

# Researching Colonial New England Ancestors

## *Class 3: Using Probates and Deeds*

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# Meet today's presenter



Melanie McComb

Senior Genealogist

# OVERVIEW

- **Presentation (60 mins.)**
  - Probate Records
  - Land Deeds
  - Searching for Probate Records and Land Deeds (Demo)
- **Q&A (30 mins.)**

# Probate Records

# What is a Probate Record?

- Court process that disposes of a deceased person's estate
- Describes how an estate will be distributed
- Names who will administer the estate
- Contains a list of property/possessions owned by the deceased

# Why Use Probate Records?

- Provide an approximate death date for the deceased
- Verify family relationships
  - Married daughters may be listed with their husband's surname
- Wills and inventories offer a glimpse into the personal belongings of an ancestor and how they were distributed
- Provide context of an ancestor's life

# Where do I find Probate Records?

- Filed at Courthouses
- Usually found on the county level
- Exceptions to this:
  - Rhode Island: town level
  - Vermont and Connecticut: Probate Districts

# Challenges of Probate Records

- Not everyone left a probate record (i.e. women)
- Deceased may have had multiple marriages
- Not all children are listed
- No uniformity
- Difficult to read

# Common Terms

- **Testate:** dies with a Last Will & Testament.
- **Intestate / Administration:** dies without a will.
- **File Papers:** the original documents associated with the probate file.
- **Record Books / Copy Books:** copies of certain probate files copied into bound record volumes.

# Documents Found in Probate Records

- Will
- Codicil
- Letters of Administration & Letters of Testamentary
- Inventory
- Accounts
- Distributions
- Guardianship Records
- Miscellaneous Probate Papers
  - Dower Records
  - Bill of Sales
  - Receipts

# Testate vs. Intestate

## Testate

- Will
- Codicil
- Letters of testamentary
- Inventory

## Intestate

- Letters of Administration
- Inventory
- Guardianships
- Distributions

# Wills and Codicils

# Wills

- A legal document written by the deceased
- Indicates how the deceased wants his or her estate distributed

## Wills Cont'd

- Wills can include the following:
  - Names of children (and their spouses)
  - Name of spouse
  - Names of grandchildren, nieces/nephews
  - Names of servants
  - Names of enslaved individuals

In the Name of God. Amen. The seventeenth Day of April: 1741  
I Phillip Rich of Sudbury in the County of Middlesex: a man  
Being sick and weak in Body but of perfect Mind and Memory Thank God  
Given unto God: Therefore calling unto Mind the Mortality of my Body  
and knowing that it is appointed for all men once to Die Do make and Ordain  
This my Last will and Testament that is to say Principally: and first of all  
I Give and Recommend my Soul into the Hands of God that gave it: and my  
Body I Recommend to the Earth to be Buried in Decent Christian Burial at  
the Discretion of my Executors nothing Doubting but at the General  
Resurrection I shall receive the same again by the mighty power of  
God: And as touching such worldly Estate where with it hath pleased God  
To Bless me in this Life I Give Devise and Dispose of the same in  
the following manner and form  
Imprimis . . . after my Just Debts and funeral Charges paid  
I Give and bequeath to Johanna Rich my Dearly Beloved wife the Use  
and Improvement of all my Estate Both Real and Personal that I have in  
Sudbury: During her Natural Life and of the improvement that is  
to say the income of my Estate shall be found sufficient for her  
Comfortable maintenance. Then my will is that I give full power to  
my here after named Executors with my wifes Consent. to sell all  
my Estate: and of the Income of the money Let. out. For Interest  
shall be found sufficient for her maintenance then my Executor  
to make Use of the same at the Discretion of the said Executors:

# Codicils

- An addition or change to a will
- Common changes:
  - Add or remove heirs
  - Change distribution of estates
  - Acknowledge deaths of heirs in will
  - Administrators of estate

But Having Casually Omitted sundry things in my said Will  
Do make this Codicil thereto as fully Explanatory thereof and  
with some Alterations and Additions to the same, First my mind  
and will is That Mr: Michael Trollett of Boston Merchant, and  
Henry Newman of Boston Shopkeeper Do accept the office  
of Executors of my said Will & this Codicil so far as relates to or  
concerns my Estate in New-England and do accordingly Appoint  
them my Executors - Item I Desire of my said Executors  
that my Daughter Louisa Genelia now in Boston  
be sent to Utrecht in the Province of Holland to my Brother  
Phillip Meinertzhagen & request their Particular Care that  
she be sent over in a good Season of the Year, Item I  
Do hereby make free from Slavery my Indian Boy called  
Gluk and give him his Liberty, Item Do allow & give  
unto the said Indian Boy the Sum of Twenty pounds -

Codicil, Anthony Henry Meinertzhagen, 1755 Suffolk County,  
Mass, Case #10998

# Why isn't someone mentioned in a will?

- Deceased
- Moved away
- Already received their inheritance
- Not yet born/considered a minor when the will was written
- Estrangement

# **Letters of Testamentary and Administration**

# Letters of Testamentary

- Issued by the court
- Exists if a person left a will
- Allows the executor to take control of the deceased's estate and distribute it according to the will

Province of the }  
Massachusetts-Bay, } Middlesex, Es.

AT a Court of Probate holden by the Honorable Jonathan  
Remington Esq; Judge of Probate of Wills, &c. with-  
in and for the County of Middlesex, on the twentyeth  
Day of July — A. D. 1741.

THE Instrument hereunto annexed (purporting the last Will  
and Testament of Phillip Rich — late of Sudbury  
in the same County, Yeoman deceased) was presented for  
Probate: Then present the  
Witnesses thereto subscribed, who made Oath that they saw the  
said Testator Sign, Seal, and heard him declare the said In-  
strument to be his last Will and Testament, and that they

subscribed their Names together as Witnesses to the Execution  
thereof, in the Presence of the said Testator, and that  
he was then (to the best of their Judgment) of sound and  
disposing Mind:

And the said Instrument is by the said Judge proved, approved and  
allowed as the last Will and Testament of the said deceased, and  
Administration thereof in all Matters the same concerning, and of  
his Estate, is committed unto the Rev<sup>d</sup> Mr<sup>Wm</sup> Cook  
the Executor therein named, faithfully to execute the said Will,  
and to administer the said Estate according thereunto; who accepted  
of his said Trust; and was directed to exhibit an  
Inventory of the said deceased's Estate  
and he shall render a full and true Account of his said  
Administration, when thereunto required.

By Order of the said Judge,

S. Danforth — Regr.

# Letters of Administration

- Issued if an individual died intestate
- The court appoints an administrator/trix
  - Distributes the estate of the deceased
  - If the deceased is married, typically the widow/widower
- After the Civil War, the names of the living heirs are named

**KNOW** all Men by these Presents, That We

*Sarah Knight Widow Nathan Wheeler Justice  
& Samuel Hale Justices all of Newbury  
in the County of Essex*

within His Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, are holden and stand firmly bound and obliged unto *John Choate Esq* Judge of Probate of Wills, and granting Administrations within the County of *Essex* in the full and just Sum of *One thousand* Pounds, in Lawful Money of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay, to be paid unto the said *John Choate* or his Successors in the said Office, or Assigns: To the true Payment whereof, we bind our selves, and each of us, our, and each of our Heirs, Executors and Administrators, jointly and severally for the whole and in the whole firmly by these Presents.

