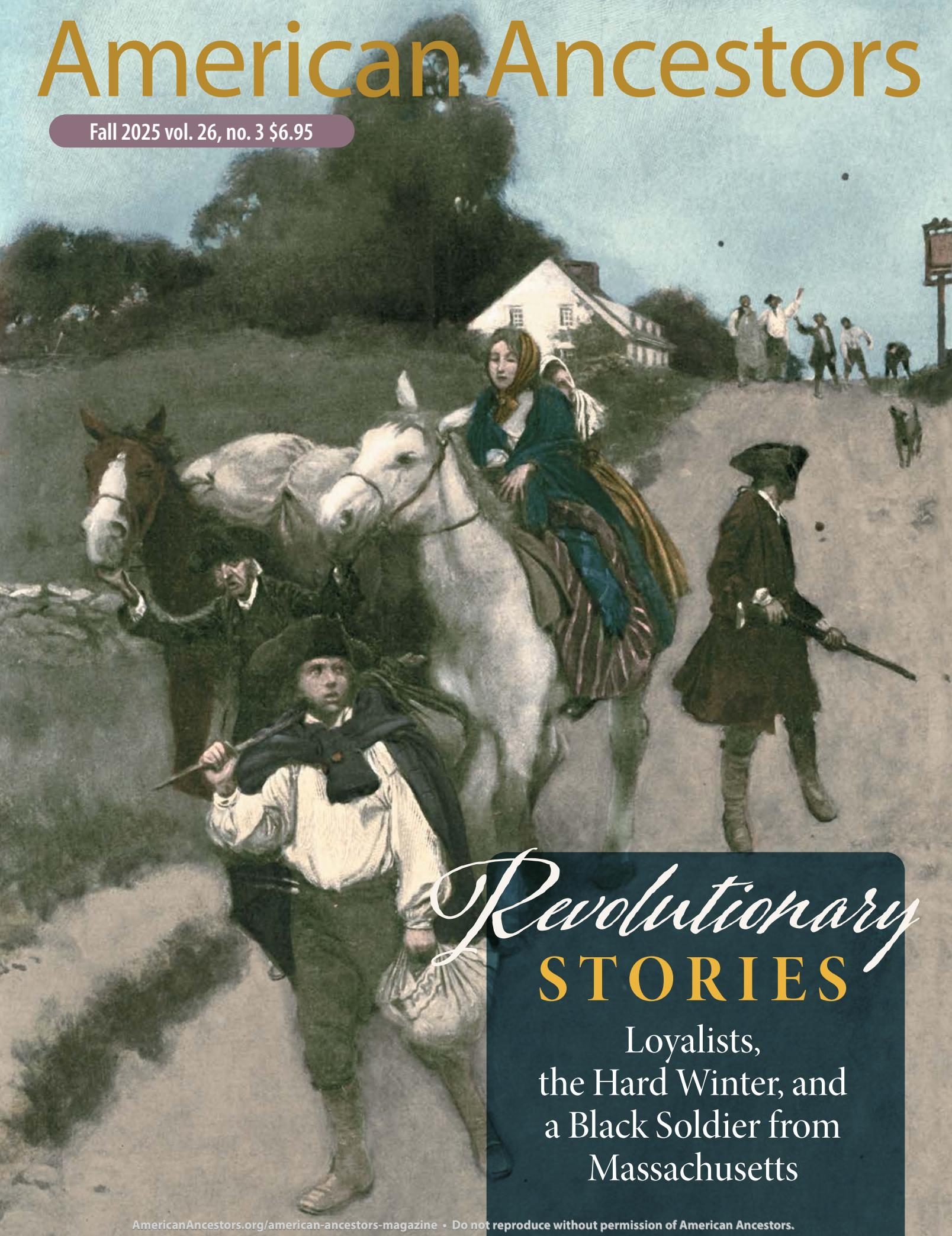


American Ancestors

Fall 2025 vol. 26, no. 3 \$6.95



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Loyalists,
the Hard Winter, and
a Black Soldier from
Massachusetts

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On the cover: Howard Pyle, “Tory Refugees on Their Way to Canada,” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, December 1901, 107. Colorized version by Carolyn Oakley. Above: Chief Genealogist David Lambert and Margaret M. Talcott, Director of Literary Programs and Partnerships, greet visitors to American Ancestors during our August Adventures open house on August 29, 2025. Photo by Jennifer Zanolli.



A Message from the President and CEO

When we think of the American Revolution, we often picture the determined Patriot, musket in hand, fighting for liberty. But the Revolution was also America's first civil war: a conflict that divided towns, congregations, and even families. Historians estimate that about 40 percent of the population supported the Patriot cause. In comparison, 20 percent remained loyal to the Crown, generally for reasons of principle, livelihood, or personal safety.

At American Ancestors, we believe these Loyalist stories are essential to understanding the Revolution through the lens of family history. Our extensive holdings and research resources bring these Loyalist lives into sharper focus, revealing a more multifaceted picture of the era.

We maintain numerous resources for tracing Loyalists. *New Englanders in Nova Scotia*, a database drawn from our Fred E. Crowell Collection, documents tens of thousands of New England Planters and Loyalists who resettled in the Maritime provinces before and after the war. Through our genealogical articles and original research material, you can trace families who left Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York to begin new lives under continued British rule.

Another powerful resource available on AmericanAncestors.org is the *Black Loyalist Directory*. This database provides the names, ages, physical descriptions, and evacuation records of thousands of formerly enslaved people who were transported to Canada by the British at the end of the war. These individuals risked everything, seeking the freedom promised in proclamations like Lord Dunmore's in 1775. Their stories—marked by courage, peril, and hope—invite us to reflect on liberty not as an abstract ideal, but as a deeply personal pursuit.

For those eager to explore Loyalist ancestry further, our staff offers deep expertise and regular educational programs on the subject. Through live seminars and online content, we provide guidance on how to navigate muster rolls, land petitions, and Loyalist claims—tools that help uncover the motivations and movements of those who lived through this transformational period.



United Empire Loyalist statue in Hamilton, Ontario, 1929.
Saforrest/Wikimedia Commons.

Studying Loyalists invites us to ask new and sometimes challenging questions: Who in our families fought—and for what cause? What principles did they stand for? What risks did they take? These questions matter because family history matters. It connects us to the decisions, dilemmas, and dreams of those who came before us. And it reminds us that the American Revolution was not a single story, but a mosaic of human experience—marked by loyalty, loss, resilience, and reinvention.

During these 250th anniversary years, I encourage you to explore all sides of your family's Revolutionary past. Let your discoveries anchor you in the broader arc of American history—a history where the personal and the national are inseparable.

Whether your ancestors supported the Revolution or the British Crown or found themselves in the uncertain spaces between, their stories belong to the tapestry of America. This Revolutionary history can be meaningful and powerful for all Americans, no matter when our ancestors arrived in this country. By recovering and remembering the wide range of experiences of those who lived through the Revolution, we honor the full complexity of our past—and the diverse legacies that still shape our future.

Warmest regards,

Ryan J. Woods, President & CEO



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American Ancestors at RootsTech 2026

Join us!

Mark your calendar for RootsTech 2026, which will be held online and in person from March 5 to 7. Our experts will travel to Salt Lake City for this annual three-day conference—the largest family history gathering in the world.



Thousands attend this conference in person each year, and millions more participate online. RootsTech is organized by FamilySearch, an international family history website sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

American Ancestors experts will present several lectures, including:

- ▶ Joining the Muster: Applying to American Revolutionary War Lineage Societies
- ▶ New Englanders to Nova Scotia: Soldiers, Settlers, and Refugees
- ▶ Researching Your Colonial American Ancestors Accused of Witchcraft

Stop by our booth in the expo hall to ask American Ancestors staff members about our resources, expertise, and our many initiatives, including the 10 Million Names project.

For more information on the conference visit FamilySearch.org/en/rootstech.

We look forward to seeing you at RootsTech!



From our readers

We want to hear from you! Email magazine@americanancestors.org or address letters to American Ancestors magazine, 97 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116. Letters will be edited for clarity and length. We regret that we cannot reply to every letter.

I read Stephen Des Georges's excellent article, "A New Chapter for the Leiden American Pilgrim Museum" [AMERICAN ANCESTORS (2025) 2:34–35] and was very pleased to learn that Leiden American Pilgrim Museum Director Sarah Moine and other museum supporters are keeping Dr. Jeremy Bangs's dream alive.

David A. Furlow, Houston, Texas

In this issue

This issue of AMERICAN ANCESTORS magazine explores several Revolutionary War topics, with a focus on Loyalists. We lead with author Alex Cain's survey of "The Loyalist Experience During the American Revolution." Senior Genealogist Melanie McComb offers a guide to researching Loyalists, and 10 Million Names Volunteer Manager Danielle Rose describes Black Loyalist history and resources.

Judith E. Harper's engaging article on the Hard Winter of 1779–1780 delves into the wartime conditions and consequences of "North America's coldest, harshest eighteenth-century winter." Ross W. Beales Jr.'s compelling feature describes the life and service—and unusual origins—of Peter Maynard, a Black Revolutionary soldier from Westborough, Massachusetts.

The issue also discusses Robert Charles Anderson's last book, the second edition of *The Great Migration Directory*, and introduces Nathan W. Murphy, the new director of the Great Migration Study Project. Kyle Hurst describes resources for researching residents of the Republic of Texas in her "State Spotlight" column, and we sample the festivities at Castle Howard in "Christmas in the Country House."



This is the third consecutive fall issue presenting material related to the American War of Independence. In fall 2023, we marked the anniversary of the Boston Tea Party, the first significant milestone of the 250th commemorations. Fall 2024 was devoted to "Researching & Remembering Revolutionary War Patriots." We expect future fall issues in the 250th anniversary era to provide research advice and stories on a variety of other Revolutionary themes.

Since its launch in 2000, this magazine has published a number of Revolutionary War–related articles and columns. While this interesting and useful content is available in the back issues archived on AmericanAncestors.org, these articles are not front and center and tend to be overlooked.

As part of our commitment to commemorate and increase knowledge about the Revolutionary War generations, we will make this previously published content accessible in new ways in 2026. Beginning in January, a Revolutionary-themed AMERICAN ANCESTORS article will be highlighted in each *Weekly Genealogist newsletter*. This collection of articles—and many other related resources—will be available on our forthcoming Revolutionary War website.



