

New York City Roadshow

Settlement of New England and New York

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Many of our ancestors that immigrated to colonial America came for religious and or economic reasons. Often early European settlers of a given town may have come from the same areas in the old country. Often the same reasons exist for settlements within America, and knowing how communities travelled can be beneficial to finding where your ancestors came from or where other relatives travelled further.



The Great Migration Begins

The work of Robert Charles Anderson, this source not only documents where many early English settlers of New England arrived from, but also where the first and second generations continued. An example of a religious migration across the ocean is that of the Pilgrims, first leaving England to settle in Leyden, Holland, and from there sailing to Plymouth Colony. Knowing that many immigrants to Plymouth colony had been in Leyden, prompted more research into Leyden records, uncovering origins of other Plymouth immigrants whose earlier residence in Leyden had not been noticed.



Earlier migrations within New England treated here include the settlement of Windsor, Connecticut, primarily from Dorchester, Massachusetts (who mainly had arrived from co. Dorset, England). Along the same lines of treating community migrations, *Search for Passengers on the Mary & John*, covers many of these Dorchester to Windsor families in their attempt to reconstruct a list of passengers on a 1630 list.

Early Migrations within and out of New England

- **Roxbury, Massachusetts to Woodstock, Connecticut (originally called New Roxbury)**

Rev. John Eliot of Roxbury travelled here in 1674 and preached to the native Wabasquassets. After King Philip's War, many of the Native Americans left the area, attracting families from Roxbury to settle this "vacant lot."



- **Connecticut to Vermont (via the Connecticut River)**



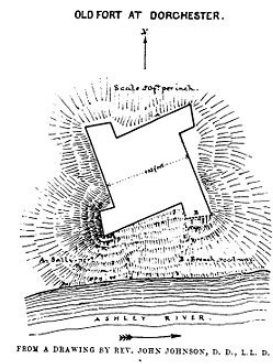
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- **Connecticut to Long Island**

Suffolk and Nassau Counties had a large amount of settlers from Fairfield County and other parts of Connecticut and Massachusetts, making the areas outside of New Amsterdam sometimes considered, “part of New England,” towns such as Huntington, voted in 1660 to be under the jurisdiction of Connecticut.

- **Dorchester, Massachusetts to Dorchester, South Carolina**

The names of “second generation” towns can also be a clue to the founding settler’s prior residence. The town of Dorchester, South Carolina was founded 1696, as a religious migration of the followers of Rev. Joseph Lord from Dorchester, Massachusetts. This was a brief settlement, as most of the residents went further south to Georgia in 1751.



Military Land Grants

The revolutionary war becomes a major impetus for further westward migration. As veterans received pensions and bounty land grants, they often settled in areas due west with some veterans travelling in groups both large and small. Losantiville, Ohio was renamed Cincinnati in 1790 by Arthur St. Clair, the governor of the Northwest Territory, an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati to encourage settlement by revolutionary war veterans.

Settlement of New Netherland and New York

The Dutch settlement of New Netherland begins in 1624 without the same religious overtones as the New England settlements. While the Dutch settlers spoke Dutch, they may have been born in present-day Belgium, France, Germany, or Scandinavia, along with French Protestants (directly immigrating from France) referred to as Huguenots, arriving after 1685, and Germans referred to as Palatines, in 1710.

Further Migrations After the Colonial Period

While migrations within New England were abundant throughout the colonial period, westward migration out of New England really kicks off after the revolutionary war and well throughout the nineteenth century. A careful understanding as to why and how people migrated throughout this period is helpful in not only determining our ancestor’s migration paths back to the east but also in finding unknown descendants of our ancestors that may have gone west.

While generally migrations follow the east to west path, this is not always the case. Some migrants who may have otherwise gone west instead went north to Maine. There was pre-Loyalist migration to Canada from New England prior to revolution as well as Loyalist migration during the war and afterward. Migrations also occurred South for religious as well as economic reasons.

In following ancestors that did do an “east to west” migration path, many considerations need to be taken into account. Often people tended to move from populated areas to less densely settled areas. In many instances the older children went west first, while the younger children may have stayed with the aging parents depending on property and if anyone decided to stay behind at all. As people go to these new towns and territories there is often difficulty in linking people via the records due to poor record keeping.

A major place our ancestors often left New England for, and possibly got “lost,” is in New York State. In the seventeenth century some New Englanders settled in Gravesend and Southampton, Long Island. Later migrations into eastern New York included the Beekman Patent and Dutchess County, which has been the focus of Frank Doherty’s *Settlers of the Beekman Patent*, with many of the volumes available on the AmericanAncestors.org website.

Additionally, migrations further west into western New York state, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio and points further expand throughout the eighteenth century. Many migrants travelled on a particular road or waterway. Local histories of a given town may indicate where early settlers came from or even sometimes where descendants of settlers migrated away. Statewide databases for many of these states have helped when the town or county a migrant came from is unknown. A very useful statewide database on AmericanAncestors.org for this migration period is “Abstracts of Wills, Administrations, and Guardianships in New York State, 1787-1835,” which indexes all names with these probate files, not necessarily the names of testator. With most of these images now directly available on familysearch.org, this provides an invaluable for research at this period. Compiled data from state and federal censuses based on states of birth have produced useful maps showing general directions of migrants.

Generally, our ancestors did not migrate alone, and having a better understanding of how our ancestors travelled, via roads, canals, or trails, and for what reasons, can help us not only find more ancestors, but give us a better historical appreciation of their experiences. Westward migration can be challenging, especially since many of our ancestors were leaving the past behind. With piecing together available records, combined with inventive searching strategies and the knowledge of how many migrants travelled, some of the “lost ancestors” can connect with some of their “lost descendants.”

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