Sealed with our Seals. Dated the *Fifth* Day of *May* Anno Domini, One Thousand Seven Hundred and *Sixty*  
*Annoque Regni Regis*

**THE** Condition of this present Obligation is such,

That if the above-bounden *Sarah Knight administratrix & singular executrix, chattels, rights & credits of her husband Joseph Knight late of Newbury aforesaid dec'd* do make or cause to be made a true and perfect Inventory of all and singular the Goods, Chattels, Rights and Credits of the said Deceased, which have or shall come to the Hands, Possession or Knowledge of *her* the said *Sarah* or into the Hands and Possession of any other Person or Persons for *her* and the same so made, do exhibit or cause to be exhibited into the Registry of the Court of Probate for the said County of *Essex* at or before the *first* Day of *July* next ensuing; and the same Goods, Chattels, Rights and Credits, and all other the Goods, Chattels, Rights and Credits of the said Deceased, at the Time of *his* Death which at any Time after shall come to the Hands and Possession of the said *Sarah* or into the Hands and Possession of any other Person or Persons for *her* do well and truly Administer according to Law: And further do make

# Inventory

# What is an Inventory?

- Appraisal of deceased's real estate and personal property
- Provides a value for the estate
- Can provide clues about the lives of your ancestors

# What can an inventory tell us?

- How much land/property an ancestor owned
- Job/trade
- Education level
- Level of wealth/status
- The number and names of enslaved persons

The Inventory of the Estate of Joseph Coman  
 Late of Providence Deceased  
 who Departed this Life June 22<sup>o</sup> 1751

To Wareing aprical - at	22-0-0
To Silver -	1-5-0
to a pease of humppon Broad Cloth	20-10-0
to a pease humppon Camblett	21-7-0
To 2 feather beds and furniture at	20-0-0
to one flock bed and furniture	15-0-0
to Outer -	20-18-0
to 2 Iron pot and 3 Iron Kittles 2 Tramiils.	
two Warming pans 2 frying Pans	
and 2 Shillets tong, Steel & Gridiron at	24-5-0
to Tables Linning and Napkins	6-5-0
to one Gun Bullet mold and powder <sup>horn</sup>	4-10-0
to Glasse Bottles and viales	1-15-0

One broken plough, one pair one Iron Harrow		
one Log Chain four rails & four Hoos		35 4 4
One yoke of Oxen		28 4 4
One Negro named Captain, Infirm		50 4 4
One Do named old Gosh		50 4 4
One Do named Santo Lame & 80 years old		50 4 4
One Negro Girl 6 years of age		60 4 4
A Tract of Unimproved Land at Madley,		
South Precinct containing about 900 Acres,		900 4 4
Lands Bought of Th: Westbrook in the County of York		200 4 4
Lands Bought of Henry Gibbs in the County of Do		1000 4 4
		343 4 4

# Tip

Note the persons who are taking the inventory. They may be family or close friends/business partners.

Ruth Waterboy Admin<sup>tr</sup> of the Estate of her Brother  
David Waterboy late of Boston Cordwainer deceased  
exhibited the above written and made Oath that it  
contains a just and true Inventory of the Estate of the Dec<sup>d</sup>  
So far as hath come to her knowledge And that if more  
hereafter appears she will cause it to be added  
Boston May 14<sup>th</sup> 1698. Jurat Cor<sup>o</sup>  
W<sup>m</sup> Houghton

# Tip

Review the inventory for any real estate holdings and then look for the corresponding land deeds.

Real Estate

1/3 of the Dwelling House & House Lot with a small Barn thereon	\$250.00
1/2 Acres of Meadow adjoining the House Lot on the East side	150.00
3 Acres in the Orchard South of the Meadow	150.00
10 Acres & 100 rods of land lying south of Mr Bradley's	}
Land & North of Josiah M Reeds land including a lane	
20 Acres of land lying towards the north end of the old Capt Everts Farm Part Wood	650.00
Amount of Real Estate	\$1839.75

Personal Estate

1 Table 75	1 Look Glass 50	1 Chest drawers 75	\$200.00
1 Churn stand 17	1 C <sup>o</sup> 75	1 Old Clock 50	142
2 Split Bottom chairs 25	1 Good Rock chair 75	1 Biche Arm C <sup>o</sup> 20	1.20
1 Flagg C <sup>o</sup> C <sup>o</sup> 20	2 Wood bottom C <sup>o</sup> 50	6 fancy cane C <sup>o</sup> 3.00	3.70
1 Bedstead & board fl.	1 C <sup>o</sup> high Post 2	1 Cherry Bureau 2.50	5.50
1 Blue Chest fl.	1 Wood looking C <sup>o</sup> 50	1 Chubb's C <sup>o</sup> 20	1.70
1 Box in Genet 6	1 Glass B <sup>l</sup> & D <sup>o</sup> 30	2 Spit Boxes 6	.42
1 Large Spin Wheel 40	1 Small C <sup>o</sup> 6	2 Split work Baskets 6	.52
1 Small trunk 6	1 Small Post tub 50		50
1 Butter tub 37	1 Lidin Hoaghead 25	1 Lidin B <sup>l</sup> 25	57
1 Small wersh tub 25	1 Cook Stone & furniture 5.25		5.25
1 Large wood bowl 20	1 C <sup>o</sup> 17	1 Small C <sup>o</sup> 20	.57
2 Small C <sup>o</sup> C <sup>o</sup> 12	2 C <sup>o</sup> 6	1 Butter table 6	24

Real and Personal Estate, Inventory of Hannah Everts, Salisbury, 1851, Film #007626797

# Accounts

# Accounts

- List of debts owed to the estate
- List of debts the estate owes to others
- Notices published in newspapers to collect on any remaining debts

# Why look at accounts?

- Hint at status of ancestor
  - Do they owe a lot of money?
  - Are they lending money frequently?
  - Do the debts add up to more than the value of the estate?
- Potential family and associate connections
  - Extended family
  - Business associates

Suffolk. The Account of Abigail Draper Admin<sup>r</sup>  
 of all & Singular the Goods, Chattels, Rights & Credits  
 of her Husband James Draper late of Roxbury  
 in y<sup>e</sup> County afores<sup>d</sup>. Husbandman deceased & intestate  
 The s<sup>d</sup>. Account chargeth her self w<sup>th</sup> all  
 & Singular the Goods & Chattels of y<sup>e</sup> s<sup>d</sup>. deceased  
 specified in an Inven<sup>t</sup> thereof by her Exhibited  
 into the Registry of Probate, Amounting to - £ 8<sup>6</sup> 6<sup>6</sup>  
 W<sup>ch</sup>. Housing & Land - £ 114<sup>11</sup> - - - -  
 W<sup>ch</sup>. Rec<sup>d</sup>. in small Debts due to y<sup>e</sup> deceased - £ 21<sup>17</sup> - -  
 Rec<sup>d</sup>. Cash for Mills sold by y<sup>e</sup> deceased - £ 37<sup>18</sup> 8<sup>8</sup>  
 £ 118<sup>2</sup> 2<sup>2</sup>

And pray's Allowance as follows. Vizt.

