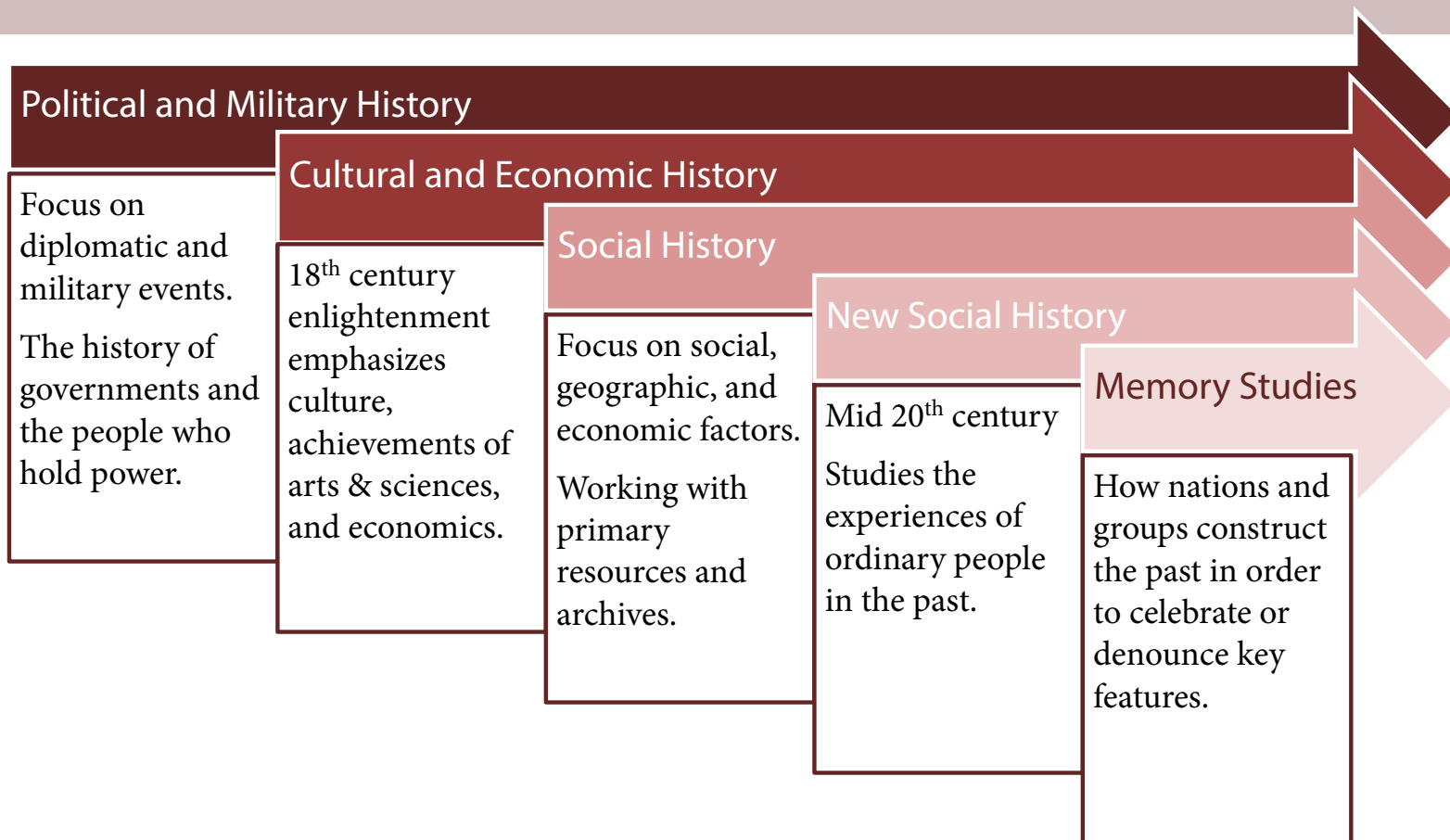
# Historical Methodology and Silenced Voices

# Historiography

The study of the methods of historians in developing history.

- Studying the historiography of a subject means studying how historians have researched and written about that subject over time.
  - The perceptions and bias of society change, and this informs historical research.
- The theories and methods historians are taught affect the bias in their work.

# How has the way we do history changed?



## How have Historical Methods shaped Genealogy?

### Social History

Most published genealogies and local histories emerge out of the influence of Social History.

Working with primary resources and archives.

### New Social History

Addition of more context to an individual's life. Trying to understand them beyond names and dates.

### Memory Studies

This is just beginning – More genealogical projects are focused on a shared experience which may be influenced by talks of collective memory.



# Race, Class, & Gender

# What is Race, Class, & Gender?

Intersectionality theory - examining the past through the ways social concepts of race, class, and gender create inequities in society. It affects:

- Individual consciousness
- Group interactions
- Group access to institutional power and privileges

# Every ancestor has a race, a class, and a gender which informs their place in society



# Who wrote it? What were their methods/bias?

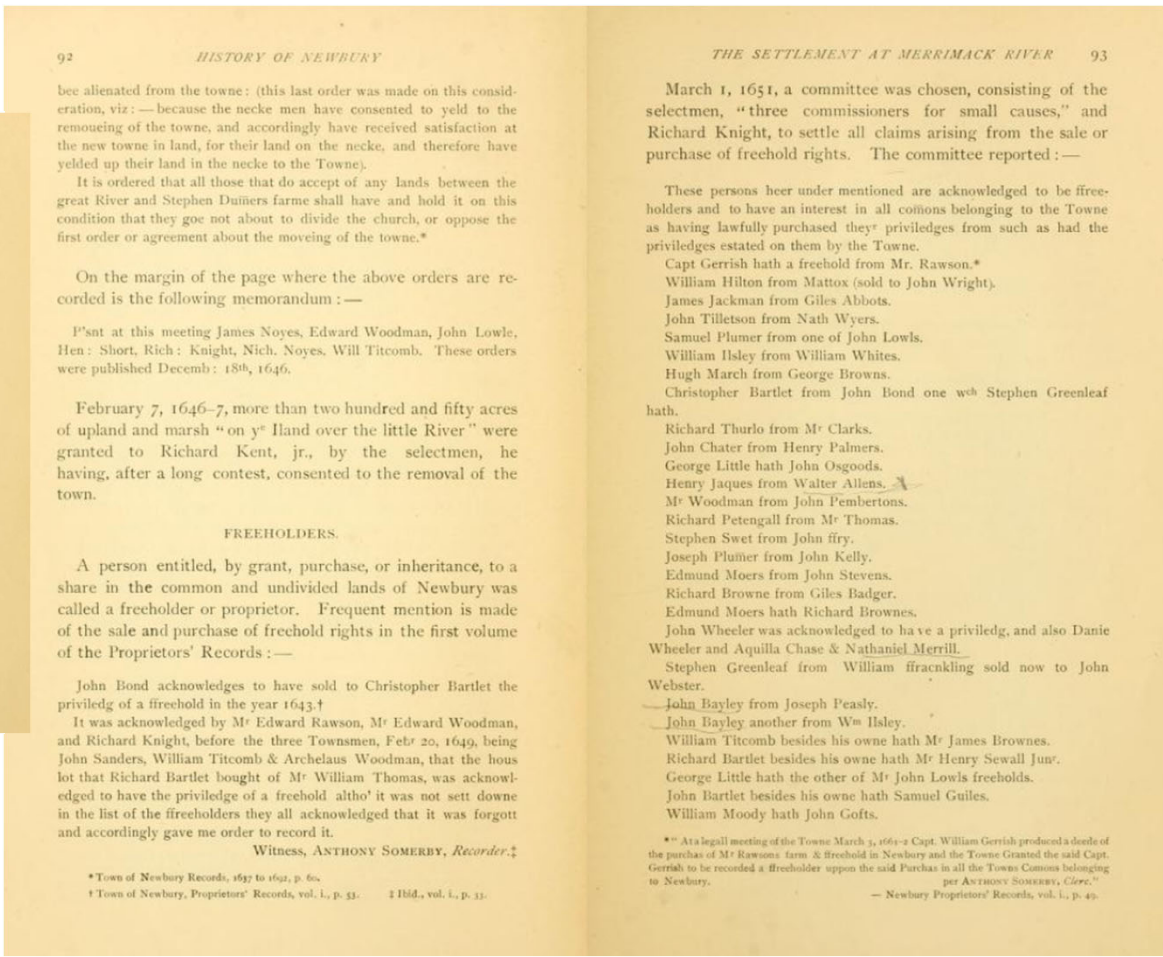
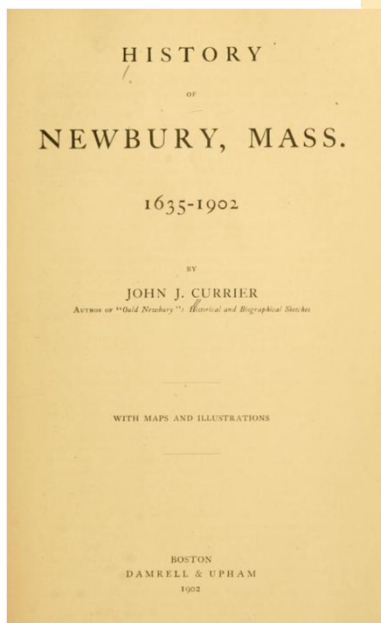
What motivations did they have in creating it?