We offer many ways to participate in our magazine community. Send a letter to the editor to magazine@americanancestors.org, submit a "brick wall" (see page 7), or share a family pet photo (see page 8). Announce your new or in-progress books, family association news, and DNA studies in our Family Focus section (see page 64). To propose an article, visit AmericanAncestors.org/publications/american-ancestors-magazine for guidelines. We look forward to hearing from you!



Lynn Betlock
Managing Editor
magazine@americanancestors.org

American Ancestors

magazine@americanancestors.org



To advance the study of family history in America and beyond, we educate, inspire, and connect people through our scholarship, collections, and expertise.

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Submissions

AMERICAN ANCESTORS invites the submission of articles. Submissions should be directed to AMERICAN ANCESTORS, 97 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116, or to magazine@americanancestors.org.



This publication is also funded in part by the Francis G. and Ruth (Wellington) Shaw Memorial Fund.

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New databases on AmericanAncestors.org

Newport, RI: Records of Enslaved, Free, and Manumitted People of Color and Enslavers (17th–19th Centuries)

This new 10 Million Names database includes records from 1663 to 1865 for more than 1,800 named people of African and Indigenous descent who were connected to Newport, Rhode Island, and the surrounding area. The more than 5,600 documents include deeds, early colony censuses, family papers, ships' logs, and records from Black-led organizations, religious organizations, and merchants. This database is the result of a collaboration with the Newport Historical Society and presents materials gathered from their "Voices From the NHS Archives" research initiative.

Massachusetts: Biographical Entries of People of African Descent in New Bedford and Coastal Towns Also Once Part of Dartmouth—1 new volume

Drawn from a research study by historian Kathryn Grover, this database consists of biographical entries for every person of color in New Bedford and historic Dartmouth (that is, Westport, Dartmouth, and Fairhaven) through 1860. Volume 2: Surnames E–J adds 13,603 names, 430 pages, and 7,005 records.

▶ If you are interested in joining our team of volunteers, email Database Services Volunteer Coordinator Zobeida Chaffee-Valdes at zobeida.chaffee-valdes@americanancestors.org.

Most popular databases

1. New England Historical and Genealogical Register
2. Mayflower Families Fifth Generation Descendants, 1700–1880
3. General Society of Mayflower Descendants Membership Applications, 1620–1920
4. Mayflower Descendant
5. Massachusetts: Vital Records, 1620–1850
6. Massachusetts: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Records, 1789–1920
7. The American Genealogist
8. Early Vermont Settlers, 1700–1784
9. Early New England Families, 1641–1700
10. Boston Tea Party Participant Biographies

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Brick walls

Send a brief narrative (under 175 words) about your “brick wall” to magazine@americanancestors.org or to **AMERICAN ANCESTORS** magazine, 97 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116. Please include your member number. We regret that we cannot reply to every submission. Brick walls will be edited for clarity and length.

I am searching for information on the origins of my ancestor **Orrin Shaler Worthington**. According to his Masonic membership record, Orrin was born July 28, 1792, in Plainfield, Connecticut. No birth record has been found for him, and little is known about his early life. On October 28, 1816, Orrin married Suanna Whitmore in Mansfield, Connecticut. The couple's first two children, Benjamin Dyer Worthington (b. 1817) and Daniel Stores Worthington (b. 1819), were born in Mansfield; twin sons William Henry “Duke” Worthington and Henry William Worthington were born in 1820 in East Brookfield, Massachusetts. After settling in Spencer, Massachusetts, the Worthingtons had eight more children between 1823 and 1841. Orrin was a carpenter and a charter member of Spencer's Masonic Lodge. He died in Spencer on February 13, 1882.

Robert Worthington, North Woodstock, N.H., bobworth9@yahoo.com

Emma Desjardins (1855–1899), my father's paternal grandmother, was French-Canadian. I know very little about her and would appreciate any information about her and her family members. She and her husband, Joseph Jules Tetreault (1851–1835), were born in Canada. Joseph and Emma were living in Lisbon, Maine, in 1876, when their only known child, Emelia, was born. Emma died in Lisbon on February 25, 1889.

Gerry Myers, Renton, Washington, myersgm@plu.edu

I am searching for information about the parents, marriage, and death of my ancestor **Sarel Bennett**. He was probably born in New York about 1795. He married Harriet Benton before 1816. Their six children—Clarissa (b. 1816), Hulda (b. 1818), Harriette (b. 1820), Hannah (b. 1829), Charles (b. 1831), and Samuel (b. 1834)—were born in New York. The family lived in Williamson, New York, where Sarel purchased and sold property in

the 1820s. On June 29, 1835, Sarel purchased 40 acres in Kalamazoo County, Michigan, likely when the family moved to Michigan. Sarel probably died in the summer of 1835. On December 30, 1835, Mrs. Harriet Bennett of Comstock, Kalamazoo County—presumably Sarel's widow—married Sanford Burdick.

Steven D. Bennett, Kalamazoo, Michigan, sdbennett00@gmail.com

My brick wall is my ancestor **Benjamin Greenslit**, who was born about 1792, possibly near Bennington County, Vermont, and died after 1865. I am searching for his parents and his birth and death dates. (He may have been the son of James Greenslit who lived in Bennington between 1790 and 1820.) Benjamin married Parthenia Davis on October 24, 1813, in Bennington County. The couple remained in Bennington County (Bennington and Woodford) through 1830. Eight of their children lived to adulthood. Benjamin apparently abandoned that family and married Sally/Sarah Hayden or Aldrich on September 7, 1841, in Stamford, Bennington County. The couple had two children, Eliza (b. 1833) and Horace (b. 1840). Parthenia died in 1880 in Readsboro, Bennington County. The last mention I found of Benjamin was in the 1865 Massachusetts state census for Cheshire, Berkshire County.

Margaret Sondey, Willoughby Hills, Ohio, M.sondey@yahoo.com

Correction: A brick wall entry in the summer 2025 issue sought the parents of **Elijah Howland**, who was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on May 22, 1802. As an adult, he moved to Chilmark on Martha's Vineyard, where he married Sophronia Tilton on May 30, 1830. They had two children, Ann C. and Emmaline. Elijah died on May 27, 1887, in Chilmark. The correct email address for Joan Wood, the submitter, is sadiegirl06@comcast.net.



The Weekly Genealogist newsletter

Every Wednesday *The Weekly Genealogist* provides readers with news and information about American Ancestors and the genealogical community. Visit AmericanAncestors.org/publications/weekly-genealogist to subscribe.



your photo submissions



Theresa Marsolais holds a cake with five candles in her grandmother's cornfield in Tecumseh, Kansas, on July 16, 1951. Also pictured are her mother, Cecilia (Koehler) Marsolais, holding her sister Lorraine, and her siblings Henry and Cecilia.

Theresa Marsolais Wilson, Manhattan, Kansas

WANTED Pet Photos!

Send us your photos of ancestors or relatives with pets (along with captions of no more than 50 words). We'll feature a few of the most striking images in our winter issue. Email magazine@americanancestors.org.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LYNN BETLOCK.



Birthday photos

Thank you to the many members who submitted their great photos! We wish we had room for more.



On May 15, 1953, **Ronny Milliner** celebrated his first birthday at home in Louisville, Kentucky. He is flanked by his two young aunts, Linda (left) and Vera Sizemore.

Ron Milliner, Brownsburg, Indiana



On April 5, 1929, twins **Robert (left) and Richard Dynan** celebrated their first birthday with their mother, Frances (Callahan) Dynan, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Cheryl Dynan, Framingham, Mass., Richard's daughter-in-law



Annie Fisher Johnson (1863–1958) celebrated her 90th birthday on October 17, 1953, at home in Newton Center, Massachusetts. Her grandson Ronald Stafford Johnson presented her with the family gift: a TV set. (Annie is the older girl in the background painting.)

Gordon O. F. Johnson, Alexandria, Virginia, Annie's grandson

This photo captures the evening Lawrence University students **Ben Russell** (seated center) and **Margaret Winslow** (right, in striped blouse) met, on September 24, 1899, at his twentieth birthday party in Appleton, Wisconsin. Margaret wrote about the party in her diary: "Ben Russell walked home with me. I like Ben Russell very much. He is not very refined but is very kind and very thoughtful and very respectful to the girls — not free." The couple married on March 29, 1911.

**Carol Hanson Pollnac, Saunterstown, Rhode Island,
Ben and Margaret's granddaughter**



This photo of **Lucy Chaffee** was taken on her 105th birthday on August 5, 1927, at the home farm in Berkshire, Vermont, by her grandson Emmett Weld.

**John Weld, Berkshire, Vermont,
Lucy's third great-grandson**



Asahel Malnor Bissell (center) celebrated his 100th birthday with his family in Wilmington, Vermont, on July, 7, 1907. Asahel lived another year after his party.

Anne Schmalz, Bedford, Massachusetts, Asahel's descendant

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November 2025

Starting 11/4 | Online Seminar For Those Who Served: Military Research from Colonial Conflicts to World War II, 5 classes \$

11/5 | Online American Inspiration Author Event *Green and Blue: Irish Americans in the Union Military, 1861–1865* with Damian Shiels \$

11/6 | Online Lecture Planning a Research Trip to New England Free

11/8 | Tour Brim-DeForest Library Tour Free

11/8 | Hands-On History Military Medals and Memorabilia, Boston, MA \$

11/9–16 | Research Tour FamilySearch Library, Salt Lake City, UT \$
(see page 12)

11/10 | Online American Inspiration Author Event *The Wounded Generation: Coming Home After World War II* with David Nasaw Free

11/19 | Online American Inspiration Author Event Writing History with Eric Foner \$

11/22 | Lecture Getting Started in Family History, Boston, MA \$

11/22 | Group Roots & Branches: A Research Club for American Ancestors Members, Boston, MA Free

December 2025

12/3 | Online American Inspiration Author Event *Radical Cartography: How Changing Our Maps Can Change Our World* with William Rankin Free

Starting 12/4 | Online Seminar Researching in New England Town Records: 17th through 19th Centuries, 5 classes \$

12/6 | Lecture Getting Started in Family History, Boston, MA \$

12/6 | Group Roots & Branches: A Research Club for American Ancestors Members, Boston, MA Free

12/10 | Online American Inspiration Author Event *A Perfect Frenzy: A Royal Governor, His Black Allies, and the Crisis That Spurred the American Revolution* with Andrew Lawler Free

12/11 | Online Lecture From Dates to Stories: How Timelines Can Transform Your Family History Research Free

12/13 | Tour Brim-DeForest Library Tour Free

12/13 | Hands-On History Family History Holiday Decorations, Boston, MA Free

12/20 | Online Lecture London in the 20th Century: The Glitter and Glamour at the Heart of the Empire \$