P. for Lett. of Admin. <sup>Eng. Reg.</sup> & Inventory.	£ <sup>11</sup> - <sup>10</sup> - <sup>0</sup>
P. sickness & funeral Charges of y <sup>e</sup> Deceased - - -	" 7 - 16 - 6
P. To several y <sup>e</sup> Sons as by Receipts doth appear <sup>is</sup> was due from y <sup>e</sup> Deceased Amounting in y <sup>e</sup> whole to	£ 59 - 7 - 6
P. to Sam <sup>l</sup> Earle of Boston a Debt - - - - -	" 3 - 3 - 6
P. to Sam <sup>l</sup> Earle for repairing y <sup>e</sup> Deceaseds Windows	" 5 - 12 - "
Loss in Clotting of y <sup>e</sup> Deceaseds Linnen & woollen being worn out, <sup>among the Children</sup> Apprized at	£ 15 - 5 - "
Wooden ware apprized at 1:13/ being worn out	" 1 - 13 - "
Cart & Tackling worn out - - - - -	1 - " - "
Paid to Samuel Gore for his Wife's Portion	£ 25 - " - "
	£ 119 - 2 - 6
For Admin. Time & Trouble - - - - -	3 - " - "
For Drawing Allowance & Reg. <sup>ing</sup> this Acc <sup>t</sup> . p.	" 8 - "
<b>Nath<sup>l</sup> Draper</b> <sup>is</sup> <sup>son</sup> of y <sup>e</sup> Deceased	mark £ 122 - 10 - 6
Being present at y <sup>e</sup> Allowance of y <sup>e</sup> <sup>Deceased</sup>	
W <sup>th</sup> to	W <sup>th</sup> to

W<sup>th</sup> to Nath<sup>l</sup> Draper

Account, Estate of James Draper, Case #2456, Suffolk County, MA Probate File Papers, AmericanAncestors.org

# **Estate Distribution**

# Distributions

- Dividing an estate among heirs
- Occurs after bills are paid and debts collected
- Heirs (children, widow, etc.) mentioned in distribution
- Genealogical importance:
  - List of children if vital records aren't available
  - Married names of daughters
  - Children of deceased heirs

of Ipswich in said county, merchant, deceased, unsworn, &c.

Whereas by your account of administration of said estate, this day settled and allowed, it appears that there is now remaining in your hands the sum of four hundred ninety one dollars seventy seven cents and a half, being the balance of said account, to be distributed among the heirs of said intestate, agreeably to law;

You are therefore hereby ordered and directed to pay and distribute <sup>formerly Elizabeth Knight, who was the widow of said intestate, the sum of one hundred sixty three dollars and thirty seven cents, as her distributive share of said balance</sup> and to ~~the said sum~~ <sup>the said sum</sup> as follows, viz. to Elizabeth Young, Henry C. Knight, Frederick Knight and Antonio Knight, children of said intestate, each the sum of one hundred ~~twenty two~~ <sup>ninety</sup> dollars ~~eight~~ <sup>twenty</sup> ~~four~~ <sup>eight</sup> cents, as their distributive shares of said balance, taking their receipts for the same; all to be still held, so far as their said shares will extend, to pay their ratable parts of what further debts and charges shall hereafter arise against said

Order Distribution, Joseph Knight estate, Essex County, Mass,  
Case #16001

# Guardianships

# Guardianships

- Appointed for minor children
  - Males: under 21
  - Females: under 18
- Guardians protected the inheritance of minor heirs to an estate
  - Can provide financial support
- After minor becomes of age, the guardian is released
  - Guardian would then make an account of compensation

The Account of Nathaniel Weston of Boston Mariner Guardian to Sarah Griggs — Daughter of Isaac Griggs late of Boston deceased in the County of Suffolk Lord wainor Deed. as well of and for such and so much Estate as hath come to his hands by virtue of the sd Guardianship & of the profits & Improvement made with the same as of & for his payments and disbursements thereof for and towards the education & maintenance of the said Sarah &c.

The sd Accountant chargeth himselfe with several Sums of money by him recd. as followeth vizt

1698.	With money recd. of Wm Griggs Adminr of the Estate of the sd Isaac Griggs -	£ 100 <sup>11</sup> - -
	more money recd. of sd Griggs -	8 <sup>11</sup> 2 <sup>11</sup> 6
9 <sup>11</sup>	With a Bond of James Russell Esq. for -	60 <sup>11</sup> - -
9 <sup>11</sup>	With one year Interest of £ 60 -	3 <sup>11</sup> 12 <sup>11</sup> -
1699	9 <sup>11</sup> With more money recd. of sd Wm Griggs -	6 <sup>11</sup> 7 <sup>11</sup> -
9 <sup>11</sup>	With Interest recd. for £ 150 -	15 <sup>11</sup> - -

Guardianship Account, Estate of Isaac Griggs, 1698, Case #2443, Suffolk County, MA  
 Probate File Papers, AmericanAncestors.org

# Miscellaneous Probate Papers

# Bill of Sale

- Property may have to be sold in order to pay debts
- Sold at public auction
- Approved by the probate court

0 0 0

- Deposition -

Robert Oliver of full age testifies and saith that in the life time of Sam<sup>l</sup> Wethered of Boston Inholder he received a Bill of sale from the said Wethered for his the said Samuels Negro man Esq & Negro Woman Named Sarah & for all his Plate his Gold Watch and his Horse & Chais for which Goods & the said Oliver Never Paid any Consideration to the said Samuel a Coppy of said Bill of Sale & the said Oliver delivered to John Row Esq<sup>r</sup> in Presence of William Taylor & Richard Willshire upon My receiving the Bill of Sale for said Good & the s<sup>r</sup> Robert gave the said Sam<sup>l</sup> a Bond the Penalty for one Hundred pounds condition that & the said Robert at any time upon demand Deliver to Sarah Wethered all the articles Mentioned above contained in said Bill of Sale and on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1760 & the said Robert delivered Every Article of said Goods to the said Sarah Wethered as for her Receipt for which & the said Robert Never receiv<sup>d</sup> any Consideration of the said Sarah  
Dorchester Novem<sup>r</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> 1760 further saith Not  
Robert Oliver

Suffolk co. Dorchester Novem<sup>r</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> 1760.  
the Above Robert Oliver made Oath to the truth of the above testimony by him subscribed (Joseph Barnes attorn<sup>t</sup> to the s<sup>r</sup> Sarah Wethered was Notified to be present at the Caption but was not  
Before me John Hilles Jus. Pace

Robert Oliver of full age testifies and saith that in  
the life time of Sam<sup>l</sup> Wethered of Boston Inholder he  
received a Bill of sale from the said Wethered for his the  
said Samuels Negro man Esq<sup>r</sup> & Negro Woman Named  
Sarah & for all his Plate his Gold Watch and his Horse  
& Chais for which Goods I the said Oliver Never Paid  
any Consideration to the said Samuel a Copye of  
said Bill of Sale I the said Oliver delivered to John  
Row Esq<sup>r</sup> in Presence of William Taylor & Richard Will  
shire upon My receiving the Bill of Sale for said Good  
I the s<sup>d</sup> Robert gave the said Sam<sup>l</sup> a Bond the Penalty  
for one Hundred pounds condition that I the said Robert  
at any time upon demand Deliver to Sarah Wethered  
all the articles Mentioned above contained in said  
Bill of Sale and on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1760 I the said Robert  
delivered Every Article of said Goods to the said Sarah  
Wethered as for her Receipt for which I the said Robert  
Never receiv<sup>d</sup> any Consideration of the said Sarah  
Dorchester Novem<sup>r</sup> 28, 1760

- Deposition -

further saith Not  
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Suffolk ss. Dorchester Novem<sup>r</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> 1760.  
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to the s<sup>d</sup> Sarah Wethered was Notified to be present at  
the Caption but was not  
Before me John Hilles Jus: Peace

## Tip

You can find lists of enslaved persons sold to others in bills of sale. These may be found in probate records or land deeds.

