

Basics of Early New England Research

Class 2: 17th-Century Published Resources

Melanie McComb, Senior Genealogist, melanie.mccomb@nehgs.org

As a group, 17th century (1601-1700) New Englanders are arguably the most studied group on the planet and thus many resources can be used to learn more about their lives- from compiled genealogies to scholarly projects to essential finding aids to original and transcribed records.

To find print-only resources at a library near you, visit: <https://www.worldcat.org/> and enter your zip code and the title of interest.

Resources

Seventeenth-Century Families and Great Migration

Anderson, Robert Charles, **Great Migration Study Project**; titles include: *The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England, 1620-1633* (3 vols., Boston: NEHGS, 1995); *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England 1634-1635* (7 vols.; Boston, NEHGS, 1999-2011); *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England 1636-1638* (1 vol; Boston, NEHGS, 2023); *The Pilgrim Migration: Immigrants to Plymouth Colony, 1620-1633* (2007) *The Winthrop Fleet: Massachusetts Bay Company Immigrants to New England, 1629-1630* (2012); *The Great Migration Directory* (2015); *The Mayflower Migration: Immigrants to Plymouth, 1620* (2020) These volumes include sketches of all known immigrants to New England from 1620-1640. Anderson not only utilizes the scholarship of the last hundred years, but also looks again at original records to provide a fresh, detailed, documented and insightful look at the Great Migration figures and their families.

For historical context of this period: *The Great Migration Newsletter, Volumes 1-25* (2017) and *Puritan Pedigrees: The Deep Roots of the Great Migration to New England* (2018).

Title	Online	Print
<i>The Great Migration Begins: Immigrants to New England, 1620-1633</i>	Searchable Database on AmericanAncestors.org	Paperback ; Hardcover
<i>The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England 1634-1635</i>	Searchable Databases on AmericanAncestors.org by volume (A-Y)	Published by volume, Paperback and Hardcover available
<i>The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England 1636-1638 (Vol. 1, A-Be)</i>	N/A	Published by volume, Hardcover

<i>The Pilgrim Migration: Immigrants to Plymouth Colony, 1620-1633</i>	N/A	Paperback
<i>The Winthrop Fleet: Massachusetts Bay Company Immigrants to New England, 1629-1630</i>	N/A	Hardcover
<i>The Great Migration Directory</i>	N/A	Hardcover; e-book
<i>The Mayflower Migration: Immigrants to Plymouth, 1620</i>	N/A	Hardcover
<i>The Great Migration Newsletter, Volumes 1-25</i>	Searchable Database on AmericanAncestors.org	Paperback

More about the Great Migration Series:

<https://www.americanancestors.org/publications/great-migration-study-project>

Archived Webinar: Searching Great Migration Databases on AmericanAncestors.org

<https://www.americanancestors.org/video-library/searching-great-migration-databases-americanancestors.org>

Hollick, Martin E., *New Englanders in the 1600s: A Guide to Genealogical Research Published Between 1980 and 2010* (expanded edition; Boston: NEHGS, 2012) An extension of the work done by Clarence Almon Torrey that covers the most recent scholarship published from 1980 to 2010. [Print only.](#)

Colket, Meredith B., *Founders of Early American Families: Emigrants from Europe, 1607-1657* (revised edition; Cleveland, Ohio: General Court of the Order of Founders and Patriots, 1985) - This book is an alphabetical, annotated list of all known immigrants to what is now the east coast of the United States within the first fifty years of English settlement, beginning with the establishment of Jamestown in 1607. While it includes many early New York (New Netherlands), Maryland and Virginia settlers, most entries are for New Englanders. For each entry the reader is given sufficient information to determine whether this is a person or family of interest, including exact or approximate date of arrival, place of origin, place(s) of residence, date of death if known, occupation/offices held, and then a very brief citation of the best or most recent genealogical treatment of the individual or family in question. Print only.

