

Researching Colonial New England Ancestors

Class 5: Determining Ancestral Origins

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Cautions/Challenges

- Not every search will be successful
 - Common names, minimal useful data
 - Seemingly unique or uncommon names that actually aren't
 - Humphrey Atherton of Winwick, Lancashire, and Dorchester, Massachusetts (Ian Watson, *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England 1636-1638*, vol. 1 A-Be [American Ancestors, 2024], 230-231)
 - Nicholas Camp of Nazeing, Essex, and Milford, Connecticut (John D. Baldwin III, “Why the Origins of Nicholas Camp, Sr. of Milford Remain Elusive!” *Connecticut Nutmegger* 30 (1997):62-63)
 - Loss or lack of records
 - All parishes were supposed to keep records of baptisms, burials, and marriages starting in 1538, but not all did
 - Many parish records were lost over the years, due to damage (water, fire, or pests), deliberate destruction, theft, or carelessness
 - Check for available parish records at [FamilySearch's Historical Maps](#) (earliest surviving year listed, but subsequent gaps not noted)
 - Incomplete and faulty indexing
- Surviving records can be difficult or costly to access
- Records can be difficult to read
 - Poorly preserved or imaged
 - Handwriting variants
 - Frequent use of Latin

What This Requires From You:

- Time and patience
 - To learn and develop skills and background knowledge
 - To go through the available records thoroughly
- The ability to read different types of handwriting
 - The best teacher is practice
 - Free resources from American Ancestors:
 - “Getting Started with Old Handwriting” guide [here](#)
 - “Deciphering Old Handwriting” lecture [here](#)
 - The (British) National Archives has a tutorial on reading old handwriting [here](#)

- Many available books (e.g., Claire Jarvis, *Teach Yourself Paleography: A Guide for Genealogists and Local Historians* [Cheltenham, Gloucs.: The History Press, 2022])
- A modicum of Latin
 - At least enough for reading parish registers and probate records (numbers, dates, relationship terms, etc.)
 - More is necessary to read some court records, especially for our purposes, the records of manorial courts.
 - A quick “cheat” is to use (with caution) Google’s [Latin to English](#) translation (it is still necessary to be able to accurately read the handwriting and abbreviations so that you enter the actual Latin text in the search box). Best for single words or short phrases, to get a general idea at least of what is being said.
 - The National Archives also has a Latin tutorial for reading older records [here](#)
- Creativity, inventiveness, and resourcefulness to find ways to make up for missing or inadequate standard source documents

Check the Literature for the Immigrant’s Origin

- Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Directory: Immigrants to New England, 1620-1640, A Concise Compendium* (NEHGS, 2015) [updated version near completion, for probable publication later this year]
- New England related journals
 - Each issue of the *Register* has a summary of “Origins” of New England immigrants on the front cover
 - The Summer issues of the *Register* list the New England-related articles in genealogical journals published two years prior:
 - *New England articles in 2015*: 171 (2017): [261-272](#)
 - *New England articles in 2016*: 172 (2018): [276-288](#)
 - *New England articles in 2017*: 173 (2019): [275-288](#)
 - *New England articles in 2018*: 174 (2020): [273-286](#)
 - *New England articles in 2019*: 175 (2021): [269-282](#)
 - *New England articles in 2020*: 176 (2022): [310-323](#)
 - *New England articles in 2021*: 177 (2023): [282-292](#)
 - *New England articles in 2022*: 178 (2024): [293-302](#)
 - *New England articles in 2023*: to appear in the Summer 2025 issue
- Check popular online databases to see what has been *proposed* (especially the [Puritan Great Migration Project](#) at WikiTree.com; list of PGM entries starting [here](#)) – if an origin is proposed here but is not found in either of the previous two bullets, evaluate the evidence given. If there is none, or if you find it lacking, then treat the proposal as a clue at best; do not let it deter you from making your own search.
- NOTE that even if the origin is already known, there may be more to find.
 - Verify the data for yourself

- Useful for practicing/developing your skills
- Experience a more intimate connection to the documents, perhaps even in your ancestor's handwriting
- Check to make sure no mistakes were made by the previous author(s)
- Was the wife also identified? Parents? Grandparents? Is there more biographical data to be found? Extended family to be traced (who stayed in England or also came over)?