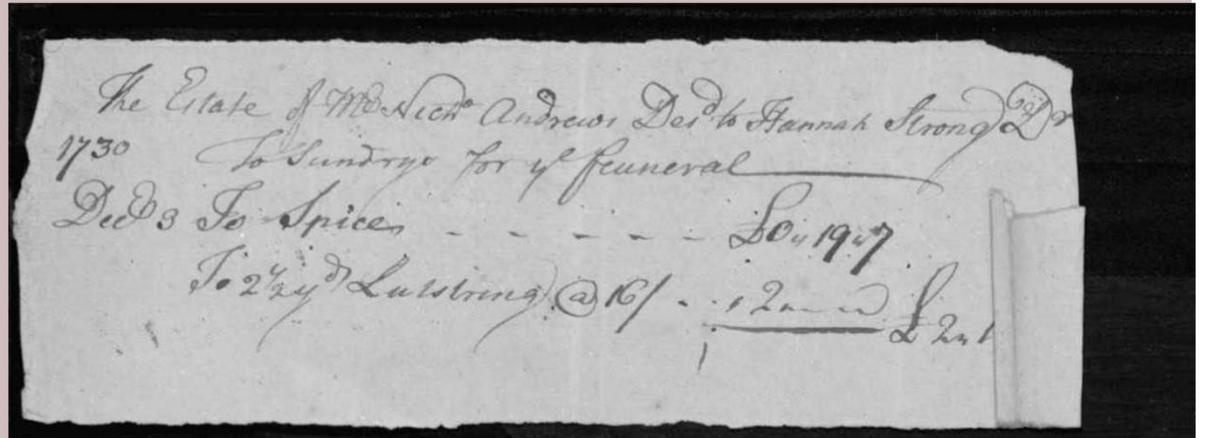
# Dower Records

- A dower is the right of a widow to her deceased husband's land and property
- In most U.S. states widows had a right of one-third share of deceased's husband's property
- Widows have right to refuse their inheritance given to them in a will in favor of their dower right

Whereas at a Court of Probates held at Mansfield in  
the District of Windham Feb<sup>ry</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> 1775, We the Subscri-  
bers were appointed & Impowered to Divide & set out to Betty  
Wattles, Widow & Relict to Capt. John Wattles, late of Lebanon  
Deceased, one third part of the whole Real Estate of s. Deceased  
for quantity & Quality, as her Dower therein; And Where-  
as on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 1775, We Did accordingly proceed  
to set out to the afores. Wid<sup>ow</sup> Betty, her Dower ~~therein~~  
in s. Estate, and made Return of our Doings thereon

# Receipts

- Record of the administrator collecting or paying debts
- Record that the estate has been distributed



Receipt for Expenses, Estate of Nicholas Andrews, 1730, Case #700, Essex County, Massachusetts

A large audience is seated in a conference room, viewed from behind. The room is dimly lit, and a presentation screen is visible at the front. The word "QUESTIONS?" is overlaid in large white text in the center of the image.

**QUESTIONS?**

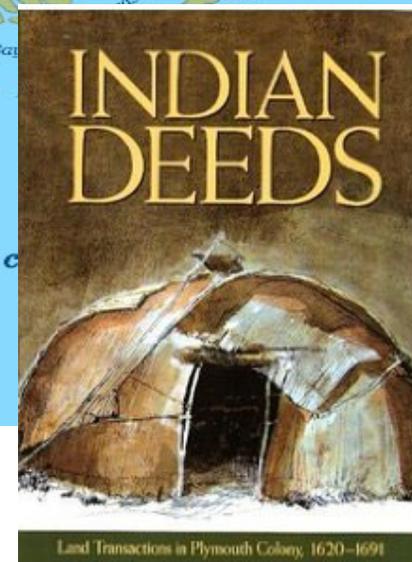
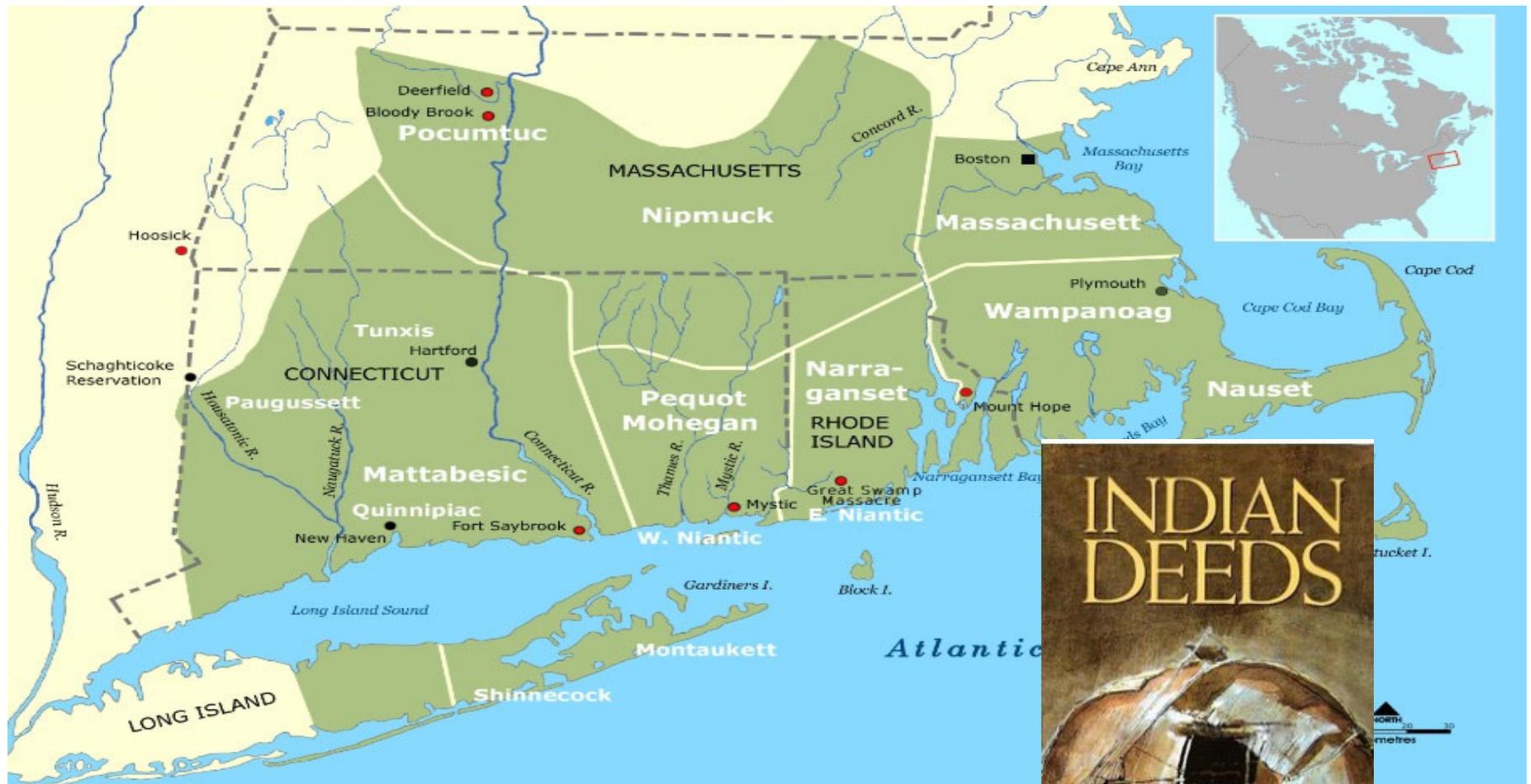
# Land Deeds

# Why Use Land Records?

- In some cases, a land record may be the only documented source you can locate.
- Land records can often trace generations of ownership of a single parcel of land.
- Using land records, you may determine the site of your ancestor's house or farm today.