Savage, James, *A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England, Showing Three Generations of Those Who Came Before May 1692, on the Basis of Farmer's Register* (4 vols., Boston: Little, Brown, 1860-62) Despite its age and lack of documentation, this is still one of the most popular books in the American Ancestors Research Center, and continues to be one of the principal sources of information on

some of the more obscure seventeenth-century New England families, and those not yet treated in Anderson's *Great Migration* series. [Digitized copy available online.](#)

Noyes, Sybil, Charles T. Libby, and Walter Goodwin Davis, *Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire* (NEHGS: Boston, 2012 reprint) One of the most authoritative and exhaustive works of any type. Provides many clues to further research into the pre-American ancestry of early New England settlers. [Digitized copy available online.](#)

Torrey, Clarence Almon, *New England Marriages Prior to 1700* (12 vol. manuscript; 1962) Torrey spent years combing the NEHGS library's book and manuscript collection, to compile this annotated list of approximately 38,000 marriages of New Englanders that occurred prior to 1700. [Available as a searchable database on AmericanAncestors.org](#)

Farmer, John, *A Genealogical Register of the First Settlers of New England* (1829; reprint ed., Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1964) One of the first American genealogical books to be published, and a milestone in the field because it was the first attempt at compiling an all-inclusive dictionary of the earliest settlers of New England. [Digitized copy available online.](#)

Pope, Charles Henry, *Pioneers of Massachusetts* (Boston: NEHGS, 2013 reprint) presents biographical information for nearly 6,000 pioneers who settled Massachusetts between 1620 and 1650. This reprint includes Pope's full, annotated text (published 1900) and his sixteen page supplement of additions and corrections (published 1902). This book also contains a list of abbreviations, sources, former town names, aggregate data for occupations and social position and an all-name index. [Digitized copy available online.](#)

Williams, Alicia Crane, *Early New England Families* (2 vols. to date; Boston, NEHGS, 2016) The Early New England Families Study Project provides accurate and concise published summaries of seventeenth-century New England families. Using Clarence Almon Torrey's bibliographic index of early New England marriages and its recent successors as a guide, the project focuses on individuals who immigrated from 1641 through 1700, grouped by year of marriage. [Searchable database on AmericanAncestors.org.](#)

Genealogical and Historical Periodicals

The New England Historical and Genealogical Register, vol. 1- (1847-) From its beginning the *Register* has been the most scholarly and important genealogical journal on both the New England and the national level, thanks to many decades of consistently high-quality editorship. Its hallmarks are compiled genealogies (for up to five generations) of colonial New England families, English origins articles, transcriptions of original records, and methodological articles. [Searchable database on AmericanAncestors.org.](#)

The American Genealogist, vol. 1- (1922-) Begun by Donald Lines Jacobus as the *New Haven Genealogical Magazine* (changing to the present title in 1932), TAG, as it is known, devotes the majority of its space to high-quality, problem-solving articles that focus primarily on New England families. [Searchable database on AmericanAncestors.org.](#)

The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, vol. 1- (1869-) Although the *Record* concentrates on the early families of Long Island, New York City and the lower Hudson River valley, a goodly number of these families had New England origins or connections, so the *Record* should always be checked. [Searchable database on AmericanAncestors.org \(vols. 1-54\).](#)

The New England Quarterly, vol. 1- (1928-) is primarily an historical and literary magazine. It is useful for background and context, and may contain articles of interest in certain instances. Available online at <https://newenglandquarterly.org>.