Comprehensive Colonial History of the Immigrant

This step was covered by the previous four classes. From that search, you want to glean the following items in particular to help you identify the immigrant's origin:

- Passenger list (check the actual enrollment record)
- Birthdate (calculated from stated age[s], guessed from typical age at first marriage, etc.)
- Immediate family old enough to have been born or married in England (spouse, children, parents, siblings)
- Any other relatives (whether or not the exact relationship is known)
- Other connections (priority to earlier and multiple connections)
 - Others listed in the same passenger enrollment record
 - Employees/Employers
 - Neighbors (especially sharing more than one location)
 - Physically close (usually from land record bounds/abutments)
 - Same towns (possibly clerical company or kinship network)
 - Deed witnesses
 - Court sureties
 - Mentions in wills (witnesses, legatees, executors, supervisors, etc.)
- Initial location, any later removes
- Occupation
- Education
- Social rank/status
- Religious tendencies (church membership, discipline, sectarian adherence)
- Character traits (especially from court appearances)

Check the literature again for connections' origins

Collect the Clues

- The items gleaned from the immigrant's comprehensive colonial history (passenger list, birthdate, family members, etc.)
- Mentions of English locations
 - Passenger list (again, check the actual enrollment record)
 - Notarial records

- Probate records
- Land records
- Court records
- Sort out the most useful clues
 - Any known English locations
 - Any suspected English locations
 - Connections with known origins
 - Trends in specific years or towns
 - English surname distribution charts (for uncommon surnames)
 - [Your Family History](#) (England 1841-1911)
 - [British Surnames](#) (England 1881, etymologies)
 - Any linked names (known family relationships between or among immigrants)
 - Things that are unique or uncommon
 - Names of immigrant and/or family members
 - Occupations
 - Advanced education, higher status

Consult Indexes

This is a necessary step even if you have one or more known English locations to check.

- England: Births and Christenings, 1538-1975 (American Ancestors [[here](#)], FamilySearch [[here](#)], Ancestry [[here](#)])
- England: Marriages, 1538-1973 (American Ancestors [[here](#)], FamilySearch [[here](#)], Ancestry [[here](#)])
- FreeReg ([here](#))
- Individual counties (paid sites; see below)

Confirm

- Follow up on the apparent match(es)
 - Don't stop with the indexes – read through the original registers yourself
 - Indexers make mistakes (misreadings, typos, items skipped by accident or because they found them too difficult to read)
 - Indexing strips out vital clues and information
 - Best to be seen in-situ and not alphabetized
 - Other information possibly included in particular entries (occupations, other names, causes of death, other notations)
 - Clues in handwriting (different scribes, importance in the parish indicated by larger/heavier writing, etc.)
 - Marginal notations (by the clerk or added later)
 - Other information (names of ministers and churchwardens, historical events, etc.)

- Check available bishop's transcripts
 - Can potentially cover gaps in the extant parish registers or clear up illegible or difficult-to-read portions
 - Can contain information not in the parish registers (especially the names of ministers or churchwardens for the particular year; occasionally other information)
- Check far enough to make sure that the suspected immigrant didn't die and didn't continue to leave records in England after supposedly being in New England
- Document everything checked, and what you find in each place (everything useful or interesting) [*HINT: reading through parish registers is a much more enjoyable experience if you take interest in more than just your particular family: get to know the family names in the parish; enjoy the occasional poignant or amusing notes; notice when there were plagues or other historical occurrences that get reflected in the entries.*]
- Don't settle for weak evidence
 - "Name's the same" is not enough, without multiple points of confirmation
 - Multiple names should be the same, if possible (family units, connections, etc.)
 - Uncommon names hold more weight than common ones (but be careful!)
- Check other records
 - Probate records
 - Check for local probate court at [FamilySearch's Historical Maps](#) as noted above
 - The [FamilySearch wiki](#) details various types of records available for English counties, including probate records (can also find via Google search for the name of the probate court)
 - See below for links to PCC and smaller probate court online indexes and images
 - Parish chest records/churchwardens' accounts
 - Check the FamilySearch catalog for each parish
 - Manorial records
 - Check the FamilySearch catalog for each parish first
 - Existence and location listed in the Manorial Documents Register maintained by The National Archives [here](#); if they have not been filmed by FamilySearch you may need to pay for digital images (check the repository for guidelines; sometimes they will perform that service in-house. Hiring an independent researcher is also an option.)
 - Usually in Latin
 - Apprenticeship records
 - Usually in cities rather than villages
 - For extant records, some are online, some have been published, some have been filmed, and some are just in repositories
 - Some useful links:
 - London
 - [Records of London's Livery Companies Online](#) (free)
 - [London Apprenticeship Abstracts](#) (FindMyPast)