What is their relationship to the subject?

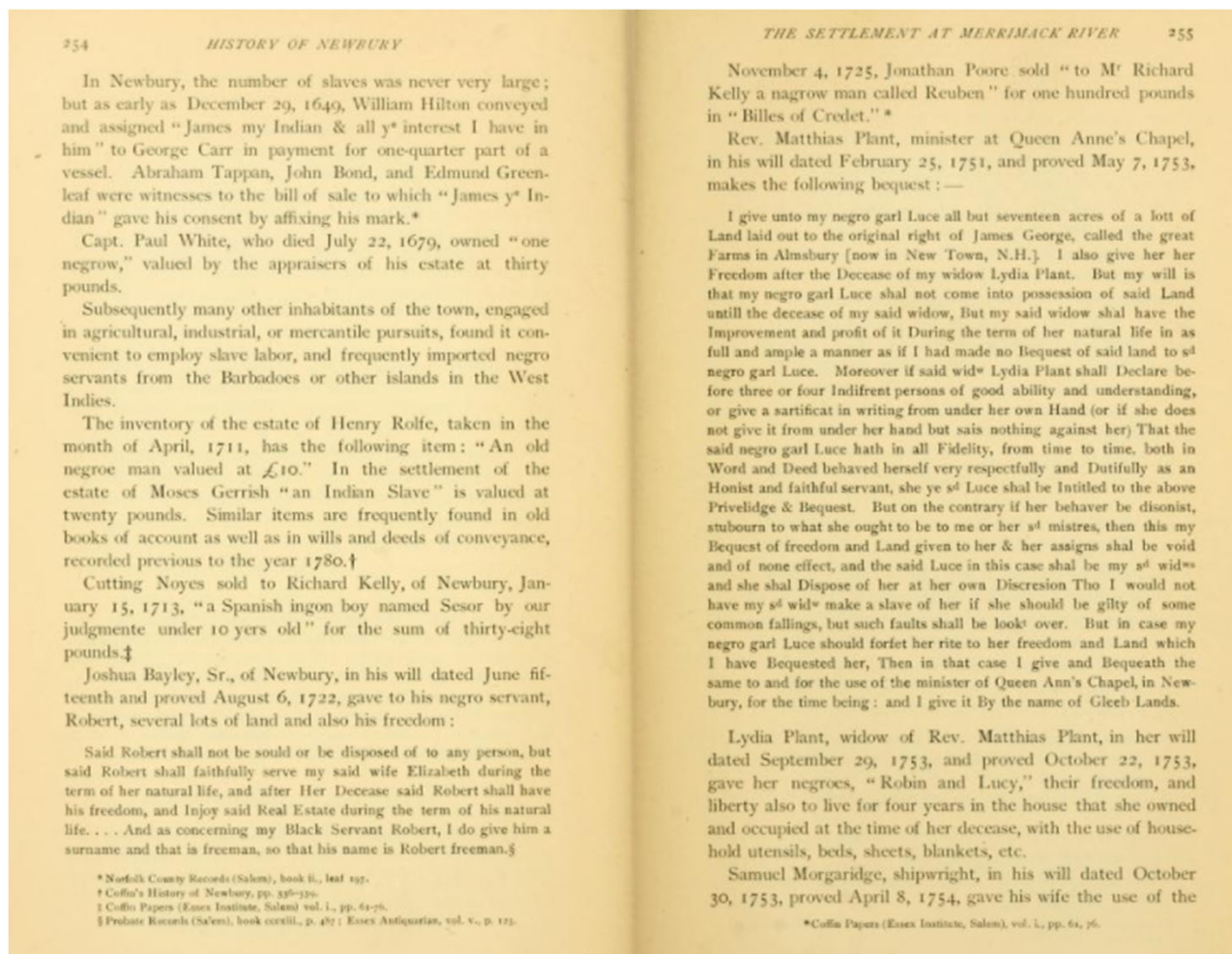
When was it written/ what was their training?

What social, cultural, or legal pressures may have influenced its creation?





# Local Histories



Local Histories Cont.





au:Currier, John J.

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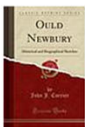
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1.  [History of Newbury, Mass., 1635-1902](#)  
 by John J Currier  
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2.  [Historical sketch of ship building on the Merrimac River](#)  
 by John J Currier  
 Print book [View all formats and languages >](#)  
 Language: English  
 Publisher: Newburyport [Mass.] : W.H. Huse & Co., Printers, 1877.  
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3.  [OULD NEWBURY : historical and biographical sketches\(classic reprint\).](#)  
 by JOHN J CURRIER  
 Print book [View all formats and languages >](#)  
 Language: English  
 Publisher: [Place of publication not identified], FORGOTTEN Books, 2015.  
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4.  [History of Newbury, Massachusetts, 1635-1902](#)  
 by John J Currier  
 Print book : Biography [View all formats and languages >](#)  
 Language: English  
 Publisher: Salem, Mass. : Higginson Book Co., [2003]  
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5.  [Bartlett's Cove : Newbury, Mass.](#)  
 by John J Currier

## Investigate the Author

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Collections Subjects Names

## Currier Family Papers, 1736-1913

**Collection** Identifier: MSS 180

Citation

Print

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Phillips Library | Currier Family Papers, 1736-1913

[Collection Overview](#)
[Collection Organization](#)
[Container Inventory](#)

### Scope and Content Note

The Currier Family Papers document the Currier families of Amesbury and Newburyport, Massachusetts. The collection features papers of the thriving Newburyport shipbuilding business of John Currier Jr. (1802-1887) and his son, John James Currier (1834-1912). Also included are personal, political, and historical papers of John James Currier and papers of other family members. Of special note in the family papers are business and militia...See more >

### Dates

1736-1913

### Creator

- Currier family (Family)

### Restrictions on Access

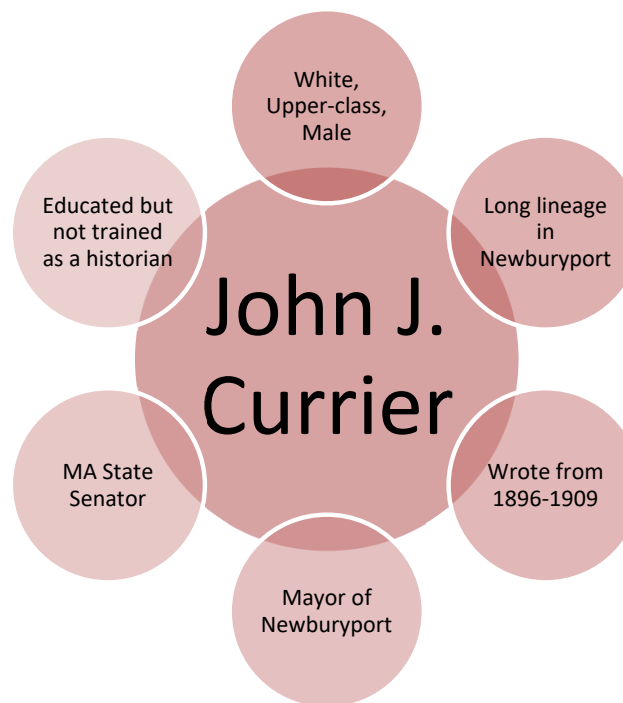
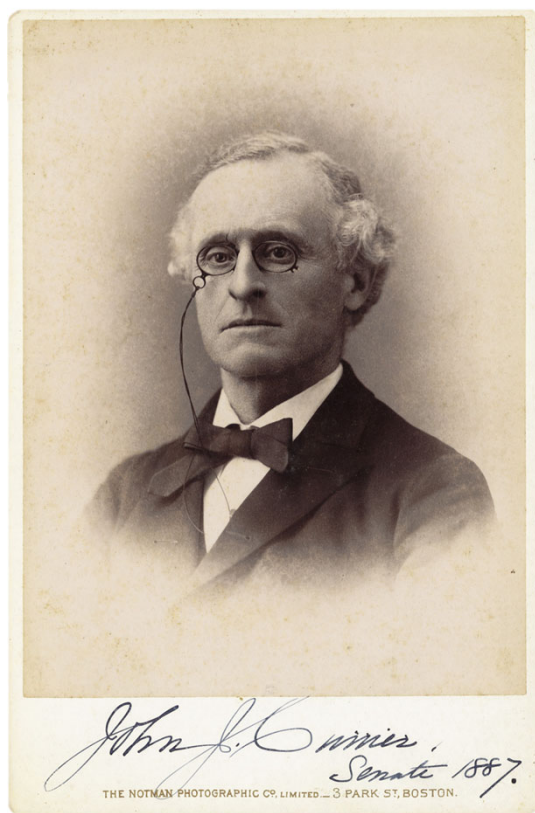
This collection is open for research use.