The Connecticut Nutmegger has been the “journal of record” of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists, Inc. for 40 years. [Searchable database on AmericanAncestors.org.](#)

The Great Migration Newsletter, vol. 1-25 (1990-2016) Published quarterly through 2016, the *Newsletter* addressed -broad issues key to understanding the lives and times of New England's first immigrants. [Searchable Database on AmericanAncestors.org](#)

Town Guides and Gazetteers

The Genealogist's Handbook for New England Research, 6th ed. Edited by Rhonda R. McClure (Boston: NEHGS, 2021) this handbook is an indispensable resource for anyone doing research in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. More than just a how-to book, it is a location guide to public records, repositories, libraries, and genealogical societies throughout New England. This edition includes introductory essays explaining the basics of research and resources unique to each state, nearly 80 state and county maps, a listing of each town's parent and daughter towns, a checklist of published and manuscript vital and church records, and a user-friendly two-color design. [Print for purchase; e-book available for purchase](#)

New England Town Guides at American Ancestors, (also includes New York) research strategies for towns throughout New England and New York. It includes information on name changes for towns, settlement and incorporation dates, parent towns or counties, and much more. Villages, and smaller sections of towns, are not included in these guides. Additionally, links to relevant databases on AmericanAncestors.org are included: <https://www.americanancestors.org/tools/town-guides>

Historical Data Relating to Counties, Cities, and Towns in Massachusetts, by William Francis Galvin (Boston: NEHGS, 1997) this is a new edition of the 1966 publication. Town by town, it gives complete detail on their formation and border changes. Part 3 of the earlier edition, “Extinct Places,” has been

incorporated into the main text, and a new index refers the reader to a new category under each town called “Section/Village Names.” There is statewide map at the beginning; small maps of each county are given at the end. [Searchable database on AmericanAncestors.org](http://www.americanancestors.org).

Passenger Lists

Hotten, John Camden, *The Original Lists of Persons of Quality*. (New York: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1880, reprint, 1962, 1968). this is the first work to assemble lists of passengers from 1600 to 1700 and time has not diminished its worth. Divided into sections with titles such as “Licenses to go Beyond the Seas from the Port of London 1634-5” and “Lists of Passengers 1631-4; mostly from West of England parts,” it includes a full index of names. [Digitized copy available online](#).

Banks, Charles Edward, *The Planters of the Commonwealth* (Boston, 1930, reprinted Genealogical Publishing Co., 1991). Covers the period from 1620 to 1640 and is arranged chronologically with indexes to surnames and ships’ names at the back. Robert Charles Anderson cautions in his introduction to Great Migration Begins that this work should be used only after “...a careful correlation of Hotten and Coldham, with a cautious dash of Banks.” [Digitized copy available online](#).

Coldham, Peter Wilson, *The Complete Book of Emigrants 1607-1660* (Genealogical Publishing Co., 1987). Listed chronologically and indexed by name, this work mainly covers arrivals at Virginia and Barbados and includes some New England emigrants. Many entries only show the number of passengers on the ship. Print only.

Digital Resources

- <https://www.hathitrust.org/>
- <https://books.google.com>
- <https://archive.org/index.php>
- <https://openlibrary.org/>
- <https://books.familysearch.org>
- <http://library.si.edu/digital-library>

When did your ancestor arrive in the colonies?

Year	Geographic Area	Resource	Call Number	American Ancestors Database
1620	Plymouth Colony	Mayflower Families through Five Generations (silver books)	F63 .M39	Yes (5 th Gen. only)
1607-1657	13 Original Colonies	Founders of Early American Families	CS61 .C64 1985	No
1620-1633	Plymouth and Mass Bay Colonies	Great Migration Begins	F7 .G74 1995	Yes

1634-1635	Plymouth and Mass Bay Colonies	Great Migration	F7 .G742 1999	Yes
1620-1640	New England	Great Migration Directory	F7 .G745 2015	No
1620-1650	Massachusetts	Pioneers of Massachusetts	F63 .P822 2013	No
1641-1700	New England	Early New England Families	F3 .W65 2016	Yes
By 1699	Maine and New Hampshire	Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New Hampshire	F18 .N68 2012	No
To 1700 (marriage, not arrival)	New England	Torrey's New England Marriages; New Englanders in the 1600s	F3 .T6 1992	Yes