January 2026

Starting 1/6 | Online Seminar Get Organized: Research, Files, Findings, 5 classes \$

1/10 | Tour Brim-DeForest Library Tour Free

1/10 | Hands-On History Paleography Primer, Boston, MA \$

1/12 | Online American Inspiration Author Event *The Road That Made America* with James Dodson Free

1/15 | Online Lecture The Dos and Don'ts of Online Family Trees Free

1/16 | Online Lecture Lost Houses of Ireland Free

1/17 | Hybrid Lecture Revolution in the Records: Tracing Revolutionary War Patriots \$

1/21 | Online American Inspiration Author Event *The Fate of the Day: The War for America, Fort Ticonderoga to Charleston, 1777–1780* with Rick Atkinson \$

1/22 | Online Lecture Origins and Migrations: Where Did They Come From, Where Did They Go? \$

1/24 | Lecture Getting Started in Family History, Boston, MA \$

1/24 | Group Roots & Branches: A Research Club for American Ancestors Members, Boston, MA Free

February 2026

Starting 2/5 | Online Seminar Leveraging Tech Tools in Family History Research, 5 classes \$

2/7 | Tour Brim-DeForest Library Tour Free

2/7 | Hybrid Lecture Revolution in the Records: Tracing Black Patriots and Loyalists in the American Revolution Free

2/10 | Online Lecture Faith and Family: Tracing the Religious Roots of Ireland's Past Free

2/13 | Online Lecture All My Worldly Goods: English Royal Weddings \$

2/14 | Hands-On History Introduction to Calligraphy, Boston, MA \$

2/17 | Online Lecture Imagining Early American Jews Free

2/18 | Online American Inspiration Author Event *Desi Arnaz: The Man Who Invented Television* with Todd S. Purdum \$

2/21 | Lecture Getting Started in Family History, Boston, MA \$

2/21 | Group Roots & Branches: A Research Club for American Ancestors Members, Boston, MA Free

2/24 | Online American Inspiration Author Event *Belonging: An Intimate History of Slavery and Family in New England* with Gloria McCahon Whiting \$

2/27 | Online Lecture La Foce: A Garden and Landscape in Tuscany Free

March 2026

Starting 3/3 | Online Seminar Finding Irish Ancestors: A Guide to Civil and Church Records, 5 classes \$

3/12 | Online Lecture The Basics of Massachusetts Family History Research Free

3/13 | **Online Lecture** Slain, Beheaded & Imprisoned: How the Howard Family Survived the Tudors **Free**

3/14 | **Tour** Brim-DeForest Library Tour **Free**

3/14 | **Hands-On History** Dear Diary, Make Your Own Journal, Boston, MA **\$**

3/21 | **Hybrid Lecture** Revolution in the Records: Beyond the Battlefield: Women and the American Revolution **\$**

3/28 | **Lecture** Getting Started in Family History, Boston, MA **\$**

3/28 | **Group** Roots & Branches: A Research Club for American Ancestors Members, Boston, MA **Free**

April 2026

Starting 4/1 | **Online Seminar** Massachusetts Research: Four Centuries of History and Genealogy, 5 classes **\$**

4/2–4 | **Research Tour** Midwest Genealogy Center, Independence, MO **\$**
(see page 12)

4/9 | **Online Lecture** The Battle of Dunbar: Researching the Scottish Prisoners of War **Free**

4/11 | **Tour** Brim-DeForest Library Tour **Free**

4/11 | **Hands-On History** Digitizing Family Papers and Photographs, Boston, MA **\$**

4/14 | **Online Lecture** Finding the Elusive Maiden Name **\$**

4/17 | **Online Lecture** Neoclassical Decorative Arts and Architecture in the English Country House **\$**

4/18 | **Hybrid Lecture** From Tyranny to Freedom: Irish Contributions to the American Revolution **\$**

4/25 | **Lecture** Getting Started in Family History, Boston, MA **\$**

4/25 | **Group** Roots & Branches: A Research Club for American Ancestors Members, Boston, MA **Free**

May 2026

Starting 5/5 | **Online Seminar** Tracing Scottish Ancestry: Records, Resources, and Research Strategies, 5 classes **\$**

5/7 | **Online Lecture** Breaking New Ground: How Land Records Can Help in Family History Research **Free**

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AmericanAncestors.org/video-library
- ▶ Read research guides on a variety of topics:
AmericanAncestors.org/tools/research-guides
- ▶ Download charts, family group sheets, and other organizing templates:
AmericanAncestors.org/tools/research-templates

5/9 | **Tour** Brim-DeForest Library Tour **Free**

5/9 | **Hands-On History** An Introduction to Quilting, Boston, MA **\$**

5/12–16 | **Research Tour** Upstate New York Research Tour, Albany, NY **\$**
(see page 12)

5/16 | **Hybrid Lecture** Revolution in the Records: Germans in the Revolution: Hessians and Patriots **\$**

5/23 | **Lecture** Getting Started in Family History, Boston, MA **\$**

5/23 | **Group** Roots & Branches: A Research Club for American Ancestors Members, Boston, MA **Free**

June 2026

Starting 6/3 | **Online Seminar** Land Records Unlocked: A Genealogist's Guide to Deeds, 5 classes **\$**

6/4–6 | **Research Tour** Research Getaway, Boston, MA **\$**

6/11 | **Online Lecture** Understanding Plimoth Colony Through Bradford's Writings **Free**

6/13 | **Tour** Brim-DeForest Library Tour **Free**

6/13 | **Hands-On History** Photography Identification, Boston, MA **\$**

6/20 | **Concert** Revolution in the Records: From Plimoth to Yorktown Concert **\$**

6/26 | **Online Lecture** Agatha Christie & the English Country House **\$**

6/27 | **Lecture** Getting Started in Family History, Boston, MA **\$**

6/27 | **Group** Roots & Branches: A Research Club for American Ancestors Members, Boston, MA **Free**

July 2026

Starting 7/2 | **Online Seminar** Beyond the *Mayflower*: History, Culture, and Encounter in Plimoth Colony, 5 weeks **\$**

7/11 | **Tour** Brim-DeForest Library Tour **Free**

7/11 | **Hands-On History** Ancestral Clothing and Hand Sewing Basics, Boston, MA **\$**

7/14 | **Online Lecture** Top Resources for Atlantic Canadian Research **Free**

7/18 | **Hybrid Lecture** Revolution in the Records: Drums, Diaries, and Duty: The Roles of Children in Revolutionary America **\$**

7/21 | **Online Lecture** Confirming Parentage **\$**

7/25 | **Lecture** Getting Started in Family History, Boston, MA **\$**

7/25 | **Group** Roots & Branches: A Research Club for American Ancestors Members, Boston, MA **Free**

August 2026

Starting 8/3 | **Online Seminar** Tides of History: Tracing Family History in Atlantic Canada, 5 classes **\$**

8/7 | **Online Lecture** A Room with a View: A Tour of Merchant Ivory's English Movie Locations **\$**

8/8 | **Tour** Brim-DeForest Library Tour **Free**

8/8 | **Hands-On History** Preservation Show & Tell, Boston, MA **\$**

8/11–15 | **Research Tour** Come Home to New England, Boston, MA **\$**

8/15 | **Hybrid Lecture** Revolution in the Records: Conscience and Conflict: The Quaker Experience in the American Revolution **\$**

8/22 | **Lecture** Getting Started in Family History, Boston, MA **\$**

8/22 | **Group** Roots & Branches: A Research Club for American Ancestors Members, Boston, MA **Free**

*Schedule is subject to change. **\$** indicates a paid program.

Programs & tours

AmericanAncestors.org/events



SCAN ME

Upcoming Research Tours & Programs*

Not all records for family history research are online! A goldmine of resources awaits you at archives, libraries, and other repositories across the country. Whether you are just starting your genealogical journey or have been researching for years, let American Ancestors be your guide. Benefit from special orientations and tutorials, one-on-one consultations, informative lectures, and more. Register at AmericanAncestors.org/events.

Research Tour to the FamilySearch Library, Salt Lake City, UT

November 9–16, 2025

Research ancestors from any region or period at the FamilySearch Library! With more than forty years of experience leading researchers of all levels to Salt Lake City, American Ancestors will open doors—and new research avenues—for you at the world's largest genealogy library. Benefit from special orientations and tutorials, one-on-one consultations, informative lectures, time with enthusiastic family historians, and more.

Members: Single \$2,225; Double \$1,675/each; Double with non-researching guest \$2,375; Commuter \$1,100; **Non-Members:** Add \$150.

Research Tour to the Midwest Genealogy Center, Independence, MO

April 2–4, 2026

Join experts from American Ancestors for a series of lectures, one-on-one consultations, and assisted research at the Midwest Genealogy Center—one of America's preeminent family history research centers. Access published resources that span all fifty states, including published genealogies, local histories, compiled county records, and more.

Early bird pricing before December 31, 2025!

Members: \$875; **Non-Members:** Add \$150. Add \$100 if registering after the early bird deadline.

Upstate New York Research Tour, Albany, NY

May 12–16, 2026

Explore the New York State Library and the New York State Archives with experts from American Ancestors by your side. This popular tour includes individual consultations, lectures from experts, and group meals.

Early bird pricing before January 31, 2026!

Members: Single \$1,750; Double \$1,500/each; Double with non-researching guest \$1,995; Commuter \$950. **Non-Members:** Add \$150 to the above prices. Add \$100 if registering after the early bird deadline.

Research Getaway at American Ancestors, Boston, MA

June 4–6, 2026

Escape to Boston for three days of research, one-on-one consultations, orientations, lectures, and social events. You will explore the rich offerings at American Ancestors and benefit from the knowledge and assistance of our expert genealogists.

Early bird pricing before February 28, 2026!

Members: \$600; **Non-Members:** \$750. Add \$100 if registering after the early bird deadline.

Come Home to New England, Boston, MA

August 11–15, 2026

American Ancestors has been collecting information about families in America for 180 years. Our collections span the globe and cover the United States, especially New England and New York. Devote almost a full week to leveraging the resources and expertise at American Ancestors. In addition to daily lectures, one-on-one consultations, and orientations, this special “Come Home” program will also include a walking tour of Revolutionary Boston.

Early bird pricing before April 1, 2026!

Members: \$1,200; **Non-Members:** \$1,350. Add \$100 if registering after the early bird deadline.