### Biographical Sketches

John Currier Jr., a famous Newbury, Massachusetts, shipbuilder, was born in 1802 to John (1771-1837) and Hannah (Coffin) Currier. In 1831, John established a thriving shipbuilding business which built over 97 vessels. In 1857, John's son John James Currier (1834-1912), entered the prosperous firm as a partner. By the 1880s, the call for merchant ships had decreased. The Curriers launched their last vessel, the ship *Mary L. Cushing*, in 1883. This ship was the last merchant ship built in Massachusetts. John Currier Jr. was also active in town politics. He was a member of the 1846 committee which advocated unification of the towns of Newbury and Newburyport. In 1852, he became mayor of the newly incorporated town of Newburyport when Honorable Caleb Cushing retired from the position.

Investigate the Author Cont.

# Investigate the Author



## What does this mean?

Does it mean it is a “bad” history? No!

But it does mean:

- The author’s motivation was likely to esteem his ancestral home.
- He likely saw his subject through his status as a white, upper-class, male and may have ignored sources on women, lower classes, and people of color.
- There are likely sources he did not utilize that could help in your search.

NEWBURY MARRIAGES 529

YOUNG, Sidney S., of St. John's, N. S., and Eliza Ann Merrill, int. Sept. 30, 1825.  
 Susanna and Bartholomew Lunt, int. Feb. 16, 1758. ("said Lunt takes the said Susanna Young Naked & so will not be obliged to pay any of her former husbands Debts.")  
 William, and Judith Williams, May 3, 1788.\*

SURNAMES MISSING

—, Diardamy, of Newburyport, and William Stanwood, int. Sept. 30, 1848.  
 —, Jonathan, and Mary Long, Oct. 24, 1676.  
 —, Mar., of West Newbury, and Toppan Pearson, int. Aug. 14, 1830.  
 —, Martha [Carr. int.], of Salisbury, and Benjamin Willet, at Salisbury, Oct. 4, 1748.\*  
 —, Mary, and Daniel Chase, Jan. 22, 1722-3. c. r. 7.  
 —, Sarah, and Robert Robinson, June 24, 1724. c. r. 7.  
 —, —, and Sarah Chase, "married out," bef. 8th m. 1773. c. r. 6.  
 —, —, and Lydia Chase, "married out," bef. 21: 9 m: 1775. c. r. 6.

NEGROES

Amme, servant to Benjamin Porter of Boxford, and John, servant to Joseph Noyes, int. June 9, 1733.  
 Andrew, servant of Nathan Wheeler, and Prince, servant of Moses Little, Oct. 3, 1745.\*  
 Bess, servant to Samuel Merrill, and Hanibal, servant to Rev. Moses Hale, Nov. 30, 1732.  
 Brooks, Susanna, of Methuen, and Peter Waters, mulatto servant of wid. Mary Morgaridge, int. Feb. 23, 1771.  
 Burnam, Scipio, of Ipswich, and Lucy Robin, Apr. 16, 1761. c. r. 8.  
 Cambridge, servant of Col. Moses Little, and Cate, servant of wid. Moses Sawyer, int. May 5, 1779.  
 Cate, servant of wid. Moses Sawyer, and Cambridge, servant of Col. Moses Little, int. May 5, 1779.  
 Chaddich, John, servant of Henry Rolfe, and Elisabeth Whitte, servant of Capt. William Ilsley, int. Oct. 5, 1754.  
 Colme, Jane, and Robert Jenkins, May 24, 1758. c. r. 9.  
 Cook, and Leucey, servants of John Little, jr., int. Sept. 28, 1745.  
 Cotenev, Jane, and Robert Jenkins, free negroes, May 24, 1758.\*

\*Intention also recorded.

530 NEWBURY MARRIAGES

Cudjo, and Lydia Dier, servants of Benjamin Coker, May 21, 1733.\*  
 Cuffe, servant to Dea. William Morss, and Pegge, Indian servant, to John Holeman, Nov. 8, 1732.\*  
 Dier, Lydia, and Cudjo, servants of Benjamin Coker, May 21, 1733.\*  
 Hall, Pero, and Catherine Small of Ipswich [mulattoes. c. r. 2], Aug. 14, 1746.\*  
 Hanibal, servant to Rev. Moses Hale, and Bess, servant to Samuel Merrill, Nov. 30, 1732.\*  
 Jane, mulatto freewoman, and John Small, mulatto freeman, both of Ipswich, Nov. 14, 1727. c. r. 7.  
 Jenkins, Robert, and Jane Cotenev, free negroes, May 24, 1758.\*  
 Joel, servant of Mrs. Sarah Weed, and Priscilla, servant of Dr. Morrill of Salisbury, int. Nov. 18, 1768.  
 John, servant to Joseph Noyes, and Amme, servant to Benjamin Porter of Boxford, int. June 9, 1733.  
 Katharine, servant of wid. Abigail Noyes, and Peter, mulatto servant of wid. Mary Morgaridge, int. Nov. 22, 1766.  
 Leucey, and Cook, servants of John Little, jr., int. Sept. 28, 1745.  
 Cambridge, of Newbury Cohoss, N. H., and Dinah Tevit, resident in Newbury, Mar. 3, 1784.\*  
 Lucy, lately servant to late Rev. Mr. Plant, and Thomas Newfield, Aug. 14, 1754. c. r. 8.  
 Lucy, servant of John Little, and Robbin, servant of late Rev. Mr. Plant, Mar. 2, 1755. c. r. 8.  
 Margaret, servant of Nicholas Gilman, Esq. of Exeter, and Thomas, servant of Peter Coffin, int. June 12, 1742.  
 Member, Nan, and John Sweed, Feb. 9, 1715-16.\*  
 Molle, servant of Rev. Jedediah Jewet of Rowley, and Toney, servant of Daniel Noyes, int. Nov. 1, 1740.  
 Moor, Titus Austin, and Betsy Phillips, Nov. 8, 1807.\*  
 Newfield, Thomas, and Lucy, lately serv't to "late" Rev. Mr. Plant, Aug. 14, 1754. c. r. 8.  
 Pegge, Indian servant to John Holeman, and Cuffee, servant to Dea. William Morss, Nov. 8, 1732.\*  
 Peter, mulatto servant of wid. Mary Morgaridge, and Katharine, servant of wid. Abigail Noyes, int. Nov. 22, 1766.  
 Phillips, Betsy, and Titus Austin Moor, Nov. 8, 1807.\*  
 Phillis, servant of Capt. Joseph Hale, and Tymon, servant of Dr. Thomas Chadwick of Boxford, int. Apr. 6, 1769.  
 Prince, servant of Moses Little, and Andrew, servant of Nathan Wheeler, Oct. 3, 1745.\*  
 Priscilla, servant of Dr. Morrill of Salisbury, and Joel, servant of Mrs. Sarah Weed, int. Nov. 18, 1768.

\*Intention also recorded.

NEWBURY MARRIAGES 531

Robbin, servant of late Rev. Mr. Plant, and Lucy, servant of John Little, Mar. 2, 1755. c. r. 8.  
 Robin Lucy, and Scipio Burnam of Ipswich, Apr. 16, 1761. c. r. 8.  
 Rose, servant of Benjamin Harris, and Scipio, servant of Dea. Samuel Moody, Oct. 13, 1749.\*  
 Scipio, servant of Dea. Sam[ue]ll Moody, and Rose, servant of Benjamin Harris, Oct. 13, 1749.\*  
 Small, Catherine, of Ipswich, and Pero Hall [mulattoes. c. r. 2], Aug. 14, 1746.\*  
 Small, John, mulatto, freeman, and Jane, mulatto freewoman, both of Ipswich, Nov. 24, 1727. c. r. 7.  
 Sweed, John, and Nan Member, Feb. 9, 1715-16.\*  
 Tevit, Dinah, resident in Newbury, and Cambridge Little of Newbury Cohoss, N. H., Mar. 3, 1784.\*  
 Thomas, servant of Peter Coffin, and Margaret, servant of Nicholas Gilman, Esq. of Exeter, int. June 12, 1742.  
 Toney, servant of Daniel Noyes, and Molle, servant of Rev. Jedediah Jewet of Rowley, int. Nov. 1, 1740.  
 Tymon, servant of Dr. Thomas Chadwick of Boxford, and Phillis, servant of Capt. Joseph Hale, int. Apr. 6, 1769.  
 Waters, Peter, mulatto servant of wid. Mary Morgaridge, and Susanna Brooks of Methuen, int. Feb. 23, 1771.  
 Whitte, Elisabeth, servant of Capt. William Ilsley, and John Chaddich, servant of Henry Rolfe, int. Oct. 5, 1754.

\*Intention also recorded.

...  
Cambridge, a decent Man of Lot Moses Little informed of his intention  
 of Marriage with Late, a decent woman of the wid. of Lot of Newbury  
 both of Newbury Nov 6 1779 Tested them in the Law Church  
Peter son Robey of Newbury Port informed of his intention of

Cambridge Little of Newbury Colono, in the state of New-  
hampshire to Dinah Tevit, a Resident in Newbury, were  
married, March 3<sup>d</sup> 1784 (Colord)

## Marriage Records for Cambridge Little



# Newspapers

The negroes here, while in slavery, had but one name. After they were freed by the constitution of 1780, those who left their masters took their family names. Thus in the records we read that, "Cambridge, servant of Col. Moses Little" married some woman, but his second marriage, after the peace, is recorded " Cambridge Little married Dinah Tibbitt" This Cambridge and Dinah lived in a house, the cellar of which I had filled in when I owned the land a few years ago near the Woodbridge school at the Upper Green, Newbury. Cambridge and Dinah were cute characters for a tale during the first years of their marriage, although legally free, they lived in Col. Little's family. When the first child was a baby a dance of colored folks was held in town to which they went, leaving their offspring in Mrs. Little's care. Dinah danced all night and when the mistress mildly rebuked her for the trouble she had caused, Dinah excused herself by saying that she had forgotten all about the young one.

