Researching & Verifying Mayflower Ancestry

Class 3: Creating a Proof Argument: Documenting Your Mayflower Lineage

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Step #1- Organize

When organizing your information for your Mayflower line, we recommend creating a qualification outline. A qualification outline is an excellent way to organize information for each generation in your line of descent, especially if you are planning to apply to more than one society. Begin with your generation (including vital information for your spouse if applicable) and state your place and date of birth (and place and date of marriage if applicable). The format for the first generation would look like this:

> <u>Generation 1</u>
> **Your name**, b. in [town/city, county, state] on [day, month, year]. He/she married in [town/city, county, state] on [day, month, year], **name of spouse**.
>
> **Name of spouse**, b. in [town/city, county, state] on [day, month, year].
>
> For each statement of vital information (birth, marriage, and death), you should include a scholarly citation. For the first three generations, these statements should be proven by a birth, marriage, and death certificate. You can typically locate these modern vital records with the town or city clerk in which the event occurred or the appropriate Department of Vital Statistics.

Next, on a separate sheet of paper, include your parents' generation, also known as Generation 2:

> <u>Generation 2</u>
> **Name of your Father**, b. in [town/city, county, state] on [day, month, year]; d. in [town/city, county, state] on [day, month, year]. He married in [town/city, county, state] on [day, month, year], **name of spouse**.
> **Name of your Mother**, b. in [town/city, county, state] on [day, month, year]; d. in [town/city, county, state] on [day, month, year].

Continue this process for each generation, concluding with your Mayflower passenger. To provide evidence for each name, place, and date, we first suggest locating all of the possible vital records (birth, marriage, and death) for each generation. Vital records often provide specific information about an individual, such as the place and date of birth, as well as information about their parents. Be sure to search for birth, marriage, and death records for the male and the female in each generation.

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Step #2- Locate records for each generation (including spouses) back to the Mayflower passenger

Vital Records:

Modern vital records are often kept on the local level (either state, county, or town) while older records may have been moved to an archives, library, or local historical society. The location, availability, and accessibility of vital records vary from state to state.

- To locate available vital records in New England, consult *Genealogist's Handbook for New England Research, 6th ed.* (NEHGS, 2021)
- For vital records outside of New England, refer to:
  - *Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources,* 3rd ed. (Ancestry Publishing, 2004)
  - *The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy,* 3rd ed. (Ancestry Publishing, 2006)
  - www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/main_page

Some alternative vital records:

It is uncommon that you will be able document your Mayflower line using only vital records. Therefore, researchers must use alternative records or secondary sources to prove connections between generations:

- **Bible records**: Family bible records can be rare, but significantly helpful when available. To locate a bible record specific to your ancestors, you should contact the local historical society, archive, or genealogical society associated with the family. You could also search on the free database, ArchiveGrid: http://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/ and NSDAR: https://services.dar.org/Public/DAR_Research/search/?Tab_ID=12 for possible bible manuscripts.

- **Census records**: Census records can provide information about an entire family, often individually listing the names of each member of the household. However, before 1850, the U.S. Federal Census did not enumerate each member of the household. The head of household was named, and the other members of the household were designated by tally marks according to their age and gender. As a result, pre-1850 U.S. Federal Census records can be less helpful (and often unacceptable by a lineage society). www.familysearch.org, www.fold3.com, and www.Ancestry.com have searchable collections of the U.S. Federal Census from 1790-1950. Some State Census records are also available.

- **Cemetery records/inscriptions**: Be sure to get a clear photo of the stone, as well as a broader, landscape photograph showing surrounding stones. Some national cemetery databases include: www.findagrave.com, www.billiongraves.com, www.interment.net, www.namesinstone.com

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- **Church records:** Baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and funeral records may have been recorded with the church, and not registered on the local or state level. To locate a church record, first identify your ancestor's religion and/or congregation. Once a denomination is determined, then work to locate available records. Some records are still maintained by the original church (or church archives), while others may have been microfilmed or published. America Ancestors maintains a large collection of compiled church records from across the U.S., and the Family Search Library has several church records on microfilm.

- **Deeds:** Land records sometimes identify specific relationships between the grantor (seller) and the grantee (purchaser). This is especially common for married men who sold property, as the record often identified the first name of the grantor's wife. Most U.S. deed records are available digitally at www.familysearch.org or on microfilm at the Family Search Library. Try this *new* experimental database at FamilySearch to assist with deed searches: https://www.familysearch.org/search/full-text

- **Local histories and well-documented genealogies**: While local histories and genealogies are often unacceptable as singular proof, well documented, or properly cited resources can provide supplemental proof for lineage. If you use a published resource, always include a photocopy of the title page. Several free sites have digitized older published genealogies and local histories: https://www.hathitrust.org/, https://books.google.com/, https://archive.org/index.php, https://openlibrary.org/, and https://books.familysearch.org

- **Military pensions:** Pension records often provide specific genealogical information about a soldier and other family members, including the date/place of birth, marriage, and death of a soldier and his widow. www.familysearch.org, www.fold3.com, and www.Ancestry.com have searchable/browseable collections of Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Civil War, Indian War, and Mexican War pension files/indexes.

- **Obituaries:** Obituaries regularly identify the names of immediate (and sometimes extended) family members. If you are using an obituary as evidence, be sure to include a clear clipping of the article, as well as a photocopy of the entire page. Digitized newspapers are available at subscription sites such as, www.genealogybank.com, http://www.newspapers.com/ and free sites, such as https://news.google.com/newspapers and http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/.

- **Probate Records**: Probate files, such as wills and guardianship records, provide researchers with information about the deceased and names of heirs (usually spouse, children and sometimes grandchildren). American Ancestors has a large collection of New England and Atlantic Canada probate on microfilm. Several U.S. town and county probate collections are available at www.familysearch.org or on microfilm at the Family Search Library. Try this *new* database at FamilySearch to assist with probate searches: https://www.familysearch.org/search/full-text

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Step #3- Determine if a proof summary is necessary

- No primary source documentation
  - Vital records
  - Probate records
- One (or no) secondary sources
  - Genealogy
  - County history
- Documentation that suggests the relationships, but not explicitly stated
- Correcting information

Step #4- Write it down!

Write it down! Here are some helpful resources for writing/recording your family history research:

Resources at American Ancestors

Writing and Publishing Guide, https://www.americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/read/writing-publishing

Portable Genealogist Compilation: Writing, This easy-to-use compilation includes seven guides to help with your genealogical writing: *Building a Genealogical Sketch, Genealogical Numbering, Editorial Stylesheet, Reference Notes, Indexing, and Compiling a Bibliography*, plus *Applying to Lineage Societies.*

Robert Charles Anderson, *Elements of Genealogical Analysis: How to maximize Your Research Using the Great Migration Study Project Method,* (Boston, Massachusetts: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2014)

Penelope L. Stratton and Henry B. Hoff, *NEHGS Guide to Genealogical Writing* (Boston: NEHGS, 2014)

Other Resources

The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th ed. (Available in print or online at www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/).
The bible of the book-publishing industry, "CMS" will help you with everything from capitalization to punctuation to reference style to guidelines for book production.

Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Evidence! Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1997) and *Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace* (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co., 2007). Comprehensive guides to citing genealogical works.

Cyndi's List, "Writing Your Family's History," www.CyndisList.com/writing. The ever-helpful Cyndi's List provides a number of links in such categories as Publishers, Publishing Online, Books, Diaries & Letters, Oral History & Interviews, Photographs & Memories.

Stories to Tell, http://www.storiestotellbooks.com/blog. This blog provides all kinds of tips on including narrative into your genealogy.

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