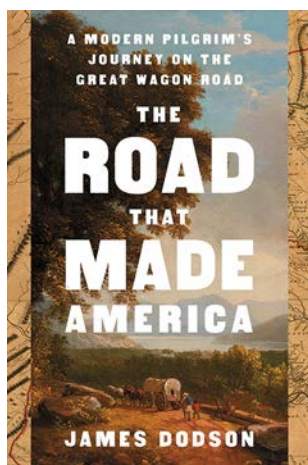
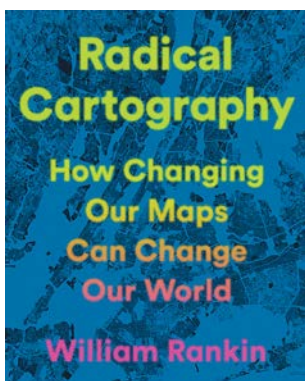
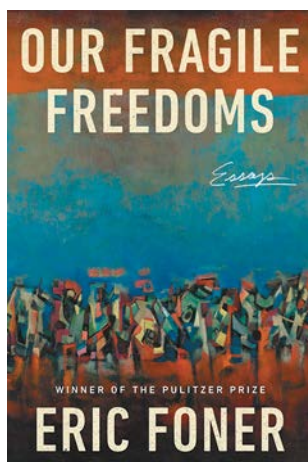
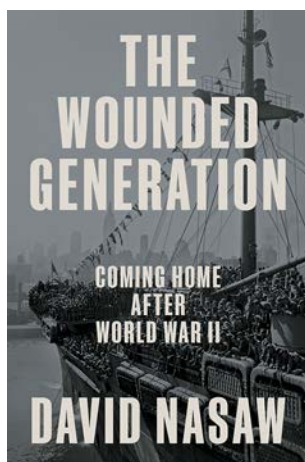
*Schedule is subject to change.





AMERICAN INSPIRATION

A BEST-SELLING AUTHOR SERIES
BY AMERICAN ANCESTORS®



See American Inspiration events in our calendar listings on page 10.



Visit AmericanAncestors.org/inspire to learn about upcoming events and view a selection of recent book talks.

Hosted by Director of Literary Programs Margaret M. Talcott, our American Inspiration speaker series presents engaging discussions on newly published histories, biographies, and memoirs from renowned authors.

In November, the American Inspiration series will honor veterans by sharing stories of war and freedom-seeking. On November 5, we'll learn about Irish American Union soldiers when Damian Shiels discusses *Green and Blue: Irish Americans in the Union Military, 1861–1865* with Senior Genealogist Melanie McComb. On November 10, best-selling biographer David Nasaw and journalist Mike Barnicle will discuss Nasaw's book *The Wounded Generation: Coming Home After World War II*.

In a special "Writing History" program on November 19, American Ancestors President & CEO Ryan J. Woods will talk with the historian Eric Foner about Foner's impactful research and writing, including his forthcoming book of essays, *Our Fragile Freedoms*. And on December 10, journalist Andrew Lawler will share his new history of the American Revolution, *A Perfect Frenzy: A Royal Governor, His Black Allies, and the Crisis That Spurred the American Revolution*.

On December 3, we will switch topics and welcome William Rankin, who will discuss *Radical Cartography: How Changing Our Maps Can Change Our World*. Author James Dodson will join us January 12 to discuss *The Road That Made America: A Modern Pilgrim's Journey on the Great Wagon Road*, with Genealogist Ann Lawthers moderating the event.

Catch up with American Inspiration!

- "The Power of Learning Your Family History," a panel discussion featuring authors Lee Hawkins (*I Am Nobody's Slave*) and Martha S. Jones (*The Trouble of Color*), moderated by historian Thavolia Glymph
- Author-historian Matthew Lockwood on *Explorers: A New History*
- Author Marcus Rediker on *Freedom Ship: The Uncharted History of Escaping Slavery by Sea*, with New Bedford (Mass.) historian Lee Blake
- Author Henry Wiencek on *Stan and Gus: Art, Ardor, and the Friendship That Built the Gilded Age* with Curator of Fine Art Curt DiCamillo

Our literary programs are often presented in partnership with other anchor cultural organizations and museums, including the Boston Public Library, GBH Forum Network, and Massachusetts Historical Society. Thanks also to series sponsors Susan K. and John D. Thompson.

News

The ancestry of Pope Leo XIV

On June 11, 2025, the *New York Times* published a major feature on the multicultural ancestry of Pope Leo XIV. American Ancestors played a leading role in uncovering the story, along with the Cuban Genealogy Club of Miami, genealogist Jari Christopher Honora, and Honorary Trustee Henry Louis Gates, Jr., whose voice continues to elevate the work of genealogy and public history on the world stage. The article was the top trending story on the *New York Times* website and ran as the cover story in the June 15 edition of the *New York Times Magazine*.

The following members of our staff contributed to this important work: Senior Genealogist Christopher C. Child, Director of Research and Library Services Sarah J. Dery, Genealogist Sheilagh Doerfler, Chief Research Officer Lindsay Fulton, Researcher Abe Laxague, Senior Researcher Anjelica Oswald, and Library Services Coordinator Aidan Walsh.

On July 5, Dr. Gates met with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican to discuss the new pope's family history, including extensive research documenting the pope's Black ancestors. Pope Leo XIV was presented with a detailed chart of his family tree by Dr. Gates.

This remarkable undertaking showcases the very best of what we do—using our genealogical and research expertise to illuminate meaningful stories that resonate on a global scale.



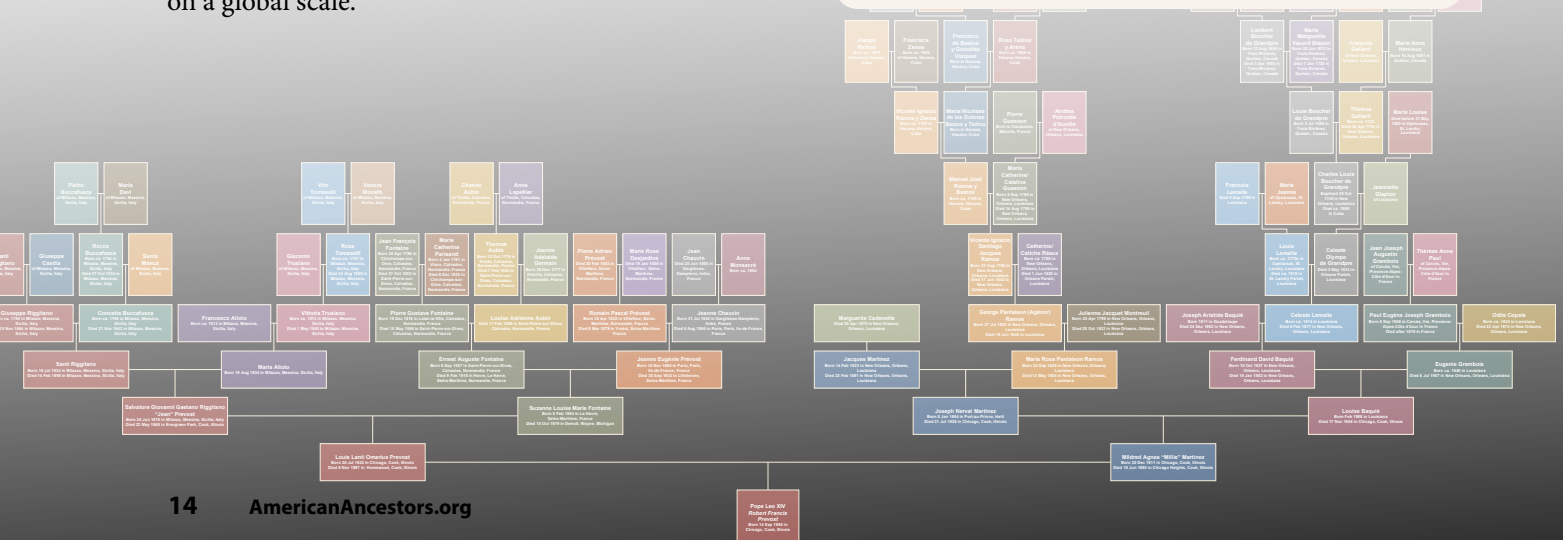
© VATICAN MEDIA

The story—and research—continues! In October 2025, *The Ancestry of Pope Leo XIV: An American Story* exhibit opened in the Family Heritage Experience at the American Ancestors headquarters in Boston. The exhibit highlights many findings within the pope's family tree and reveals new ancestral lines and countries of origin (since the *New York Times* article). The exhibit will be on display in Boston through December 2025.

Below: Ancestral Chart of Pope Leo XIV.



Scan the QR code to read the *New York Times Magazine* article "Finding the Pope's Roots," by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.



Revolutionary roots: American Ancestors commemorates the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution

The 250th anniversary of the American Revolution offers American Ancestors—and the country—a renewed opportunity to remember the events of 1775 to 1783, while also exploring broader themes that shaped the Revolution and continue to resonate today.

Special events & educational programming

Starting in January 2026, American Ancestors will offer a monthly hybrid lecture series—“Revolution in the Records”—highlighting the contributions and stories of people who participated in the founding of America. Topics will focus on tracing Revolutionary War veterans and shed light on the role of the Irish, Patriots of Color, Black Loyalists, Quakers, women, children, Hessians, and others during the American Revolution. Musical group Seven Times Salt will demonstrate the musical evolution that occurred “From Plimoth to Yorktown.” Songs will be paired with excerpts from our manuscript collection that echo the period and mood.

We will offer walking tours of Revolutionary Boston led by local historians and our experts. Our American Inspiration series will highlight authors including Andrew Lawler with *A Perfect Frenzy: A Royal Governor, His Black Allies, and the Crisis That Spurred the American Revolution* (December) and Rick Atkinson with *The Fate of the Day: The War for America, Fort Ticonderoga to Charleston, 1777–1780* (January). In April 2026, our American Stories, American Lives gala’s Revolutionary theme will highlight our 250th anniversary-related initiatives.

Revolutionary War-related publications

Publications commemorating the 250th anniversary include *Portable Genealogist: Researching Veterans of the American Revolution* by Ann G. Lawthers (now available!) as well as upcoming Classic Reprints on Massachusetts Loyalists and privateers, new books featuring Rhode Island records, and a history of General Jacob Bayley.

Database development

The *Daughters of the American Revolution: Patriots of Color, 1712–1888* database debuted on AmericanAncestors.org in 2025. Continuing this work, American Ancestors, in partnership with FamilySearch,



the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Sons of the American Revolution, and the Society of the First African Families in English America, is creating searchable family trees of known descendants for the approximate 6,000 men of color who served during the American Revolution. We aim to create descent trees for seventy-five Patriots by spring 2026.