Some of the family owned an island with a small house in a pond some miles back in the country and it was decided to let these negroes have the place and get such living as they could upon it. So they furnished a horse and cart, with which they started off and took possession. A tree was growing on the side of a hill and was leaning downhill and Cambridge wanted to cut it so it would fall up hill. His plan was to hitch the horse to the top of the tree. This he did, and the tree fell down the hill taking the horse with it and killing the animal. This ended the experiment of Cambridge in farming on his own hook. He returned to Newbury and lived in the house which has been mentioned.

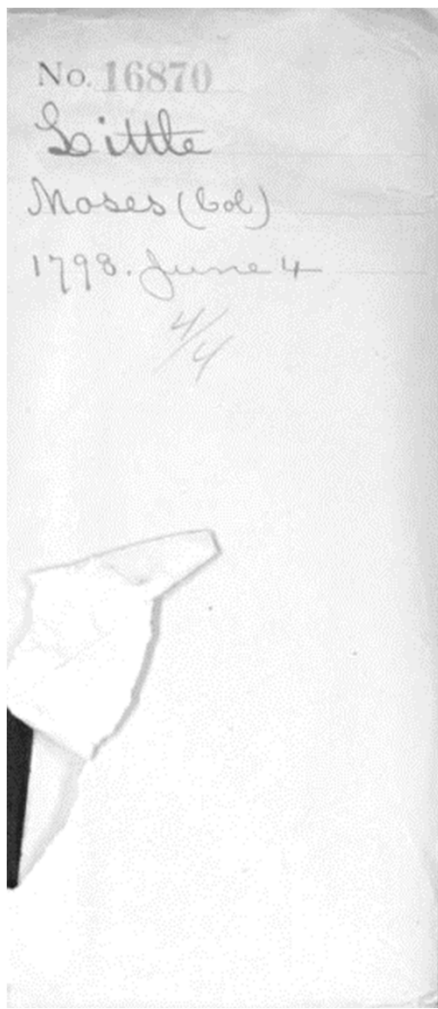
The town records have the following entry "Cambridge Little, died, 25 Feb. 1825." Dinah lived to be 98 years old. Her daughter married a man named Francis, and with her the old woman lived and died in 1852 in the house next to the railroad at the crossing at Low street, and her descendents still remain.

*Newburyport Morning Herald – Sept. 20, 1902 – page 2  
(Likely written by N.N. Withington)*

Newspaper “history” of Cambridge Little, formerly enslaved by Moses Little.

Suggests a vibrant Black community at and around Newburyport, MA

Even if the stories here are false or elaborated, it shows that a Black community did exist, demonstrates attitudes in Newburyport towards those formerly enslaved, and gives more clues for your research.



Probate Inventory for Moses Little

Minute continued sum brought forward - - -	8892 50
Great estate in this county in Homestead lands the Easterly side of the road about one hundred acres with the buildings thereon	10000
About sixty acres homestead lands with the buildings thereon the Easterly side of the road -	2750
One other piece of <sup>land</sup> meadows and pasture undivided with Josiah Little the half about 5 1/2 acres -	275
One other piece of land at Browns garden so called about 16 acres	400
Four acres field land with a barn thereon the West side of the country road leading to Bradford - - - - -	240
About twenty seven acres field & pasture land on the Easterly side of the said road - - - - -	1000
About seven acres salt marsh nigh Peanons mill - - - -	250
About four acres salt marsh at Joncks so called - - - -	80
Two acres of land on Bradford road opposite Peter Ordways -	80
Minute continued. Lands not in this County appraised from best information given -	
About five hundred acres in Little's grove adjoining New Locster undivided with Josiah Little's estate estimated at -	1500
Eleven hundred & fifty acres in Dusham undivided with <del>Joseph</del> Joseph's estate	2300
Lot No. two above Dusham thirteen hundred & sixty four acres	2700
Lands in Lewis town in company with six Little's others about 5000	8000
Lands in & below the Plantation of Littleborough undivided	1000
Lands in Poland first division about six hundred acres -	1500
About 2000 acres in St. Poland undivided with Josiah Little's	8000
One hundred acre lot in said Poland conveyed to Lydia Atkinson by deed of gift as portion - - - - -	600
Thorn in Newbury state of Vermont occupied by John G. Taylor the meadow & house lots with the buildings thereon - - - -	4000
Lands in said Newbury called the upper meadows two house lots & two meadow lots with the buildings thereon - - - - -	1600
About twenty three hundred acres back land Newbury Vermont	2300
About two hundred & forty acres land in Haverhill New Hampshire	240
About 1100 acres land in Littleton state of New Hampshire	11000
About 700 acres land in Danville Vermont - - - - -	2000
	\$ 66,942 50

Benj <sup>m</sup> Stevens	1	2	2	
Jeremiah Stevens	1	1	1	
Therobon Sawyer	3	1	<del>2</del>	
Eben <sup>t</sup> Sawyer	2	1	2	
Francis Sawyer	1	4	5	
Dudley Smith	2	3	3	
Caleb Sawyer	5		2	
George Allen				6
Cambridge Little				4
Solomon Thomas	2		3	
Daniel Abbot	5		1	
Eaph <sup>m</sup> Curtis	1	1	6	
Abigail Clough	2	1	2	
Stephen Richardson	1	2	3	
Dudley Smith	2	3	3	
Moses Clements	1	3	3	
N <sup>o</sup> House 160	310.	284.	584.	89.



1790 US Federal Census – Dracut, MA



## THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN MASSACHUSETTS

WILBUR H. SIEBERT\*

**M**OST of the fugitive slaves who passed through the New England states on their way to Canada and secure freedom crossed some section of Massachusetts by means of the so-called "Underground Railroad." The operatives of this curious combination of variable routes were, of course, abolitionists, whose pity for the oppressed slave impelled them to welcome and conceal him on his arrival at their doors, attend to his needs, and, a night or two later, hitch up their teams and convey him to some trusted friend a few miles farther on.

This secret system extended through all the northern states as far west as Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa, and everywhere its methods were substantially the same. The increasing supply of fugitives who came to New England was brought by sailing vessels engaged in trade with our South Atlantic seaboard, and in some instances from the West Indies. Generally the fugitives came as stowaways, though occasionally as paid passengers, under the watchful eye of some friendly negro hand on board. Among their ports of departure were New Orleans, Mobile, Jacksonville, Savannah, Charleston, Wilmington, North Carolina, and Portsmouth and Norfolk, Virginia. Of course, some of the stowaways were discovered on board ship and were returned to bondage. Among these we may mention Peter, who secreted himself on the British ship *Wilson* at Charleston, bound for Liverpool. He was found and handed over to the brig *Reporter*, sailing to Boston, after being two days out, with the request that on arrival at that port he be transferred to the first vessel going South. Accordingly he was placed on

\* For a more lengthy treatment of this subject by Professor Siebert and a map of the underground routes, see *Proceedings*, American Antiquarian Society, New Series XLV, Part 1, 25-100: Wilbur H. Siebert, "The Underground Railroad in Massachusetts."

### THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD 463

Concord, there was a route to the Merrimac at Lowell which avoided that cotton-mill city by turning northeast to the negro settlement known as "Black North" (Dracut), whence the wayfarers were helped on to Pelham and Windham in New Hampshire.

The most notable friend of the escaping slave in the

Item I give unto my son Joseph Anthony Negro the sum of five shillings  
in Cash To be Paid out of my Estate by my Executor In as much as I  
Have already Given him the sum of Thirty Pound in the Sale of the  
Land he Purchased of me

Item I give and bequeath unto my son Robert anthony Negro the sum of  
Twenty Four Pound in good Bills of Publick Credite to be Paid by my  
Executor out of my Estate

Item I Give and Bequeath unto my Daughter Peggy or margret anthony  
Negro the sum of Twelve Pound Cash or Bills of Publick Credite to be  
Paid by my Executor out of my Estate

Item I give and bequeath unto my Daughter hannah Anthony Negro  
all the money or Cow that her now master Nathan Blodgett is to give  
her at the age of Eighteen year old with five shilling more to be Paid  
her at the age of Eighteen year out of my Estate by my Executor

Item I give unto my Daughter Sarah Anthony Negro the sum of six  
Pound in Cash to be Paid her out of my Estate by my Executor  
at Eighteen years old

Item I give and Bequeath unto my son David anthony Negro the sum

Will of Anthony Negro, 1741,  
Dracut, Middlesex County Probates Case 15785

130

DRACUT BIRTHS.