- York
 - [City of York Apprentices and Freeman](#) (FindMyPast)
- Norwich
 - Percy Millican, *The Register of the Freemen of Norwich, 1548-1713* (Norwich: Jarrold, 1934); images available at the FamilySearch Library and local FamilySearch centers [here](#)
- Especially for rural parishes, get to know the place and its people as completely as possible, looking for any references to the family or individuals in question.
- Create as complete a picture of the English family as you can.
- See if other immigrants came from there, and when, and to where in New England. Were they also associated with your ancestor?
 - Keep your eyes open for other possible immigrant families when you go through parish registers
 - Check the [Great Migration Parish Map](#) for known immigrants from nearby parishes
- Document everything
 - Research logs
 - Write things down as you find them; don't wait until later or until the document reaches a "critical mass" of useful information
 - Find a system that works for you to extract, store, and retrieve information from parish registers, wills, etc.

Compose—Write It Up in Article Form

- The best way to check for missing pieces
- The best way to preserve your work for yourself and your family
- Ready for submission/publication

Celebrate!

- Take a walk around the village via Google Street View
 - Start with the parish church (find [here](#))
 - Use the address directly with Google Street View or click through the options to get there from the original site
- Find pictures or YouTube videos of the area(s)
- Make it a part of your next trip over
- Share your discovery (ideally in published form)
 - [New England Historical and Genealogical Register](#)
 - [The American Genealogist](#)
 - [The Genealogist](#)
 - [The Essex Genealogist](#)
 - [The Connecticut Nutmegger](#)

- [Rhode Island Roots](#)
- [Vermont Genealogy](#)
- [The Maine Genealogist](#)
- [New York Genealogical and Biographical Record](#)

Case Study: Robert¹ Carr and Caleb¹ Carr of Rhode Island; results documented in

- Robert Battle, “The English Origin of Robert¹ Carr and Caleb¹ Carr of Rhode Island” *Rhode Island Roots* 48 (2022):58-75
- Robert Battle, “Confirmation of the English Origin of Robert¹ Carr and Caleb¹ Carr of Rhode Island: Their Connection to Robert¹ Jeffreys of Massachusetts and Rhode Island” *Rhode Island Roots* (to appear)

Photos of places in the presentation were all taken June 2022 (by Robert Battle except where noted); all are of locations where at least one Great Migration immigrant or his/her ancestors lived [the lists of immigrants are not exhaustive]:

- “Voice of” slide: **Badingham, Suffolk**
 - Anne (Derehaugh) Stratton and children
- “Class coverage” and “Consult indexes” slides: **Fressingfield, Suffolk**
 - Nathan Aldis
 - Elizabeth (Aldous) Brock
- “Cautions/Challenges” slide: **Terling, Essex**
 - Thomas Weld
 - Thomas Birchard
 - Henry Rust (to appear)
- “Check the literature” slides: **Hoxne, Suffolk** (brasses in the Hoxne church from members of the Thurston family)
 - Anne (Derehaugh) Stratton and children
 - Anna and Susanna Hunting
- “Collect the clues” slide: **Winfarthing, Norfolk**
 - Ellis and Grace Barron and children
- “Comprehensive colonial history of the immigrant” slide: **Hingham, Norfolk**
 - Dozens of Great Migration immigrants
- “Confirm” slide: **Great Baddow, Essex**
 - Robert and John Pease
 - Thomas Hooker
- “Compose” slide: **Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire**
 - Ann (Linney) Jones, Abraham Jones

- *Rodolphus Elmes*
- “Celebrate” initial slide: **Southwold, Suffolk**
 - *Richard and Margaret (Gentleman) Ibrook*
 - *Richard and Susan (Gentleman) (Hunter) Hollingsworth*
 - *John and Christopher Youngs*
 - *William Cockerum*
 - *Robert Hempenstall*
 - *Christian, Thomas, William, and Elizabeth Hunter*
- “Celebrate” brasses: **Little Waldingfield, Suffolk**
 - *John Thorndike*
 - *William and John Gager*
 - *Samuel Appleton*
 - *John Gosse*
 - *Sarah (Caly) Dillingham*
 - *John Sales*
 - *John Coggeshall*
 - *Muriel (Gurdon) Saltonstall*
 - *Jemima (Waldegrave) Pelham*
- “Celebrate” group (taken by John Battle): **Great Waldingfield, Suffolk**
 - *John Thorndike*
- “Case Study” slide: **Stoke by Nayland, Suffolk**
 - *Isaac and Mary (Barker) Stearns*

Supplementary Material:

Commonly referenced regions of England (*neither exhaustive nor exclusive*)

Regions	Counties
East Anglia	Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk
East Midlands	Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland
South East	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex
South West	Bristol, Cornwall, Dorset, Devon, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire
West Country	Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset
West Midlands	Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire

Online availability of English parish register indexes and images (paid sites)

Ancestry = Ancestry.com

ERO = EssexArchivesOnline.co.uk (Essex Record Office)

FMP = FindMyPast.com (or .co.uk)

[NB: Indexes are always faulty and subject to human error; also, these are not always complete, sometimes far from it.]