Conservation & digitization

Several never-before-digitized Revolutionary-era manuscripts will be conserved and made available on the American Ancestors Digital Library and Archives (digital.americanancestors.org), including:

- Accounts, bills, and receipts of the British Quartermaster-General and Commissary General
- Hannah Mather Crocker’s unpublished manuscript “Reminiscences & Traditions of Boston”
- “Documents Concerning the Ship *Protector*, 1779–1780”
- “Wagon Department Papers, 1776–1783”
- “Journal of John Varnum, 1777–1780”
- “Account Books of Aaron Blaney, 1773–1776”

You can learn more about these initiatives and our existing American Revolution resources at AmericanAncestors.org/Rev250.

A portion of the funding needed to complete the above initiatives was provided by a Massachusetts 250 Grant from the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism. To help support these efforts, please consider making a gift to our annual fund at AmericanAncestors.org/give.



Scan Me



Making History on the Common

On Monday, June 2, 2025, American Ancestors staff participated in Making History on the Common, an interactive experience that educates students about the people and events that contributed to the history of our nation's oldest park, the Boston Common. It was a busy and exciting day, with approximately 800 students in attendance.

This free annual event, sponsored by the Friends of the Public Garden, is open to Boston students in grades three through five. Activity booths throughout the Common represent local organizations such as the Freedom Trail Foundation, the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, and the Boston Landmarks Commission.

School Programs and Curriculum Manager Dustin Axe designed a "cemetery scavenger hunt" for the American Ancestors activity. Staff members engaged students in a fact-finding expedition among replica gravestones of local historic figures. The exercise was designed to hone research, communication, and critical thinking skills in a hands-on environment. The students visiting our station knew that cemeteries are final



resting places for the deceased and that gravestones contain basic biographical information—but most were surprised to discover that information gleaned in cemeteries can provide insight into the social fabric of long-ago communities. Our activity enabled students to work actively and collaboratively while learning how to conduct research.



Scout visit

On May 31, Scouts from many different Massachusetts troops visited our American Ancestors headquarters to earn their genealogy merit badges. This was the first group of students to interact with our new exhibits in the Family Heritage Experience. Guided by our genealogists and archivists, the Scouts learned basic genealogical terms and sources and developed personalized research plans to discover their own family histories.

Staff news

DUSTIN AXE is now School Programs and Curriculum Manager. **JULIEN OSBORNE** has joined our staff as Education and Programming Coordinator. **REBECCA KELLY-BOWDITCH**, **GIG MOINEAU**, **JUSTIN PEAVEY**, and **DAVID SHAW** have joined our staff as Researchers.

2025 American Ancestors Young Family Historians Essay Contest winners

We're delighted to announce the winners of the 2025 American Ancestors Young Family Historians Essay Contest. We received submissions from nineteen states and the District of Columbia, with winners and semifinalists from California, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Our essay contest, held annually since 2020, is open to students in grades 4 to 12 in public, private, and home schools across the country and in US territories. The contest is divided into three grade-level categories: 4–6, 7–8, and 9–12. Each essay is evaluated by two judges from American Ancestors, using a rubric shared in advance with students. Submissions are assessed on each student's research process, use of evidence, originality, and overall quality of writing.

Each year, we craft an essay question designed to inspire students to uncover a meaningful story from their family history and encourage them to explore how the past can shape their lives in the present. This year we asked students to describe a challenge their ancestors faced and how they overcame it.

Benjamin Ahumada, an eighth-grade student from Boston Latin School in Massachusetts, described his great-great-grandfather's experience during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during World War II: "[My] great-great-grandfather's story has helped me to understand resilience and perseverance. His journey from wealth to devastation and back to success has taught me that even when everything seems lost, we can endure and rebuild. What impacts me most is how he transformed tragedy into opportunity, not just for himself but for his family, including those of us he never met."

Neel Sood, a fifth grader from Bridgewater, New Jersey, shared his grandfather's inspiring journey from an Indian village to becoming a respected American college professor and author, overcoming significant adversity, including poverty and bullying. Sood, who identifies with his grandfather's academic inclinations and experiences with bullying, felt empowered by his grandfather's story.

Winners and semifinalists were mailed a certificate, a one-year membership to American Ancestors, and a cash prize. Winning essays in each grade-level category earned a \$500 prize, while semifinalists received \$250.



2025 Young Family Historians Essay Contest winners

Grades 4–6

WINNER: Neel Sood, Grade 5, Hillside Intermediate School, Bridgewater, New Jersey

SEMIFINALIST: Leonardo Shen, Grade 5, Germantown Academy, Lansdale, Pennsylvania

Grades 7–8

WINNER: Zoe Li, Grade 8, Great Neck South Middle School, Great Neck, New York

SEMIFINALIST: Benjamin Ahumada, Grade 8, Boston Latin School, Boston, Massachusetts

Grades 9–12

WINNER: Colsen Nguyen, Grade 11, Christian Brothers High School, Sacramento, California

SEMIFINALIST: Paul Sparacello, Grade 11, Jesuit High School of New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana

The 2026 Young Family Historians Essay Contest is now open!



Share a story of an ancestor who was "revolutionary" and explain how their actions were new or impactful for their time. Entries are due April 1, 2026. Visit AmericanAncestors.org/essay-contest-2026 for rules and judging criteria.

JHC hosts Jewish American Heritage Month celebration with Governor Maura Healey

The Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center (JHC) at American Ancestors was chosen by the Jewish Community Relations Council and Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey's office to host the governor's May 2025 celebration of Jewish American Heritage Month. For the first time, organizers decided to take the event out of the State House and host it in a setting that represented Jewish heritage. Approximately eighty people—Jewish political and institutional leaders from across the state—gathered in the American Ancestors rotunda on May 28 for speeches, refreshments, and a display of JHC archival items that told the story of Jewish history and heritage in the Commonwealth. Among those in attendance was State Treasurer and Receiver General of Massachusetts Deborah Goldberg, whose family is represented in the JHC Archives in both the Rabb Family Stop & Shop Collection (P-679) and the Kehillath Israel Synagogue (Brookline, Mass.) Records (I-488). After the event, JHC Executive Director Rachel King and President and CEO Ryan J. Woods escorted the governor to the JHC's office suite and exhibit. This event provided an important opportunity to inform the community about the rich resources and educational programs located at the JHC.



Top: JHC Executive Director Rachel King and Governor Maura Healey shake hands behind the podium in the rotunda of the Family Heritage Experience at American Ancestors. *Bottom:* Governor Maura Healey, President and CEO Ryan J. Woods, and JHC Executive Director Rachel King in front of the exhibit at the entrance to the JHC office. Photos by Josh Qualls, Office of Maura Healey.



Announcing Shiyong Lu as the first JHC Curhan Research Scholar

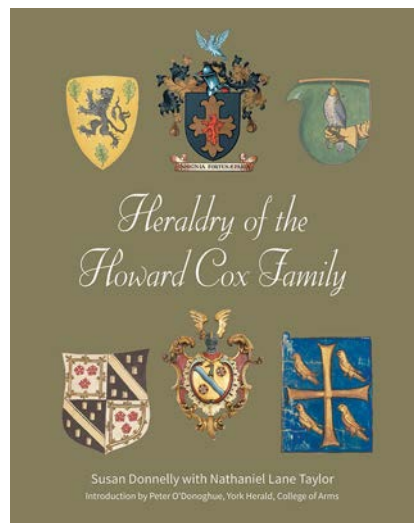
The Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center (JHC) at American Ancestors is pleased to announce Shiyong Lu as the inaugural Curhan Research Scholar. Generously funded by the Curhan family, the Professor Ronald C. Curhan and Joan Pokross Curhan Research Fellowship supports scholars at the start of their careers. Lu is a joint PhD Candidate in Hebrew and Judaic Studies and History at New York University. Her fascinating research explores the diverse interactions between Jewish and Chinese people in America, with a focus on food and business. She will be using the JHC's collections for research toward her dissertation, "We Offer Chicken Chop Suey on Sundays': How Chinese Food Purveyors Encountered Jews in Twentieth-Century America."

New Publications

shop.AmericanAncestors.org

See back cover for information about the new 2nd edition of *The Great Migration Directory!*

From Newbury Street Press

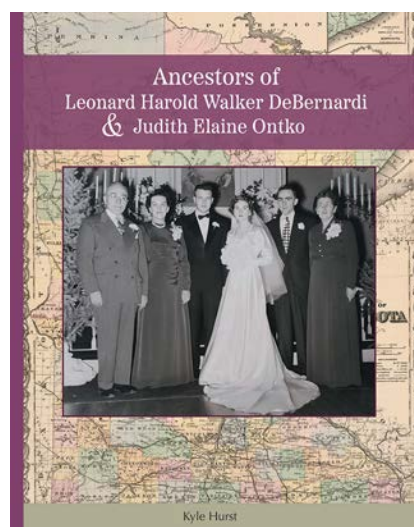


Heraldry of the Howard Cox Family

By Susan Donnelly with Nathaniel Lane Taylor

Introduction by Peter O'Donoghue, York Herald, College of Arms

This is a lavishly illustrated and meticulously researched history of the coats of arms used by the ancestors of Howard Cox, 4th great-grandson of Chancellor Robert Livingston who administered the oath of office to President George Washington. Two principal branches—the Livingstons of New York, represented through Howard's mother, Anne Crane Delafield Finch, and the Cutlers of New England, represented through his father, Howard Ellis Cox—form the foundation of a narrative that weaves a story of courage, entrepreneurial spirit, and a profound commitment to public service reaching back to the Middle Ages and including connections to William the Conqueror, the Anglo-Saxon kings, and medieval warrior-king Charles the Great, known as Charlemagne. The complex relationships in these English, Scottish, and Dutch families are illustrated in 22 detailed genealogical charts.



Ancestors of Leonard Harold Walker DeBernardi & Judith Elaine Ontko

By Kyle Hurst

Many of Leonard DeBernardi's English ancestors migrated to New England and New Jersey during the 1600s, while others arrived in Maryland and Virginia during the 1700s. His German ancestors went to Pennsylvania or directly to the Midwest; his Irish ancestors settled in Pennsylvania and what became West Virginia by the mid-1800s. Meanwhile, Judith Ontko's ancestors emigrated from what became the northeastern corner of Slovakia to America during the 1870s and 1880s. Along the way, all of them were sustained by their Protestant faith and strong connections to their communities. The hub for these families was Minnesota. Surnames covered include Bakalar, Branson, Claflin, Fenton, Glass, Kirkpatrick, Kruger, Ontko, Rehard, Walker, and Wallace.