- , Susannah, w. Capt. James V. Hildreth, — [1779].  
G.R.8.  
 ——, Sybie, w. Lt. Samuel Harper, — [1802]. G.R.6.  
 ——, Tryphena, w. Daniel Goodhue, — [1793]. G.R.8.  
 ——, Viah, w. Jacob K. Cheever, — [1801]. G.R.10.  
 ——, ——, d. Asa, yeoman, and Hannah, — [rec. July  
 3, [18]47].  
 ——, ——, ch. Nath[anie] P., mason, and Caroline, Oct. 30,  
 [18]47.

NEGROES, ETC.

- Jonathan, s. Antony and Sary, Aug. 8, 1721.  
 Margret, d. Antony and Sary, Aug. 27, 1716.  
 Robert, s. Antony and Sary, Apr. 15, 1719.

WYMAN (see Wiman).

- YOUNG, Edna M., ch. Edward R. and Edna, June 3, 1838, a. 2 y.  
1 m. 21 d. G.R.7.  
 Harriet M., ch. Edward R. and Edna, Nov. 19, 1844, a. 15 y. 2 m.  
14 d. G.R.7.

UNIDENTIFIED.

- , Abigal, Dec. 23, 1766.  
 ——, Henry G. H., typhoid fever, Nov. 10, [18]46, a. 11.

NEGROES, ETC.

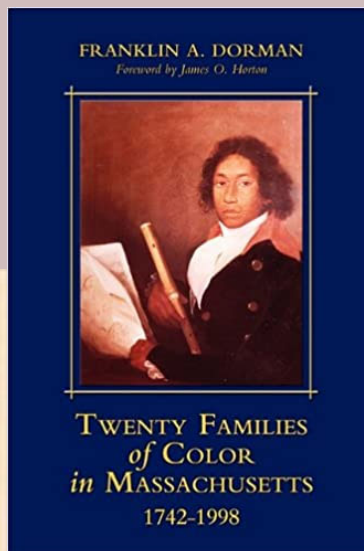
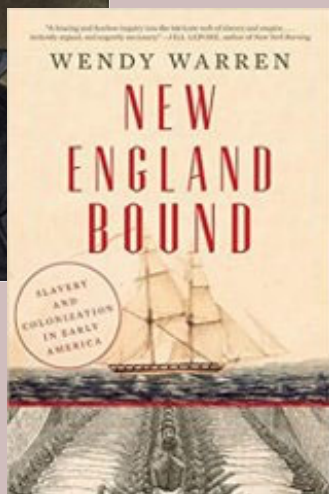
- Anthony, June 10, 1741.  
 ——, "the Wife of Anthony Neagro," Jan. 20, 1740-1.



- Samuel Richard ye son of Josiah Richardson Deceased on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of March 1740
- Major Ephraim Hildreth Deceased on ye 26<sup>th</sup> day of September 1740
- Hannah Curtis the wife of Ephraim Curtis Deceased on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of February 1740/41
- John Anthony was drowned in the month of April 1739
- The wife of Anthony Neagro Deceased on ye 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1740/41
- The Widow Sarah Colburn Deceased on ye 1<sup>st</sup> day of June 1741
- Anthony Neagro Deceased on ye 10<sup>th</sup> Day of June 1741. —

## Dracut Town Records -Deaths

# Look at Other Sources



Check footnotes –  
what sources and  
repositories did  
they use?

# Finding Silenced Voices

# Historical Context

Understand the time when your ancestor lived.

- What were the social and legal structures that informed their access to power and privilege?
- You may think you know the answer to this – but do you *REALLY* know?

What Laws had a direct affect on their lives?

- Own land
- Have a bank account
- Vote
- Attend school
- Become a Citizen
- Seek legal council, etc.

## Historical Context, cont.

What major historical events influenced their lives?

- How were they affected by war?
- Natural disasters?
- Growth of Industries?

What occurred at the local level in their town or city during their lifetime?

- Did this affect their occupation?
- Influence migration?



## Confront the Realities of the Past

- History was *recorded* by those in power.
  - Records for enslaved persons will be under the slave owner's name.
  - Records for women are often recorded under the men in their family.
  - Records for the lower classes are usually recorded when they affected people of higher means (court records, “warning outs,” etc.)
- You will need to use terms in your search that may be uncomfortable to you, i.e. Negro or Savage

# Tip

Find histories, scholarly projects, or places  
focused on your ancestor's race, class,  
and/or gender

# Repositories to Search



# Navigating Repositories

COLLECTION GUIDES 
Massachusetts Historical Society

SEARCH | MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS | PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTIONS | OTHER COLLECTIONS
Help | Print | Library Catalog

Collections Relevant to African American History at the  
Massachusetts Historical Society

An Overview

Request Items
 FIND Keywords
TABLE OF CONTENTS ▾

Dolbeare Family Papers

Request Items
 FIND Keywords
TABL

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The Dolbeare family papers consist of six document boxes and six cased volumes spanning the years 1665 to 1830, with the bulk of the material dating from 1720 to 1809. The collection contains correspondence, legal papers, business and financial papers, diaries, and other volumes. Correspondence includes that of Benjamin Dolbeare (1711-1787), his brother-in-law William Clarke, and his sons Thomas Dolbeare and John Dolbeare concerning merchant business, travels, weather, finances, illnesses, and other family news, including the successful breast cancer surgery of Mary Dolbeare Townsend. Letters from St. Elizabeth and Kingston, Jamaica, where the family did business, include several that discuss a slave rebellion on the plantations in St. Elizabeth in 1760.

Legal papers consist of deeds, bonds, and indentures, including deeds for lands in Massachusetts, Maine, and New Hampshire; slave records, detailing the sale of several slaves in both Boston and Kingston, Jamaica; and wills, estate inventories, and probate records, including the will and estate records of Sarah Comer Dolbeare and Hannah Vincent Dolbeare. Of note are the 1733 search warrant for James Dolbeare (1705-1743) to investigate the neglect of his sick wife, Mary, and their subsequent divorce papers in 1738. Also of interest are William Clarke's 1744 and 1757 commissions as surgeon at Castle William in Boston Harbor.

Business and financial papers include bills, receipts, and accounts related to personal and business expenses, primarily of Benjamin Dolbeare (1711-1787) and John Dolbeare (1752-1830). Also included are business papers such as shipping records and contracts for business partnerships.

The volumes consist of William Clarke's medical ledger and his journal from Louisbourg during King George's War, as well as Benjamin Dolbeare's ledger, memorandum book, and 1739 diary of his travels in England. The diaries of John Dolbeare (1752-1830) document daily life; business; privateering in the American Revolution; the Napoleonic Wars; and local Massachusetts election results. His 1777 diary describing the Battle of Saratoga contains copies of letters from Horatio Gates, including one to Gen. John Burgoyne discussing an exchange of prisoners for Ethan Allen. Other volumes include 18th-century bills of lading and the estate records of Nathaniel Loring.

TIP - Check to see if repositories have guides to manuscripts containing information on Black ancestors. This is a good starting point.

<http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides>





[Catalog Home](#) | [Basic search](#) | [Advanced search](#) | [Search Help](#) | [Contact](#) | [Visit](#) | [RIHS Home](#)

### Full record display

**Accessibility:** Request at [RIHS Library](#)

**Format:** Book

**Title:** Considerations on keeping Negroes : recommended to the professors of Christianity, of every denomination.

**Author/Creator:** [Woolman, John, 1720-1772.](#)  
[Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790, printer.](#)  
[Hall, David, 1714-1772, printer.](#)  
[Lyndon, Josias, former owner.](#)  
[Manning, James, former owner.](#)  
[Varnum, James Mitchell, 1748-1789, former owner.](#)

**Call number:** Vault Penn. Imprint Phila. 1762

**Imprint date:** 1762.

**Publisher:** Printed by B. Franklin, and D. Hall,

**Imprint place:** Philadelphia :

**Physical Description:** 52 p. ; 19 cm. (8vo)

**Bibliographic References:** Evans 9314; Miller, C.W. Franklin, 785; NUC pre-1956 NW 0443376; Hildeburn, C.R. Pennsylvania, 1863

**Notes:** Part first published under title: "Some considerations on the keeping of Negroes" Philadelphia, 1754.  
 Signatures: A-Câ□, DÂ².  
 "Some account of the slave-trade, from the writings of persons who have been at the places where they are first purchased, viz."--p. 35-37.  
 "Extracts from a collection of voyages. Vol. I."--p. 38-52.