# Tip

Remember not all deeds were recorded at the date of the sale.



JEREMY DUPERTUIS BANGS

## Indian Settlement in SE New England

The first of July 1640

(30)

Bought of Ponus Sagamore of Toquams and of Wajcupue Sagamore of Shippan by mee Nathanael Turner of Queneponke all the ground that belongs to both the abovesaid Sagamores except a piece of ground which the abovesaid Sagamore of Toquams reserved for his and the rest of the said Indians to plant on all which ground being expressed by meadows upland grass with the rivers and trees And in consideration hereof the said Nathanael Turner am to give and bring or sell to the abovesaid Sagamores within the space of one month twelve coats twelve hoes twelve hatchets twelve glapes twelve knives two kettles four fathom of white wompum. all which land both We the said Sagamores do promise faithfully to perform both for ourselves heirs Executors or assigns to the abovesaid Nathanael Turner of Queneponke to his heirs Executors or assigns And hereunto we have set our marks in the presence of many of the said Indians they fully consenting hereunto

Witnessed by us

William Wilkes

James

Witnessed by two Indians

the mark of

the mark of

of mark of  Ponus Sagamore

of mark of  Wajcupue Sagamore

 Owenoke Sagamore Ponus's Son

pd in part of payment 12 glapes  
12 knives  
04 coats

# Proprietor Records

# Who Were Proprietors?

- The Colony courts assigned grants of land to groups of settlers.
- These settlers formed Proprietorship Committees to distribute land to settle towns.

## Where to find Proprietor Records?

Town Halls, Town Clerk, Tax Office or assessor

County Registry of Deeds

Libraries and local historical societies

Family History Library microfilm

Published transcriptions of Proprietor records

THE REGISTER BOOK  
OF THE  
LANDS AND HOUSES IN THE "NEW TOWNE"  
AND  
THE TOWN OF CAMBRIDGE  
WITH  
THE RECORDS OF THE PROPRIETORS OF THE  
COMMON LANDS

BEING THE RECORDS GENERALLY CALLED

**"The Proprietors' Records"**

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE CITY COUNCIL UNDER THE  
DIRECTION OF THE CITY CLERK

CAMBRIDGE, 1896

24

PROPRIETORS' RECORDS.

Moore Jn Westend ffeild aboute three Ackers — Robert Daye  
foutheaft the high way to fresh pond fouth west Garrad Haddon north-  
west the highway to great swampe north east

The 5<sup>th</sup> of Octobr 1635

[23] RICHARD GOODMAN Jn Cowyard Rowe aboute three Roods:  
John Steele northwest Cowyard lane southwest Edward Stebinge fouth-  
east the Comon pales northeast

Moore one fmale lotthill aboute two Ackers Daniell Denison north-  
east Samuell Dudly foutheaft Thomas Heat fouth west the high way to  
the Comon pales one the north west

Moore Jn the necke aboute fix Ackers Thomas Dudly Esqr north-  
west the Comon pales north east William Westwood fouth east the high  
way to oyster bancke fouth west

Moore Jn the Great Marsh aboute fix Ackers Symon Sacket north  
west Charls River fouth west William spencer northeaft Nathaniell  
Richards foutheaft

Moore Jn the Long Marsh . aboute one acker one Roode William  
Goodwine north east and fouth east Richard Butler fouth west Symon  
Bradstreet north west

WILLIAM KELSIE Jn the Towne one house wth Garden and back-  
fide aboute halfe aroode Creeke lane Northwest long street north east  
\* \* fouth east Andrew Warner fouth west

Moore one fmale lott hill aboute three Ackers Symon Sackett  
northeaft Samuell Dudly foutheaft Math

Tip

Tax Records can indicate when  
your ancestor was paying  
Real Estate Tax

Names.		Province.				Town	County	Total all the Town.	
		Poll. £. S. d.	Real. £. S. d.	Prof. & £. S. d.	Total of Province £. S. d.				
Nb.	Ebenerer	Newcomb, <u>Drain tree</u>	X . . .	3 6 . . .	3 6 . . .	3 7 . . .	5 . . .	7 6 . . .	
P.	Capt. William	Pierce	X . . .	2 . . .	2 9 . . .	2 10 . . .	4 . . .	5 11 . . .	
R.	David	Rawson, <u>Drain tree</u>	X . . .	17 2 . . .	17 2 . . .	17 7 . . .	2 . . .	1 18 9 . . .	
S.	James	Swift	+ 12 3 . . .	2 4 . . .	5 . . .	15 5 . . .	1 9 . . .	1 12 2 . . .	
W.	John	Webb	X 4 6 . . .	. . .	4 6 . . .	5 1 . . .	3 . . .	2 12 7 . . .	
	Joseph	Woodward	X 12 3 . . .	. . .	12 3 . . .	12 7 . . .	1 5 . . .	1 6 3 . . .	
	Joseph	Whiston	X 12 3 . . .	. . .	12 3 . . .	12 7 . . .	1 5 . . .	1 6 3 . . .	
			3 . 1 3	1 . 5 9	. . 5	4 . 7 5	4 . 9 8	. 10 4	9 . 7 5
		Brought over	6 . 2 6	9 . 6 3	5 8 10	16 17 7	17 . 5 10	2 . 0 3	36 . 3 6
		Total	9 . 3 9	10 12 .	1 . 9 3	2 1 5 .	2 1 5 6	2 10 5	4 5 10 11
	Note, The	Est. of Herckiah Merottu	paid in	part					00 15 6
	And	John Webb has	paid in	part					2 . . .
									42 15 5
									6 . 7 6
									49 . 2 11