From American Ancestors

Two new *Portable Genealogist* quick-reference guides by Chief Genealogist David Allen Lambert are now available. **Getting Started with U.S. War of 1812 Records** and **Getting Started with Civil War Veteran Records** describe how bounty-land grants and pension records can help you in your research and how to use Union pension records to access information on invalid, widows', and minor children's pensions, as well as pensions given by states to Confederate soldiers.

THE PORTABLE GENEALOGIST 13

Getting Started with U.S. War of 1812 Records

By David Allen Lambert

Introduction

The War of 1812 records are a treasure trove for researchers looking for information on their ancestors. This book provides a comprehensive overview of the records and how to use them.

Did My Ancestor Serve?

This section provides a checklist of questions to help you determine if your ancestor served in the U.S. Army during the War of 1812.

U.S. Army State Subscribers Records

This section provides information on the U.S. Army State Subscribers Records, which are a valuable source of information on soldiers and their families.

How to Use the Records

This section provides information on how to use the records, including tips on how to find the records and how to interpret the information.

Index

This section provides an index of the records, which is a valuable tool for researchers.

AmericanAncestors.org

AmericanAncestors.org

THE PORTABLE GENEALOGIST 14

Getting Started with Civil War Veteran Records

By David Allen Lambert

Introduction

The Civil War veteran records are a treasure trove for researchers looking for information on their ancestors. This book provides a comprehensive overview of the records and how to use them.

Did My Ancestor Serve?

This section provides a checklist of questions to help you determine if your ancestor served in the U.S. Army during the Civil War.

U.S. Army State Subscribers Records

This section provides information on the U.S. Army State Subscribers Records, which are a valuable source of information on soldiers and their families.

How to Use the Records

This section provides information on how to use the records, including tips on how to find the records and how to interpret the information.

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ONLINE COURSE

Researching in New England Town Records 17th through 19th Centuries

December 4, 9, 11, 16, and 18, 2025. 6–7:30 p.m. (ET)

Presented by David Allen Lambert, Rhonda R. McClure, and Melanie McComb. Cost: \$125; members save 10%



SCAN ME

Early New Englanders are known for creating a wealth of records that provide insights into their lives. This abundance of records

was largely due to the important role that town government played in the region. New England town records contain a wide variety of genealogical information—documenting births, marriages, burials, mortgages, service to the community, and more—but they are often overlooked and can be difficult to navigate. In this five-week online seminar, we'll delve into these important resources and demonstrate how you can get the most out of these records for your own family history.

This course includes:

- ▶ Five 90-minute classes
- ▶ Exclusive access to handouts and recordings of each presentation
- ▶ In-depth Q&A sessions with the instructors

Class 1: Introduction to the New England Town Meeting and Record Keeping, David Allen Lambert

Class 2: Vital Records in New England, David Allen Lambert

Class 3: The Foundations of Using Financial Records in New England Research, Melanie McComb

Class 4: Diving Deeper: More New England Financial Records, Rhonda R. McClure

Class 5: Records of Service to the Community, Rhonda R. McClure

Register at
AmericanAncestors.org/Events

THE BRUE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER

THE LOYALIST EXPERIENCE DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

It is often said that history is written by the victors, and the American Revolution was no exception. Because the War of Independence was won by the rebels, American colonists who remained loyal to the British Crown were often portrayed in a negative light. In historical accounts, legal documents, and popular culture, Loyalists have been shown as corrupt, inept, and greedy individuals whose unwavering loyalty to the Crown ultimately led to their downfall. However, these stereotypes downplay the difficult choices and genuine hardships that American Loyalists faced.

The total number of Loyalists in the American colonies prior to the outbreak of war in 1775 was approximately 380,000 to 400,000, about 15 to 20 percent of the population. By the end of the Revolutionary era, between 80,000 and 100,000 Loyalists had fled.¹ More than half of them escaped to Canada. Of those, 45,000



Alexander Cain is a noted author and speaker on the Revolutionary War era. He has written multiple articles and two books on Lexington, Concord, Bunker Hill, and the Loyalist experience. Alex lives in Massachusetts and is the author of the blog and podcast Historical Nerdery.



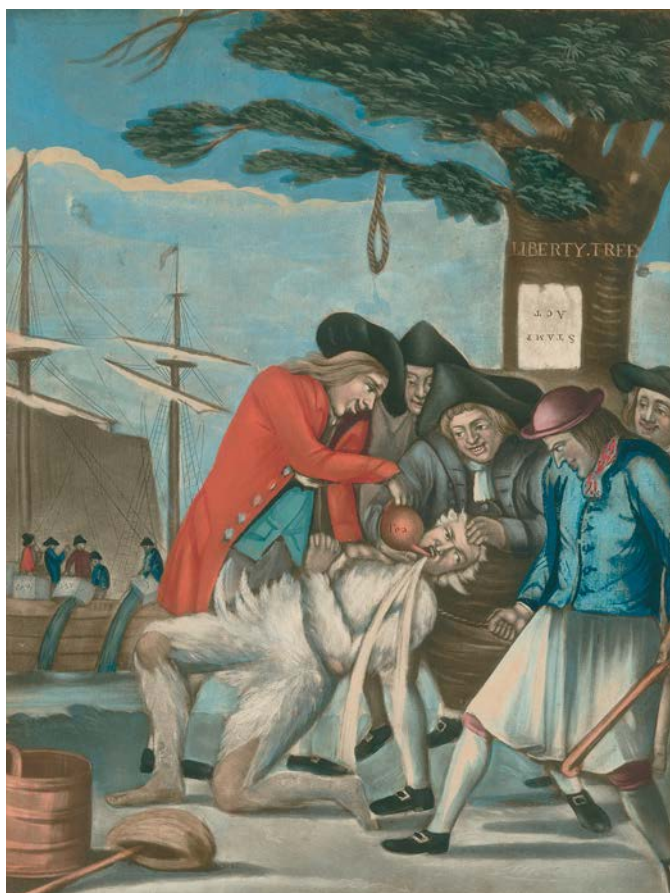
refugees settled in the Maritime region, and an additional 9,500 went to Quebec. About 7,500 of those ultimately settled in what became Upper Canada (now Ontario).² The Loyalist men, women, and children who departed lost more than just their homes and personal belongings—they left behind their way of life, communities, relatives, friends, and businesses.³

Who were the Loyalists?

The lives of many colonists who ultimately became “Tories” did not obviously differ from their neighbors who embraced the cause of independence. Some Loyalists—among them well-educated Harvard graduates who were merchants, doctors, lawyers, and ministers—were elite members of their towns and communities. However, most colonists who remained faithful to the Crown hailed from the middle and lower classes.

In 2016, historian Amber Jolly examined court records relating to over 850 Loyalist property seizure cases in New York that occurred following the passage of the Confiscation Act of 1783.⁴ She found that the overwhelming majority of Loyalists who lost property

Above: Howard Pyle, “Tory Refugees on Their Way to Canada,” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, December 1901, 107. Colorized version by Carolyn Oakley.



"Bostonians Paying the Exciseman, or Tarring and Feathering," by Philip Dawe (London, 1774). This print depicts a January 25, 1774, incident in which Loyalist John Malcolm, British Commissioner of Customs, was tarred and feathered, assaulted, and forced to drink tea by a Patriot mob. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library.

in New York were from the laboring, agricultural, and artisan classes. Only six percent would be considered "professional" by modern standards.⁵

Aside from Crown officials, who usually aligned with "friends of government," no single trait defined Loyalists. Loyalists came from every social class in colonial society, representing a variety of occupations and regions.⁶ As Patriot pressure increased, many Loyalists fled to nearby areas held by the British army, including Boston, New York City, Lower Canada (Quebec), and Philadelphia. On the frontier settlements of the southern colonies—Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia—escaping to safety was much harder since British military outposts were scarce and spread out. As a result, Loyalists formed armed militias to fight back against harassment by local Patriots, many of whom were their neighbors and family members.⁷

The demographic profile of the Loyalists who ultimately settled in Upper Canada reveals a diverse

population shaped by recent immigration. Over half of the refugees who settled in Upper Canada had not been born in North America.

More than fifty percent of these non-native Loyalists were Scottish Highland Roman Catholics who had fled from New York, the Hampshire Grants (modern day Vermont), and Maine. When the Revolution began, many of these Scots had recently arrived in the American colonies, having an average residence of only four years. Approximately forty percent of these Upper Canada arrivals were German and Irish immigrants who, on average, had lived in New York and the Hampshire Grants between eleven and eighteen years. Eight percent of these Loyalists were born in England and had lived in New England and New York for an average of eight years.⁸

Almost ten percent of Loyalists who fled to Canada were of African descent. Whether enslaved or free, many Blacks cast their lots with the Crown in an attempt to secure better lives for themselves and their families. Many Native American allies of the British also relocated to Canada after the war. Over 2,000 Iroquois from the Six Nations, Mohicans, Nanticokes, and Squakis had settled in Ontario by 1785.⁹

Reasons to remain loyal

American colonists remained loyal to the British Crown during the Revolutionary era for a variety of reasons. One was religious beliefs. Anglican ministers, like Benjamin Pickman of Salem, Massachusetts, and John Amory of Boston, viewed loyalty as a sacred duty. Some Congregationalists and Roman Catholics supported British rule due to pacifist principles or a desire to maintain Crown support for religious tolerance.

Financial concerns also played a role in the decision to side with Loyalists, as officials, merchants, and tenant farmers feared economic disaster if ties with England were severed.

Other colonists valued stability and upholding the social order and opposed Patriot violence. Mob attacks against fellow colonists and government officials in major Revolutionary strongholds like Boston, New York City, and Williamsburg pushed some moderates toward loyalty. Prominent Loyalists, including William Paine, Samuel Curwen, and Reverend Samuel Seabury, viewed Patriot actions as oppressive. Some early advocates of independence changed sides after the Declaration of Independence, unable to condone a radical break from the British Empire.

Many ordinary citizens who initially leaned toward neutrality were reluctantly drawn into taking a side as

events unfolded. Patriot use of nonimportation agreements and loyalty oaths during the late 1760s and 1770s prompted many neutrals to become Loyalists. Once the conflict began, residents were pressured to make a choice, as those who remained neutral often faced intimidation from both armies.¹⁰

Loyalists as refugees

At the start of the American Revolution, Loyalist men often sought refuge in British military enclaves, leaving their wives and children behind. The men assumed their families would be safe. However, Patriot authorities sometimes punished these women and children, rejecting the idea that they were innocent bystanders. Contemporary accounts illustrate the widespread abuse Loyalist women and their children endured, including public humiliation, beatings, and displacement.