**Subject:** [Slavery -- Early works to 1800.](#)  
[Slavery -- United States -- Early works to 1800.](#)  
[Slaves -- United States -- Social conditions.](#)

**Permalink:** [Click here to add this link to your Bookmarks list.](#)

**NETOP is a working database, providing online access to the Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society. We have been collecting and cataloging since 1822, therefore records in NETOP may vary in level of detail. Every month we update, refine and complete the current records while adding new records and images.**

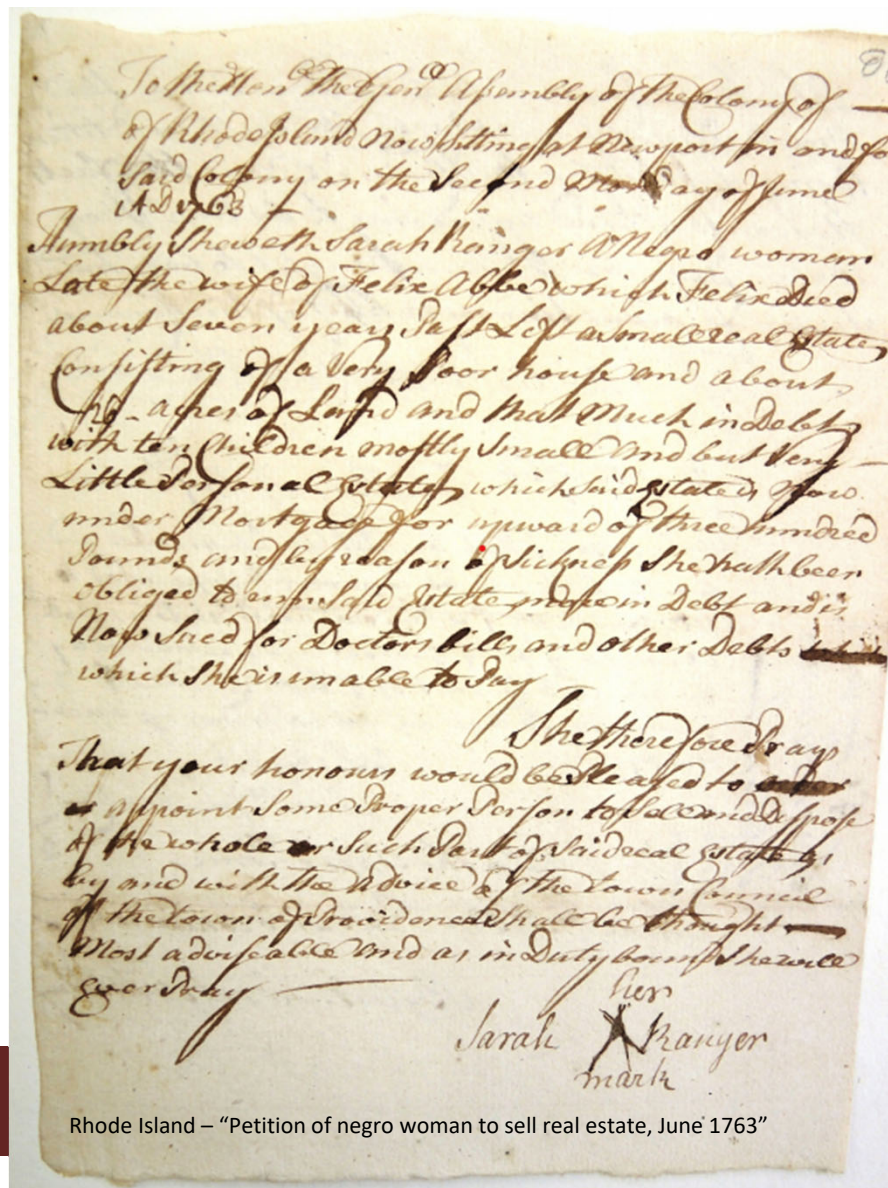


# Investigate Laws

For Remedy whereof for the future  
 Be it Enacted by the General Assembly of this  
 Colony and by the Authority of the same It is Enacted that  
 no Molatto or Negro Slave shall be hereafter manumitted  
 discharged or set free or at Liberty until sufficient Security  
 be given to the Town Treasurer of the Town or Place Where such  
 Person dwells in a valuable Sum not less than one hundred  
 Pounds to secure and indemnify the Town or Place from all  
 Charge for or about such Molatto or Negro to be manumitted  
 and set at Liberty in Case he or She by Sickness Lameness or  
 otherwise be rendered incapable to support him or herself  
 And no Molatto or Negro hereafter manumitted shall  
 be deemed or accounted free ~~from~~ for whom Security shall not be  
 given as aforesaid but shall be the proper Charge of their Respective  
 Masters or Mistresses in Case they should stand in Need of Relief

Rhode Island "An Act Relating to Freeing Molatto and Negro Slaves, February 1728"

Understanding how your ancestor's race, class, and gender informed their legal status can help you identify what powers, privileges, or restrictions were placed on their lives.



Rhode Island – “Petition of negro woman to sell real estate, June 1763”

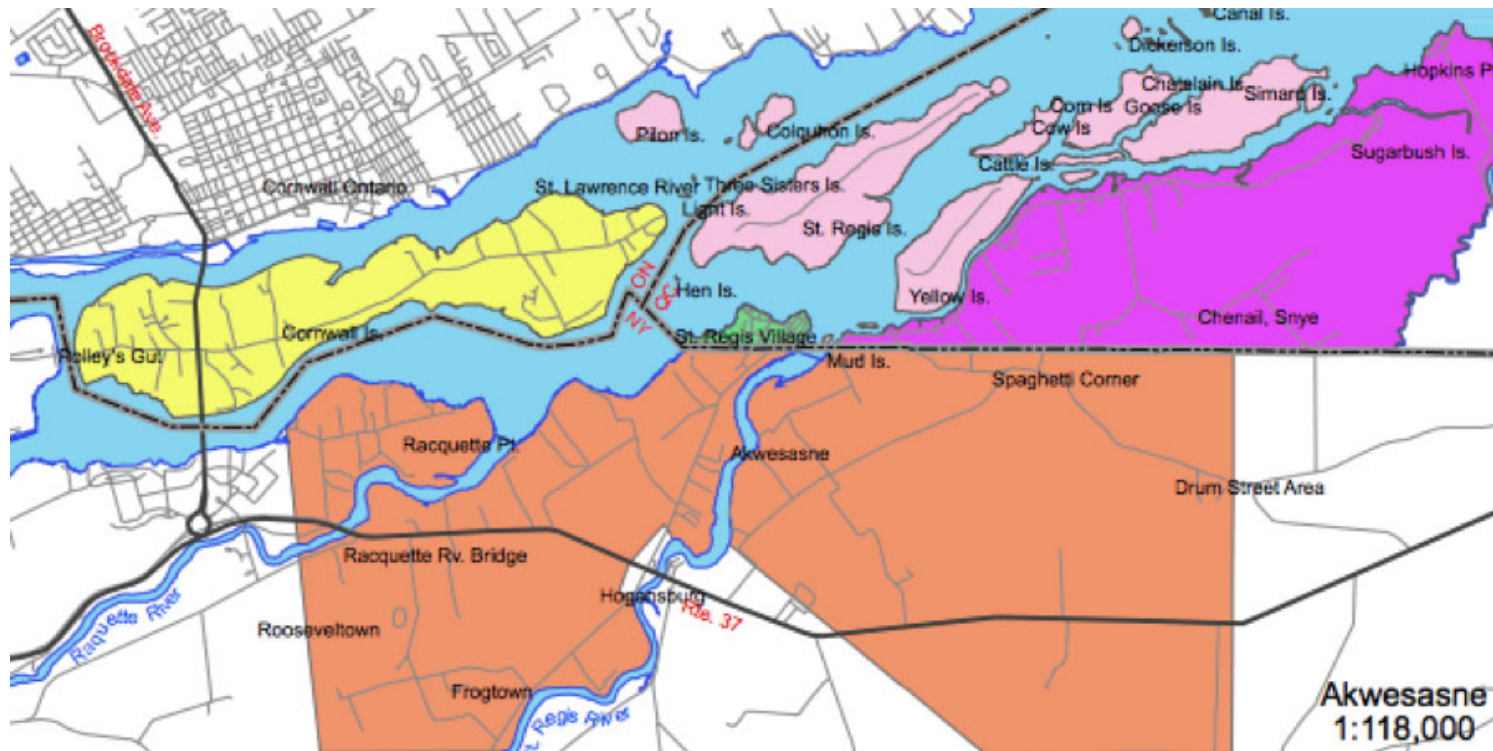
Understand Legal Status





St. Regis Mohawk Reservation - Akwesasne

Understand the History of Place



- Two Federal Governments – U.S. and Canada
- Three State/Provinces – New York, Quebec, Ontario
- Two Tribal Governments - Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (within Canada's borders) and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Council, (within the United States)

## International Border through Akwesasne





Photos of Ernest and Salli by Doug George-Kanentiio in Dianne Meili, "Ernie and Salli Benedict [Footprints]," *Windspeaker Publication*, vol. 29, Iss. 8, 2011.



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE—BUREAU OF THE CENSUS 158

**FOURTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1920—POPULATION**

STATE New York COUNTY Franklin TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY Township of Bombay NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE St. Regis Indian Reservation WARD OF CITY \_\_\_\_\_

ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE 6<sup>th</sup> DAY OF January, 1920. Louis Bruce ENUMERATOR.