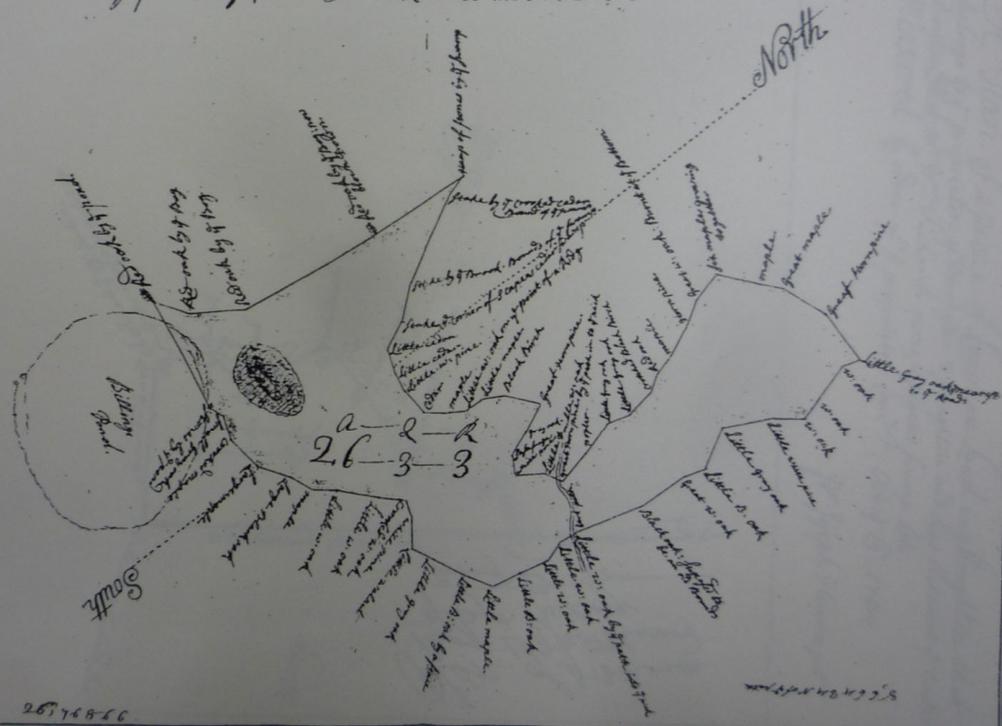
Tax Records of Proprietors

# Tip

You ancestor did not need to  
reside in a community to own  
land there.

The Plan of a piece of Common Land in Sloughpton, Belonging to the Proprietors of Berchester & Sloughpton  
 The Land lying to the Northward of Capt. Eben<sup>r</sup> Billings farm.  
 Measured at the Desire of the Proprietors, June 25<sup>th</sup> 1751, and found to contain Twenty Six Acres, Three Quarters & Three Rods  
 Error Excepted by Joseph Stevens and

The Plan was drawn by a Scale of 4 Chains, or 16 Rods to an Inch



Proprietor's Plans

# Tip

Use Proprietor records to determine the earliest date of settlement for your family in the 17th and 18th century.

# Land Deeds

To all People to whom this present shall come Greeting Knowe Ye that  
I Edward Sargent of Newbury in y<sup>e</sup> County of Essex in the Province of y<sup>e</sup> Massack<sup>ts</sup>  
Bay in New England Gentleman for and in Consideration of the full & true sum of  
twenty five pounds in good Province bills of Credit to me well & truly  
in hand paid by Thomas Arnold of Newbury afores<sup>d</sup> Marriner y<sup>e</sup> Receipt whereof  
I do hereby Acknowledge & myself therewith fully Satisfied & Contented have  
given granted bargained & Sold and by these presents do give grant bargain  
sell aliene Convey & Assign unto the said Thomas Arnold his heirs & Assignes  
all that one Certain Messuage or Tenement Lying & being in Newbury  
afores<sup>d</sup> at Merrimack River bounded as followeth, by Joseph Greenleaf  
Westerly by Merrimack River Northerly by Moses Little Easterly and by the  
highway southerly with one Dwelling house Warehouse & Wharf thereupon  
standing & being together with Garden & fence & part of an well digged by  
John Calfe upon said Land the said Land & part <sup>being</sup> a Quarter of an acre be the  
same more or less with all y<sup>e</sup> appurtenances thereto belonging  
to him the said Thomas Arnold his heirs & Assignes as a good perfect & absolute Estate of  
Inheritance to him & them to his and their own only benefit use & behoofe Inheritance  
forever, and I the said Edward Sargent for my selfe & my heirs do Covenant promise  
& grant to and with y<sup>e</sup> said Thomas Arnold his heirs & Assignes in form & manner  
following (viz) That Immediately before y<sup>e</sup> Enrolling hereof Jam<sup>y</sup> true told  
and

Grantor/Seller



Grantee/Buyer



Abutting neighbors

Land Measurements

Location of Land



## Introduction of the Land Deed

Essex County, Massachusetts Land Deed, Edward Sargent of Newbury to Thomas Arnold of Newbury, 1722/23, FamilySearch.org

Sole and Lawfull owner of y<sup>e</sup> above granted premises and have in my  
Self good right full power & Lawfull Authority to Sell & Dispose of y<sup>e</sup> said  
premises according to y<sup>e</sup> true intent and meaning of these presents, and  
I will forever warrant & Defend this Sale against all persons whomsoever  
Laying any Lawfull Claim to y<sup>e</sup> same or any part thereof In Witness  
to all above written y<sup>e</sup> said Edward Sargent have hereunto Set my hand  
and Seal the Eleventh day of February Anno Domini 1722/3 in y<sup>e</sup> Nineth  
Year of the Reign of His Majesty King George of Great Britain &c  
&c. Note that it is interlined before signing (with all y<sup>e</sup> appurtenances thereto belonging)

Terms of the Land Sale

# Land Measurements

- 1 mile: 80 chains, 320 poles, rods or perches = 5,280 ft.
- 1 chain: 4 poles, rods perches is 66 ft., or 100 links.
- 1 pole, rod or perch: 25 links, 16 ½ ft.
- 1 link: 7.92 inches



*King etc. Note that it is interlined, before signing (without it being necessary to sign)*  
Signed Sealed & Delivered in presence of } Edward Sargent of Seal  
John Galt Deborah Galt Junr. }

Signed, Sealed, Delivered

At Newbury February 21<sup>st</sup> 1722/3 the within named \_\_\_\_\_  
personally appeared before me J. Subscriber and acknowledged y<sup>e</sup>. within  
Instrument to be his voluntary act & Deed of hand & seal  
Examined Joseph Woodbridge Justice of y<sup>e</sup>. Peace

Appearing before the Court

# Tips for Analyzing Land Deeds

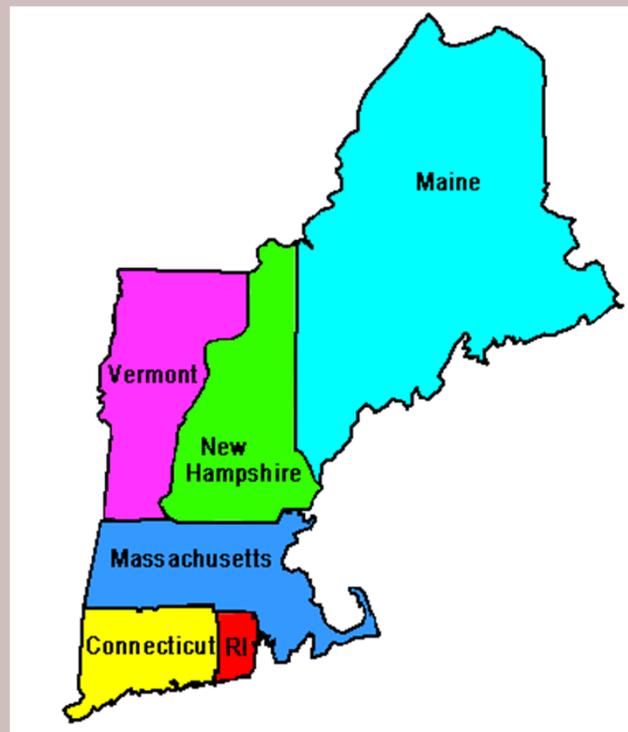
- Note where the buyer and seller's residence is at the time of the sale. This is a key clue for identifying migration.
- Look for deeds where a husband is selling property. If his wife is living, first name will be referenced in the deed and/or the court inquiry to release her dower.
- Note the deed witnesses and abutting neighbors. They may be relatives of either party.
- Look for phrases like "in consideration of natural affection" to identify family members.
- Quit claim and power of attorney deeds are useful for documenting the children of a deceased parent.