County	Parish Register Indexes	Parish Register Images
Bedfordshire	FMP (bp m bur)	
Berkshire	FMP (bp m bur)	
Bristol		Ancestry
Buckinghamshire	FMP (bp m bur)	
Cambridgeshire	FMP (bp m bur)	
Cheshire	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Cornwall	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Cumberland	FMP (bp m bur)	
Derbyshire	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Devon	Ancestry	FMP (bp m bur parishes)
Dorset	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Durham	FMP (bp m bur)	
Essex	FMP (bp m bur), Ancestry	ERO (no index)
Gloucestershire	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Hampshire	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Herefordshire	FMP (bp m bur)	
Hertfordshire		FMP (bp m bur parishes)
Kent*	Ancestry	FMP (bp m bur parishes1 parishes2)
Lancashire		FMP (bp m bur parishes), Ancestry
Leicestershire		FMP (bp m bur parishes)
Lincolnshire		FMP (bp m bur parishes)
London/Middlesex		Ancestry**
Norfolk		FMP (bp m bur parishes), Ancestry
Northamptonshire	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Northumberland	FMP (bp m bur)	
Nottinghamshire	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Oxfordshire	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Rutland		FMP (bp m bur parishes)
Shropshire	Ancestry	FMP (bp m bur parishes)

Somerset	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Staffordshire	Ancestry	FMP (bp m bur parishes)
Suffolk	FMP (bp m bur)	[Ancestry***]
Surrey		FMP (bp m bur parishes), Ancestry
Sussex	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry****
Warwickshire		FMP (bp m bur parishes), Ancestry
Westmorland	FMP (bp m bur)	
Wiltshire	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Worcestershire	FMP (bp m bur)	Ancestry
Yorkshire		FMP (bp m bur parishes), Ancestry*****

* - Some Kent parish register images available for free [here](#)

** - Divided into two Ancestry databases ([London](#) and [Westminster](#))

*** - Due to appear later this year

**** - Divided into two Ancestry databases ([East Sussex](#) and [West Sussex](#))

***** - Divided into five Ancestry databases ([York](#), [Yorkshire](#), [North Yorkshire](#), [West Yorkshire](#), and [Sheffield and Rotherham](#))

Online availability of English probate record indexes and images (paid sites)

Ancestry = Ancestry.com

ERO = EssexArchivesOnline.co.uk

FMP = FindMyPast.com (or .co.uk)

[NB: Most of the English ecclesiastical courts in which wills were probated have indexes available in book form and/or in manuscript form, filmed by FamilySearch; the items below are not these but are rather directly searchable electronic indexes. All of these indexes (electronic and printed) are of the testators only, not the legatees, witnesses, etc.]

County	Indexes	Images
(England – Prerogative Court of Canterbury)		Ancestry
[Bedfordshire]		
Berkshire	FMP	
[Bristol]		
[Buckinghamshire]		
[Cambridgeshire]		
Cheshire		FMP
[Cornwall]		
[Cumberland]		

Derbyshire		FMP
Devon	FMP	
Dorset		Ancestry
[Durham]		
Essex		ERO
Gloucestershire		Ancestry
Hampshire		Ancestry
[Herefordshire]		
Hertfordshire	FMP	
Kent	FMP	
Lancashire	FMP	
Leicestershire		FMP
[Lincolnshire]		
London/Middlesex		Ancestry*
Norfolk**	Ancestry , FMP	
Northamptonshire	FMP	
[Northumberland]		
[Nottinghamshire]		
Oxfordshire	FMP	
Rutland	FMP	
Shropshire		FMP
Somerset	Ancestry	
Staffordshire		FMP
[Suffolk]		
Surrey	FMP	
Sussex		Ancestry***
Warwickshire		FMP
[Westmorland]		
Wiltshire		Ancestry
Worcestershire	FMP	
Yorkshire		Ancestry

* - Divided into two Ancestry databases ([London](#) and [Westminster](#))

** - Norfolk probate records can also be searched for free [here](#)

*** - Divided into two Ancestry databases ([East Sussex](#) and [West Sussex](#))