After New York Loyalist Daniel McAlpin fled from local Patriot authorities, his wife, Mary, refused to assist the rebels in locating or securing her husband. A mob of rebels seized Mary and her oldest daughter, stripped them down to their shifts, and “carted” them through the streets of Albany as bystanders pelted them with dirt and rotten vegetables. Mary and her children were then kept in captivity for several weeks.¹¹

Loyalists fleeing to British-held enclaves faced hardship and danger on their journeys. Loyalists traveling north to Canada typically followed an overland route through Native American territory to Lake Ontario. Since much of the journey was along forest trails, guides were essential. Unfortunately for the Loyalists, the route required passing through territory controlled by the Oneidas, who were American allies. The refugees also had to avoid Continental and militia detachments actively patrolling the area. Once out of enemy territory, the refugees crossed Lake Ontario at Oswego, New York, or traveled along the lake’s southern shore to the Niagara River. The trip along the Niagara was often dangerous, especially during the spring floods.

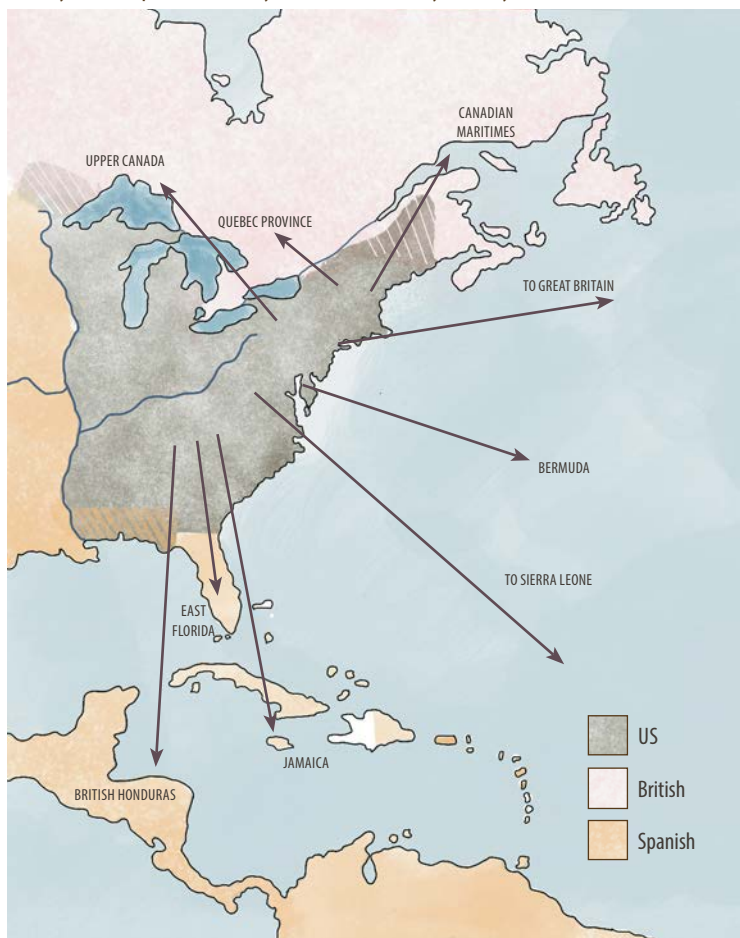
The British government was unprepared for the arrival of thousands of Loyalist men, women, and children in Canada.¹² Following the defeat of Burgoyne in 1777, estimates place the number of nonmilitary Loyalists in Canada at over 1,000 men, women, and children. By 1780, the number of Loyalist refugees in Canada had grown to 5,000; by 1784, the number had increased to 7,000.¹³

Loyalists in refugee camps

In response, the Crown implemented a policy reminiscent of its approach toward the impoverished in Britain. Loyalist arrivals were interrogated about their trades or professions and directed to designated areas for employment opportunities or recruited for military service. Destitute Loyalists, including the sick, infirm, children, women with infants, and the disabled, were assigned to refugee camps in Quebec and placed on public assistance. In exchange for this “protection” for their families, men were expected to enlist in Loyalist regiments and support the effort to suppress the American rebellion.

Government authorities struggled to provide adequate housing in Quebec for the growing number of refugees. The situation was exacerbated by delays in construction, shortages of building materials, and the failure to establish essential infrastructure including sawmills and schoolhouses. Living conditions in refugee settlements were extremely cramped. In 1779, in Machiche, near Sorel-Tracy, over 400 refugees were packed into just twenty-one small buildings, each only about 18 by 40 feet, forcing many families to endure overcrowded conditions during the harsh winter.¹⁴

The Loyalist Diaspora. Created by Alex Cain and Carolyn Oakley.



British officials struggled to provide refugees with essential supplies like food, clothing, blankets, and cooking equipment. Many refugees suffered or even died from malnutrition, inadequate apparel, and harsh living conditions. Attempts to create self-sufficient refugee communities outside Quebec City largely failed, leaving thousands dependent on government aid.

Loyalist refugees were horrified by the dire conditions in the Quebec camps. Residents of the Machiche refugee camp suffered from extreme poverty, overcrowding, and a lack of provisions. Accusations of corruption further fueled resentment. British authorities restricted movement outside the camps and denied refugees opportunities to earn an income or sell goods, further deepening their hardships. Diseases such as camp fever, malaria, smallpox, and pneumonia spread rapidly. Government officials dismissed the complaints of Loyalist refugees as exaggerated or ungrateful.

Black Loyalists, who were promised freedom in exchange for allegiance to the Crown, could face especially harsh treatment. Some were re-enslaved, sold, or denied the rights they had been promised, despite protests from some British officers.¹⁵

As the war continued, the emotional and psychological toll of confinement grew in the refugee camps. The long-term absence of men due to military service added to the burden, and marital breakdowns, alcoholism, infanticides, and suicides became increasingly common.¹⁶ Frustrated British leaders saw the refugees as a drain on resources and used the group's dependence to maintain control, forcing the refugees to either endure poor conditions or fend for themselves.

Wealthy Loyalists

Unlike many of the “lower sort,” wealthy and politically influential Loyalists like Sir John Johnston of New York, George Leonard of Massachusetts, and William Franklin of New Jersey enjoyed privileges while under the protection of the British army. These Loyalists were allowed to move freely throughout the colonies, raise regiments of soldiers, pursue business ventures, and receive political and military appointments that often brought them profit.

However, even the Tory elite were not completely secure from the hardships of being refugees or from the wrath of the Americans—or the British. In 1775, Loyalist merchant John Andrews bitterly complained that British soldiers stationed in Boston and their female camp followers routinely plundered his property.¹⁷ Although during the war James Clarke benefited from being safely behind defensive lines in British-held Newport, Rhode Island, he concluded he could not stay



Landing of the Loyalists, 1783, by Henry Sandham in Beckles Willson, *Romance of Empire: Canada* (London: T. C. & L. C. Jack, Ltd., 1907). Wikimedia Commons. This view of Loyalists arriving in New Brunswick reflected romanticized notions of Loyalist history. Both the artist and author were Canadian.

permanently. In a 1786 letter, he reflected on leaving the colony and relocating to New Brunswick: “My Attachment to our native Country is so fervent and sincere that I could freely give up my Life, and Ten Thousand more if I possess them, could I restore dear Rhode Island to its former happy, happy Situation.”¹⁸

After the signing of the Declaration of Independence, several states, including Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, enacted confiscation laws that criminalized dissent by allowing the seizure and sale of Loyalist property. Wealthy Tories were especially targeted. In one case, Loyalist John Borland's property in Braintree, Massachusetts, was confiscated and subsequently acquired by John and Abigail Adams, who renamed it Peacefield.¹⁹

Resettlement and rebuilding

After the Treaty of Paris ended the Revolutionary War in 1783, approximately 60,000 American Loyalist refugees from the former American colonies and Quebec were forcibly relocated to new locations, primarily Upper Canada, several Caribbean islands, West Florida, and Sierra Leone.²⁰ These Loyalists faced arduous journeys and arrived ill-prepared. They, too, relied heavily

on inadequate British provisions and charity for their survival.

Most Loyalists who had left their homes in the American colonies during or after the war and settled in Canada faced the immense challenge of rebuilding their lives with limited resources, few markets, and poor infrastructure. They cleared forests, built shelters, and cultivated land while enduring isolation and the emotional strain of displacement.

Despite the hardships they endured, Loyalists gradually transformed the wilderness into productive farms and communities. With only limited government support in the form of supplies, land grants, and protection, Loyalists not only survived but also laid the foundation for lasting prosperity. ♦

Notes

- ¹ Robert M. Calhoon, "Loyalism and Neutrality," in *A Companion to the American Revolution*, eds. Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole (John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 235.
- ² Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (Random House, 2012), 357.
- ³ Bruce Wilson, *As She Began: An Illustrated Introduction to Loyalist Ontario* (Dundurn Group, 1981), 13.
- ⁴ Amber Jolly, *Map of Loyalist Property Confiscations in New York*, created for Alexander Cain, December 1, 2016. Data from "List of Loyalists Against Whom Judgements Were Given Under the Confiscation Act," Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, accessed June 20, 2025, digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/92a14bb0-0e2f-0134-a08b-00505686a51c. The largest number of property confiscations occurred in Albany and Tryon Counties.
- ⁵ *Ibid.* Only twenty-three men were identified by Jolly as "esquires." Eight were gentlemen, twelve were merchants, and seven were physicians or attorneys. Only four were military officers.
- ⁶ Shannon Duffy and Zoie Horecny, "Loyalists," *George Washington Presidential Library Digital Encyclopedia*, Mount Vernon, last modified July 3, 2025, mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/loyalists.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ Wilson [note 3], 17.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.
- ¹⁰ For a detailed study of Pennsylvanians who identified as "neutral" during the American Revolution, see Aaron Sullivan, *The Disaffected: Britain's Occupation of Philadelphia During the American Revolution* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 304.
- ¹¹ Great Britain, *Audit Office Records*, vol. 21, reel B-1159 (1776), Library of Congress, guides.loc.gov/

[british-manuscripts/audit](#). One local minister later recalled, "Mrs. McAlpin was brought down to Albany in a very scandalous manner so much that the Americans themselves cried out about it." A second account asserted that "when Mrs. McAlpin was brought from the hut to Albany as a prisoner with her daughter ... they neither of them had a rag of cloaths to shift themselves."