150  
To all Christian People to whom these presents shall come Greeting  
I know ye I Samuel Sharp of Wallingford in y<sup>e</sup> County of  
New-haven & Colony of Connecticut in New England & cause for  
in consideration of a naturall affection & fatherly love which  
I have & bare unto my wellbeloued Son in Law Edward Jen-  
of Wallingford afore said plantex as also for other good  
causes & Considerations me thereunto especially mouing haue  
giuen & granted & by these presents Doe give grant & Confirme  
unto said beloued Son in Law Edward Jen one peice or parcel

"In consideration of natural affection and fatherly love"

**New England  
Land Records  
Overview**  
*state-by-state*

# New England



# Connecticut Land Records

- The earliest land was granted by the Conn. General Court to town Proprietors.
- Proprietors distributed the land within the town.
- Records are held on the town level
  - The only exception are the border towns of Woodstock and Suffield which were once part of Massachusetts.
- FamilySearch has microfilmed deeds on the town level through 1900 in most towns.
- There is no statewide or county index to deeds.

## Search Database

★ Favorite



Hartford, CT: General Index of Land Records of the Town of Hartford, 1639-1839

Exact Search  Soundex

SEARCH

First Name

First/Middle/[Maiden] names

Last Name

Last Name

Years

From

To

Location  Exact Location

e.g. Boston, Massachusetts

Keywords

Enter terms or words

Family Members (Father/Mother/Spouse)

Any

First and Middle Names

Last Name

+ Add family members +

# Maine Land Records

- Maine deeds are recorded on the county level by the Registrar of Deeds
- Cumberland Co. Land records were not destroyed.
- First 18 vols. York County Deeds covering all Maine to 1736 were published by the state from 1887-1910 on [AmericanAncestors.org](http://AmericanAncestors.org)
- Some land dealt with through the Land Office in Maine after 1820.

above Writing Wells Feb<sup>ry</sup> the Eighth 1721/2 —

John Wheelwright John Gray Quor Unus Just Pacis In Perpetuam Rei Memoriam  
A true Copy of the Original Received August 20. 1730

Attest: Jos : Moody Reg<sup>r</sup>

To all People to whom these Presents shall come Greeting Know ye that we John Watson

Watson & Dorman  
Dorman  
To Perkins

& Jabez Dorman of Arundel in the County of York within his Maj<sup>ty</sup>s Province &c  
Yeomen for & in Consideration of the Sum of Eleven Pounds to us in Hand before  
the Ensealing hereof well & truly paid by Thomas

Perkins [Jun<sup>r</sup>] of the Town & County afores<sup>d</sup> Yeoman the Receipt whereof we do acknowledge & our selves therewith fully satisfied & contented & thereof do exonerate acquit & discharge the s<sup>d</sup> Thomas Perkins his Heirs Exec<sup>rs</sup> Admin<sup>rs</sup> for ever by these Presents have given granted bargained sold aliened conveyed & confirmed & by these Presents freely fully absolutely give grant bargain aliene convey & confirm unto him the s<sup>d</sup> Thomas Perkins his Heirs & Assigns for ever all our Right Title Interest Claim Challenge or Demand We have had or ought to have by Virtue of any Deed or Grant whatsoever unto a Parcel of Upland or Tract of Land situate lying & being in Arundel afores<sup>d</sup> known by the Name of Montequ Islands Bounded Westwardly by a Ditch & Creek Northwardly by Marsh now in the Possession of the s<sup>d</sup> Watson & Dorman Eastwardly by a Creek & Ditch to the Flats or Salt Water Cove which is the South Bounds of the s<sup>d</sup> Land To have & to hold the s<sup>d</sup> granted and bargained Premisses with the Appurces Priviledges & Commodities to the same belonging or in any wise apper — or belonging To him the s<sup>d</sup> Thomas Perkins his Heirs & Assigns for ever To his & their proper Use Benefit & Behoofe for ever — And that the s<sup>d</sup> Thomas Perkins his Heirs & Assigns shall & may from Time to Time & at all Times for ever hereafter by Force & Virtue of these Presents lawfully

2

Watson Dorman  
To  
Perkins

To all People to whom these Presents shall come greeting  
Know ye that We John Watson & Jabez Dorman of Arundel in the County  
of York within his Majesty's Province of Virginia for & in Consideration of Eleven  
Pounds to us in Hand before the Unsealing hereof well & truly paid by Tho-  
mas Perkins Jun<sup>r</sup> of the Town & County afores<sup>d</sup>. Yeoman the Receipt whereof  
we do acknowledge & our selves therewith fully satisfied & contented & thereof  
do exonerate acquit & discharge the P<sup>r</sup>. Thomas Perkins his Heirs Exec<sup>rs</sup> Admin<sup>rs</sup>  
for ever by these Presents have given granted bargained sold aliened  
conveyed & confirmed & by these Presents freely absolutely give grant bar-  
gain aliene convey & confirm unto him the P<sup>r</sup>. Thomas Perkins his Heirs &  
Assigns forever all our Right Title Interest Claim Challenge or Demand  
We have had or ought to have by Virtue of any Deed or Grant what-  
soever unto a Parcel of Upland or Tract of Land situate lying & being in  
Arundel afores<sup>d</sup>. known by the Name of Montague Islands bounded West-  
wardly by a Ditch & Creek Northwardly by Marsh now in the Possession  
of the Watson & Dorman Eastwardly by a Creek & Ditch to the Flat or Salt  
Water laves which is the South Bounds of the P<sup>r</sup>. Land To have & to  
hold the P<sup>r</sup>. granted & bargained Premises with the Appurtenances with the Ap-  
purtenances Priviledges & Commodities to the same belonging or in any wise apper-  
taining to him the P<sup>r</sup>. Thomas Perkins his Heirs & Assigns for  
ever To his & their proper Use Benefit & behoofe for ever And  
that the P<sup>r</sup>. Thomas Perkins his Heirs & Assigns shall & may from  
Time to Time & at all Times for ever hereafter by Force & Virtue  
of these Presents lawfully peaceably & quietly have hold use occupy  
possess & enjoy the P<sup>r</sup>. demised & bargained Premises with the Appurtenances  
free & clear & freely & clearly acquitted exonerated & discharged from all  
Manner of former & other Gifts Grants Bargains Sales Wills Entails  
Jointures Thirds or Dowries & Encumbrances whatsoever Furthermore  
We the P<sup>r</sup>. John Watson Jabez Dorman for our selves our Heirs Exec<sup>rs</sup> and  
Admin<sup>rs</sup> each of them do covenant & engage the abovesaid Premises  
to him the P<sup>r</sup>. Thomas Perkins his Heirs & Assigns against the Lawful

York County Deed – Original page

# New Hampshire Deeds

- **Masonian Proprietary Period 1629-1641** *New Hampshire Provincial and State Papers* (Vols. 29).
- **Original Town charters** from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century can be found in the *New Hampshire Provincial and State Papers* (Vols. 27-28).
- *New Hampshire Provincial and State Papers* online on University of New Hampshire web site and HathiTrust
- **Massachusetts Era 1641-1679**



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in this series

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## Provincial and State Papers



A [name index](#) compiled by Frank C. Meyers is available from the N.H. Secretary of State website.