PLACE OF ABODE. 1	NAME 2	RELATION. 3	TIME 4	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION 5	CITIZENSHIP. 6	EDUCATION. 7	NATIVITY AND MOTHER TONGUE.						OCCUPATION.			
							PERSON.		FATHER.		MOTHER.		28	29	30	31
							Place of birth.	Mother tongue.	Place of birth.	Mother tongue.	Place of birth.	Mother tongue.				
1	Jurman George Jr.	Son	M	31 5/8	U		New York	New York	New York	New York	New York	None				
2	Wangaret	Mother	F	46 1/2	U		New York	New York	New York	New York	New York	None				
3	Thompson John	Hired Man	M	21 5	U		Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Laborer	Dairy farm	W		
4	Pepin John	Adopted	M	13 5	U		New York	New York	New York	New York	New York	None				
5	Wasson Christy	Servant	F	25 5	U		New York	New York	New York	New York	New York	Housekeeper	Private family	W		
6	Conroy Annie	Cousin	F	14 5	U		New York	New York	New York	New York	New York	None				
7	Head Sarah	Head	F	57 1/2	U		New York	Canada	Canada	New York	New York	Banker's Clerk	For self	OA		
8	Head Charles	Head	M	38 1/2	U		Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Carpenter	Building	W		
9	Wife Julia	Wife	F	33 1/2	U		New York	New York	New York	New York	New York	Banker's Clerk	For self	OU		
10	Daughter Eva May	Daughter	F	10 5	U		Canada	Canada	Canada	New York	New York	None				
11	Son Arthur Charles	Son	M	8 1/2	U		Canada	Canada	Canada	New York	New York	None				
12	Daughter Lillian Gertrude	Daughter	F	6 1/2	U		Canada	Canada	Canada	New York	New York	None				
13	Son Ernest Michael	Son	M	1 1/2	U		New York	Canada	Canada	New York	New York	None				
14	Head John P.	Head	M	39 1/2	U		New York	New York	New York	New York	New York	Laborer	Lumber Camp	W		
15	Wife Mary	Wife	F	36 1/2	U		New York	New York	New York	New York	New York	Banker's Clerk	For self	OA		
16	Head Sarah	Head	F	57 1/2	U		New York	Canada	Canada	New York	New York	Banker's Clerk	For self	OA		
17	Head Charles	Head	M	38 1/2	U		Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	Carpenter	Building	W		
18	Wife Julia	Wife	F	33 1/2	U		New York	New York	New York	New York	New York	Banker's Clerk	For self	OU		
19	Daughter Eva May	Daughter	F	10 5	U		Canada	Canada	Canada	New York	New York	None				
20	Son Arthur Charles	Son	M	8 1/2	U		Canada	Canada	Canada	New York	New York	None				
21	Daughter Lillian Gertrude	Daughter	F	6 1/2	U		Canada	Canada	Canada	New York	New York	None				
22	Son Ernest Michael	Son	M	1 1/2	U		New York	Canada	Canada	New York	New York	None				

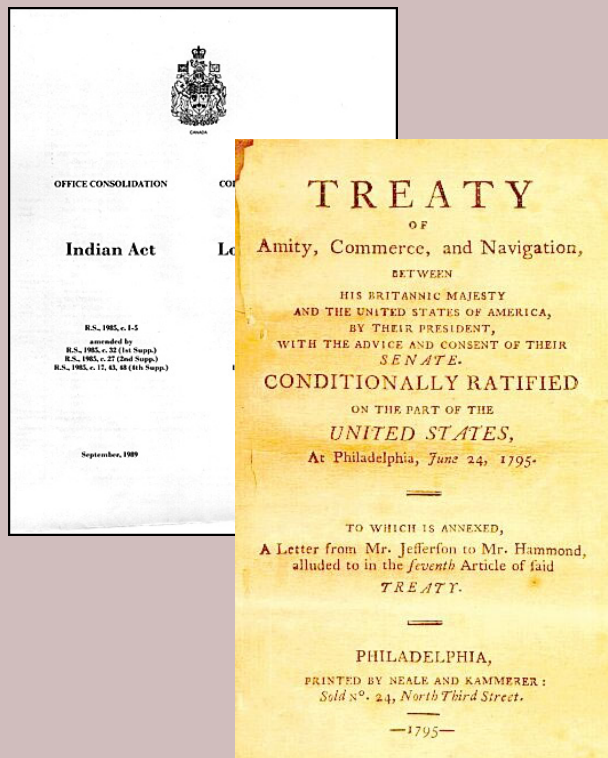
1920 United States Federal Census

POPULATION BY NAMES  
(at 12 o'clock Midnight of March 31st, 1901.)

No. of Family	No. of Family	NAME OF EACH PERSON IN THE FAMILY	Sex	Other	Relationship to Head of Family	Grade, Rank, Widowed, Divorced	Age at Birth	Place of Birth	Religion	Months at Sea	Can Read	Can Write	Can Speak English	Can Speak French	Other Languages	Color of Hair	Color of Eyes	Color of Skin	Height	Weight	Complexion	Scars or Tattoos	
1	1	Charles Benedict	M		Son		81	St. Regis															
1	1	Ira	u				81	13															
1	1	William	u				81	10															
1	1	Elijah	u		Son		81	4															
4	1	Mitchel Garrison	u		Head		81	48															
1	1	Schriate	u		Wife		81	38															
57	1	Mitchel Lewis	M		Head		81	58															
1	1	Anna	u		Wife		81	26															
58	1	Matthew Thompson	M		Head		81	46															
1	1	Margaret	u		Wife		81	31															
1	1	Ross	u		Son		81	7															
1	1	Swah	u		Daughter		81	7															
1	1	Anna	u				81	5															
1	1	Peter	u		Son		81	3															
59	1	Joseph Thompson	M		Head		81	38															
1	1	Nancy	u				81	19															
1	1	Anna	u				81	19															
1	1	Agnis	u				81	5															
1	1	Christie	u				81	44															
60	1	Peter Day	M				81	44															
1	1	Lillie	u				81	21															
1	1	Margaret	u				81	21															
1	1	John Smart	M		Labour		81	29															

1901 Census of Canada

# Legal Status at Akwesasne



- Check Treaties with United States and Canada to determine legal status.
- Check tribal laws and registration requirements.
- What records exist and where are they kept?





Ernest Benedict with the Wolf Belt at Akwesasne

M2  
 Laccis  
 Marouherti  
 &  
 Charlette  
 Kasernison

Le vingt quatre février mil huit cent soixante dix neuf, nous soussignés avons après la publication d'un ban fait au prou de notre mère paraisant entre Louis Marouherti, sauzge de lui, fils majeur de Michel Sawennakarati et d'Anastasia Tsiamenti, d'une part: et Charlette Kasernison, auzge de lui, fille mineure de Charlette Kasernison et de Louis Kasernison, d'autre part, de l'union pres de nous, devant ces parties, de

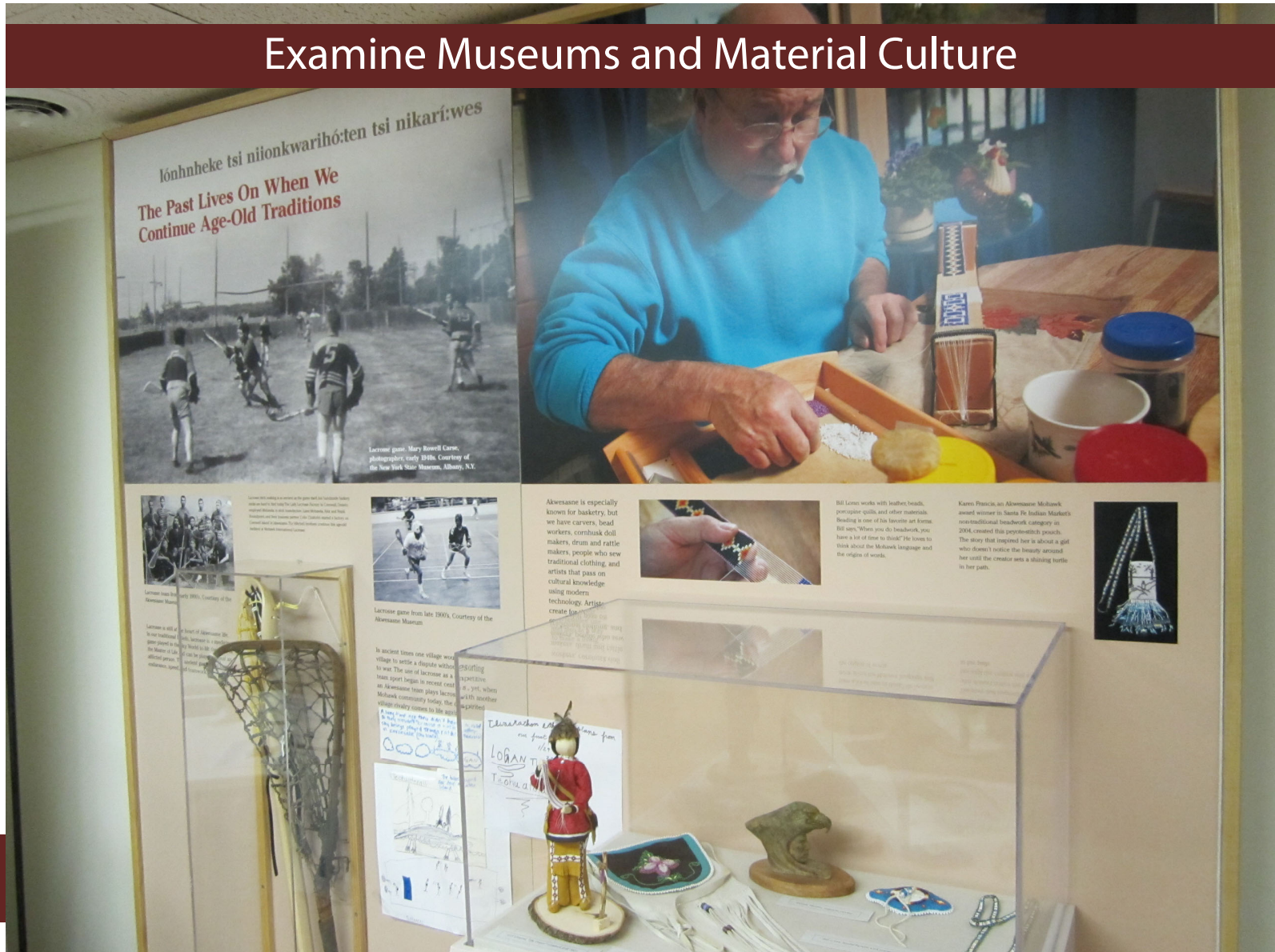


Eglise de St Régis (1899)