### Submissions from 2004

[PDF](#) [NH Provincial and State Papers Index](#), Frank Meyers

### Submissions from 1943

[PDF](#) [New Hampshire court records, 1640-1692, Court papers, 1652-1668, State papers vol. 40](#), New Hampshire, Probate Court

### Submissions from 1941

[PDF](#) [Probate records of the province of New Hampshire vol. 9, 1767-1771 state papers series vol. 39](#), New Hampshire, Probate Court

### Submissions from 1940

[PDF](#) [Probate records of the province of New Hampshire vol. 8, 1764-1767 state papers series vol. 38](#), New Hampshire, Probate Court

### Submissions from 1939

[PDF](#) [Probate records of the province of New Hampshire vol. 7, 1760-1763 state papers series vol. 37](#), New Hampshire, Probate Court

### Submissions from 1938

[PDF](#) [Probate records of the province of New Hampshire vol. 6, 1757-1760 state papers series vol. 36](#), New Hampshire, Probate Court

### Submissions from 1936

[PDF](#) [Probate records of the province of New Hampshire vol. 5, 1754-1756 state papers series vol. 35](#), New Hampshire, Probate Court

<https://scholars.unh.edu/propapers>

## A

Abbe, Ichabod **XXX**:309  
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    Thomas **XXIV**:454  
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    133, 139, 149, 174, 183, 185, 320, *passim*, 338,  
    399, 841, 852, 951, 956, 966; **XVI**:114, 145, 157,  
    880, 881, 882; **XVIII**:807  
James **XV**:592  
Jeremiah **VIII**:607; **XV**:175, 268, 271, 274, 275, 419, 514;  
    **XVI**:88, 93, 255, 501, 604, 882  
Jesse **XV**:185, 234  
Joab **VII**:514  
Joel **XVI**:694

Date	Name	Residence
1765(?) Oct. 29	Abernethy, Beatrice	Londonderry
	to from	
	(Rankin)Renkins, Samuel	"
	Description	land in Londonderry
Vol 87		
p. 187		

# Tip

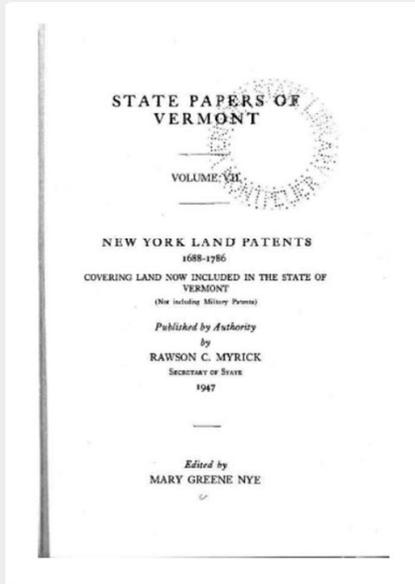
All Provincial Deeds before 1771 are registered in Rockingham County, N.H.

# Rhode Island Land Records

- The earliest land grants were made by the colony. The records of these grants are known as "land evidences" are held at the Rhode Island State Archives.
- The Rhode Island General Assembly granted land to groups who in turn became Proprietors of that town.
- Some early grants and land transfers were recorded in *Proceedings of the General Assembly, 1646 to 1851*, located at the Rhode Island State Archives and online on FamilySearch.
- Rhode Island Deeds are recorded on the town level.

# Vermont Land Records

- The earliest land owners in Vermont were town Proprietors.
- Some early Vermont land recorded 1688-1786 appears in Secretary of State. *New York Land Patents 1688–1786: Covering Land Included in the State of Vermont* (Vol. 7).
- Land Grants 1778-1881 were published in Secretary of State, *Petitions for Grants of Land 1778–1881*. State Papers of Vermont, (Vol. 5). The petitions lists the location, property, and the reason purpose for the petition.
- Vermont land deeds are recorded at the town level.



New York land patents 1688-1786 : covering land now included in the state of Vermont (not including military patents)

Title No	63489
Creator	Vermont. Secretary of State Nye, Mary Greene
Language	English eng en
Subject	Vermont - Land and property
Extent	537 p.
Page Count	537
Owning Institution	Houston Public Library
Publisher Digital	FamilySearch International
Access Level	Public

# Demonstrations

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We're getting ready to launch a new version of this page. Select "Try It" to get a sneak-peek.

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**Discover Your Family's History**



Build your family tree, and find new ancestors as you add what you know.

**BUILD YOUR TREE**

N What will you share? 

Start writing your first post! Here are some ideas to get you started. Happy posting!

- What memories do you have of your hometown?
- Where did you go on your most recent vacation?
- Did your kids do anything crazy, or sweet, this week?
- How did...
- What memories...
- Have your...

**Search for an Ancestor**

First Names

Last Names

*Required*

Possible Location

Estimated Birth Year  

SEARCH

**Ideas for Getting Started**

- Starting with FamilySearch**  
Choose from a list of activities to see how FamilySearch works.
- Get Involved with Indexing**  
Help make historical records searchable online.

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LEARN MORE TRY IT

**Discover Your Family's History**



Build your family tree, and find new ancestors as you add what you know.

**BUILD YOUR TREE**

N What will you share? 

**Start writing your first post!**  
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**Searching on  
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No. OFFICE OF DISCOUNT AND DEPOSIT OF  
*The Bank of the United States, at Boston, 5th* 1833  
RECEIVED of the PRESIDENT, Agent for paying Pensioners,  
belonging to the State of *Massachusetts,*  
Dollars *60* Cents,  
Monthly  
*Signature*

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Who in the world are you?

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# Review

1. Probates and land deeds are invaluable records to help confirm family relationships.
2. Search for probate records for extended family outside of your ancestors. Their records may reveal the details you've been seeking.
3. Pay close attention to any witnesses, abutting neighbors, guardians, and more.
4. Seek out land deeds in all of the locations where your ancestors lived.



# QUESTIONS?

**Schedule a consultation**

*consultations@americanancestors.org*

**Hire Research Services**

*research@americanancestors.org*

# Consultations

Book a one-on-one  
consultation with  
a genealogist and  
receive help with your  
family history research!

[AmericanAncestors.org/  
Expert-Help/Consultations](https://AmericanAncestors.org/Expert-Help/Consultations)



A large audience of people is seated in a conference room, viewed from behind. They are facing a stage area with a presentation screen. The room has a dark wood-paneled wall and a patterned acoustic panel. The text "THANK YOU!" is overlaid in large white letters, and the URL "AmericanAncestors.org/Education" is overlaid in smaller white letters below it.

**THANK YOU!**

[AmericanAncestors.org/Education](https://AmericanAncestors.org/Education)



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