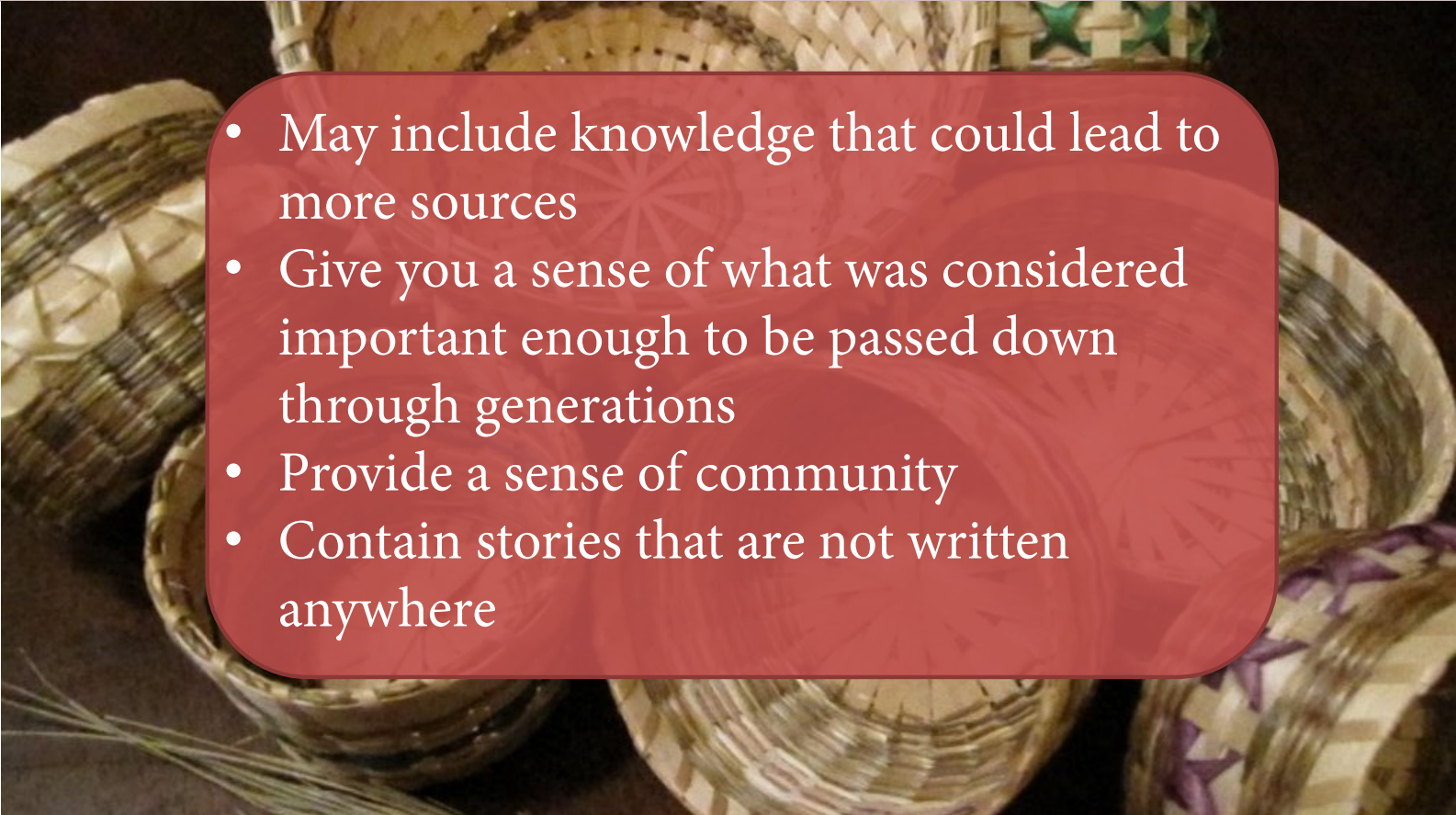
1879 Marriage of Louis Sawennakarati and Charlette Kasernison

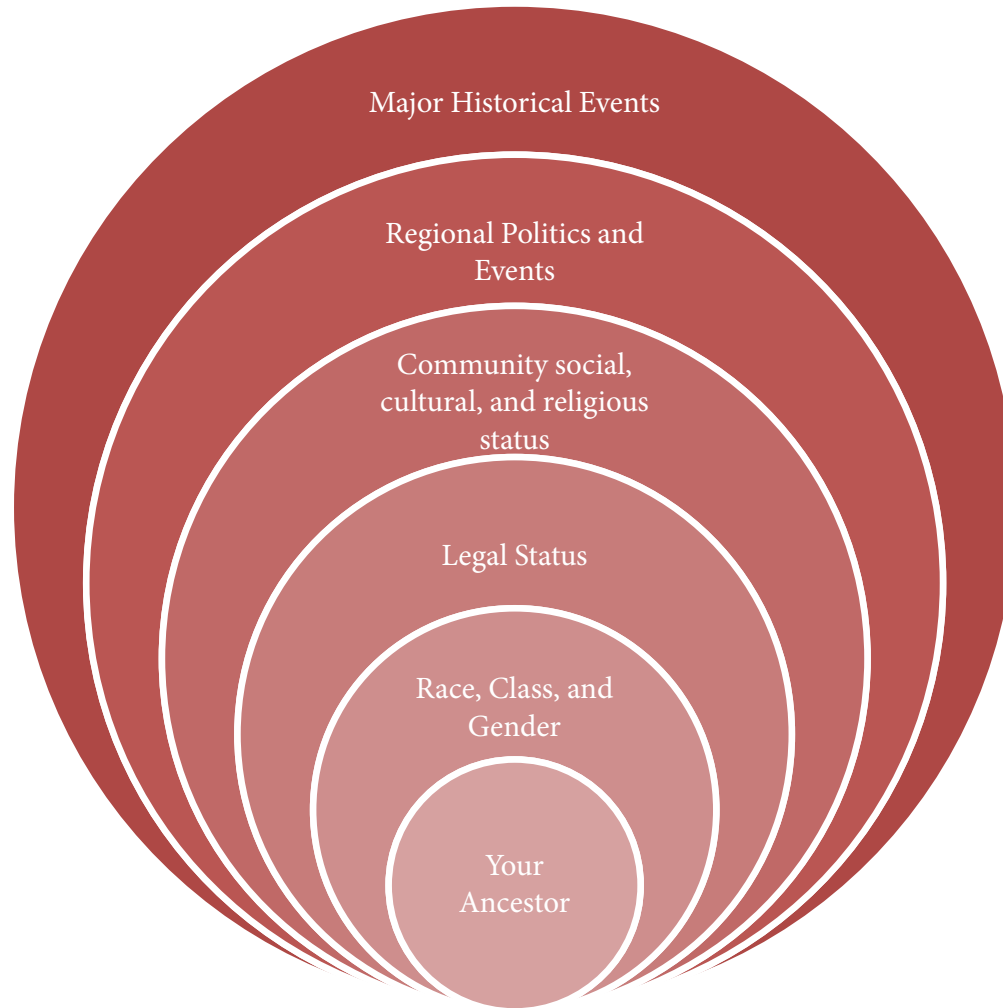


# Examine Museums and Material Culture



# Utilize Oral History

- 
- May include knowledge that could lead to more sources
  - Give you a sense of what was considered important enough to be passed down through generations
  - Provide a sense of community
  - Contain stories that are not written anywhere



## Pulling it All Together

## ***Recognizing* Voices of the Past**

- Even those left out of records or history books had agency over their own lives.
- Understanding a group or community history is the best way to fully understand ancestors when records are scarce.
- Use the records left by the “victors” to your advantage.

# In Review: Question Everything!

- Things to note while researching:
  - Keep a running list of questions to check against sources to examine the bias of source creators.
  - Race, Class, and Gender groups that may have historical projects dedicated to them.
  - Friends, neighbors, and associates you discover along the way.

Get to know your own bias and check it often!





*See you again on*  
Monday, October 17  
6-7:30 pm (ET)  
for our live conversation...

## ***Uncovering Hidden Histories: Compiling Biographies of People Omitted from Written Record***

featuring panelists Meaghan E.H. Siekman,  
Carole Emberton and Anne F. Hyde