- ¹² Janice Potter-MacKinnon, *While the Women Only Wept: Loyalist Refugee Women in Eastern Ontario* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 96–97.
- ¹³ Alexander Clarence Flick, *Loyalism in New York During the American Revolution* (Columbia University Press, 1901), 38–39.
- ¹⁴ Letter from Conrad Guty to Frederick Haldimand, November 16, 1778, quoted in Potter-MacKinnon, *While the Women Only Wept* [note 12], 114.
- ¹⁵ Regrettably, although numerous court cases from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Upper Canada addressed attempts to re-enslave freed Blacks, a comprehensive data set detailing the total number of individuals re-enslaved is lacking. Several white Loyalists, such as Jesse Grey from Charleston, Nova Scotia, have been identified as profiting from kidnapping Black freedmen and subsequently selling them back into slavery. See "Enslaved Again," *The Black Loyalist: Our History, Our People*, accessed July 26, 2025, at blackloyalist.com/cdc/story/exile/enslave.htm.
- ¹⁶ Barry St. Leger to Frederick Haldimand, in Potter-MacKinnon, *While the Women Only Wept* [note 12], 121. For further examples of the upheaval of Loyalist lives within Quebec refugee camps, see Potter-MacKinnon [note 12], 120–125; and W. Stewart Wallace, *The United Empire Loyalists: A Chronicle of the Great Migration* (Glasgow, Brook & Company, 1914), 27. There are contemporary accounts of several "insane Loyalists" being sent from refugee camps in Quebec to a hospital in Quebec City. Colonel Daniel Claus to Frederick Haldimand, June 14, 1784, in Potter-MacKinnon [note 12], 121.
- ¹⁷ "Soldiery think they have a license to plunder evry ones house & Store," John Andrews to William Barrell, June 1, 1775, Andrews-Eliot correspondence, Massachusetts Historical Society, Collection Online, accessed July 26, 2025, masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=2050.
- ¹⁸ James Clarke to Miss Coggeshall, Halifax, February 5, 1786, in Catherine S. Crary, ed., *The Price of Loyalty: Tory Writings from the Revolutionary Era* (McGraw-Hill, 1973), 446–47.
- ¹⁹ Mark Boonshoft, "Dispossessing Loyalists and Redistributing Property in Revolutionary New York," *The New York Public Library Blog*, September 19, 2016, accessed July 27, 2025, nypl.org/blog/2016/09/19/loyalist-property-confiscation.
- ²⁰ Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles* [note 2], 357. Approximately 12,000 Loyalists went to Great Britain, 12,000 to the Caribbean, 5,000 to Florida, and 1,200 to West Africa.



Finding Loyalists in Your Family Tree

Loyalists, also known as Tories and Royalists, supported the British during the Revolutionary era. According to historians, approximately fifteen to twenty percent of American colonists (approximately 500,000 people) identified as Loyalists.¹ These colonists remained loyal to the British Crown for a variety of reasons, including wanting to remain British subjects and maintain family ties and business relationships. However, Loyalists in the colonies risked the confiscation of their lands, as well as being harassed, arrested, and eventually evicted from the colonies.

The following records are key to researching Loyalist connections.

Oaths of Allegiance

Legislation passed by individual colonies required male residents to sign a pledge to the Patriot cause. These were known as “test laws,” since they tested allegiance to the Patriot cause. Failure to take the pledge could result in imprisonment, banishment, a loss of legal rights, and even execution if the Loyalist returned to that colony. Claude Halstead Van Tyne’s *The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (1902) includes appendices with the text of each colony’s laws. The oaths of allegiance generally consisted of three components: renouncing and refusing all allegiance to King George III, his heirs,

Above: “Encampment of the Loyalists at Johnston, a New Settlement, on the Banks of the River St Laurence [sic] in Canada, taken June 6th 1784,” by James Peachey. Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1989-218-1.

and successors; swearing allegiance to the colony; and promising to make any traitorous conspiracies known.

The lists of individuals who took this oath can be found in various repositories around the country, including local historical societies and universities. For instance, the New York Public Library has a volume of 1781 oaths taken by South Carolina residents.²

Confiscation of Lands

All of the colonies passed their own laws on the confiscation of Loyalist property. Usually, the land was confiscated and auctioned by the colonial government, which kept the proceeds.

Many of these land sales were publicized in local newspapers. For instance, on December 30, 1782, the Committee for the Sale of Absentee Estates in Suffolk County, Massachusetts, gave notice in the *Boston Gazette* that the confiscated home of Robert Jarvis, an “absentee”—a Loyalist who fled—would be sold at public auction at the Bunch of Grapes tavern.³ (See page 28.)

New York had the most aggressive land confiscation laws. The Forfeiture Act passed there on October 22, 1779, proscribed not only seizure of property, but also banishment from the state. An act of attainder even listed several individual people, including William Tryon, a late governor of the colony, as “enemies of the state.”⁴



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Loyalist resources

Databases

American Loyalist Claims

*1730–1835: [FamilySearch.org/en/search/catalog/192412](https://familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/192412)

*1776–1835: [Ancestry.com/search/collections/3712](https://ancestry.com/search/collections/3712)

Black Loyalist Directory, 1783–1788

This database contains details about Black and multiracial passengers who left the US mainly for ports in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Quebec. The source is *The Book of Negroes: African Americans in Exile After the American Revolution*, edited by Graham Russell Gao Hodges and Alan Edward Brown (Fordham University Press, 2021).

[AmericanAncestors.org/search/databasesearch/2823/black-loyalist-directory-1783-1788](https://americanancestors.org/search/databasesearch/2823/black-loyalist-directory-1783-1788)

*Land Petitions of Lower Canada

bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/land/land-petitions-lower-canada-1764-1841

*Land Petitions of Upper Canada

bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/land/land-petitions-upper-canada-1763-1865

*Lower Canada Land Petitions and Related Records, 1637–1842

familysearch.org/search/catalog/500672

*Loyalist Directory

uelac.ca/loyalist-directory

Massachusetts: Divided Hearts, Massachusetts Loyalists, 1765–1790

This biographical directory, sponsored by the Society of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, provides information on 1,705 Massachusetts Loyalists.

[AmericanAncestors.org/search/databasesearch/80/massachusetts-divided-hearts-massachusetts-loyalists-1765-1790](https://americanancestors.org/search/databasesearch/80/massachusetts-divided-hearts-massachusetts-loyalists-1765-1790)

*Upper Canada, Petitions for Land Grants and Leases, 1791–1867

[FamilySearch.org/en/search/catalog/521830](https://familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/521830)

Other resources

Friend or Foe: Researching Colonial Ancestors During the American Revolution [video]

Chief Genealogist David Allen Lambert discusses how to determine if—and how—your ancestors participated in the American Revolution.

[AmericanAncestors.org/video-library/friend-or-foe-researching-colonial-ancestors-during-american-revolution](https://americanancestors.org/video-library/friend-or-foe-researching-colonial-ancestors-during-american-revolution)

Loyalist Collection at the University of New Brunswick

loyalist.lib.unb.ca

Researching Black Patriots and Loyalists During the Revolutionary Era [video]

Researcher Danielle Rose discusses Black soldiers during the Revolution and their motivations for joining the Patriots or Loyalists, plus relevant resources, records, and research strategies.

[AmericanAncestors.org/video-library/researching-black-patriots-and-loyalists-during-revolutionary-era](https://americanancestors.org/video-library/researching-black-patriots-and-loyalists-during-revolutionary-era)

*Starred items are described in the article.

Some town records hold information on local Committees of Correspondence, Safety, and Inspection. Reports from those committees sometimes include details about people under investigation who had their property seized and sold. Many town records can be found online on FamilySearch.org under the Catalog>Town Records.

Land Petitions

Many Loyalists who fled the American colonies settled in Canada. Applications for Crown land asked claimants for proof of their loyalty to the Crown. Examples include having signed oaths of allegiance or served in the British military or being children of known Loyalists. When petitions were approved, successful applicants received a ticket with the township and lot number of their newly assigned land.

The land petitions for Lower Canada (which includes present-day Quebec) and Upper Canada (modern Ontario) have been indexed and are searchable on the Library and Archives Canada website.⁵ The land petition files can be found on the Library and Archives Canada website and FamilySearch.⁶

Loyalist Claims

In 1783, the American Loyalist Claims Commission was established by an act of Parliament to address Loyalist claims of property damage and confiscation during the Revolutionary War. The records created by this commission provide insight into applicants' lives beyond the information contained in the town records and land deeds.

One of these claims tells the story of John Brown, an immigrant from Scotland who arrived in the American colonies in 1764. John, a tin worker, settled in Georgia. When

the war began, he avoided serving with the Americans and didn't sign an oath to the new government. Instead, John served in a Georgia militia with British troops. As he later documented on a schedule of real or personal estate, John owned 200 acres of land near Savannah in Queensborough Township, as well as seventeen heads of cattle, eight heads of hogs, four horses, mechanical and plantation tools, and more totaling approximately £185. During the evacuation of Savannah in 1782, John fled to St. Augustine, Florida. In 1786, John filed a claim for his property in Georgia that was confiscated after he left.⁷ He later settled in Rawdon Township, Nova Scotia.

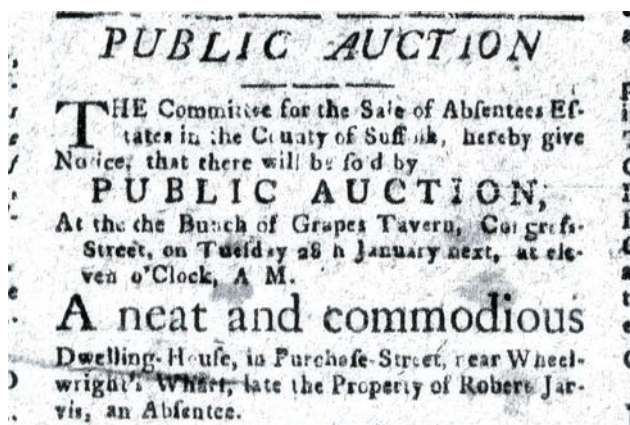
The commission's records are held at the National Archives of the UK. This collection is also available on FamilySearch and Ancestry.⁸

United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada

The major lineage society that honors Loyalist forebears is the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada (UELAC). Anyone with an interest in Loyalist history may join the organization. Descendants of Loyalists who fled the British colonies and settled in Canada can apply for a Loyalist Certificate that establishes a genealogical proof back to a Loyalist ancestor. Applications are based on the traditional lineage requirements of births, marriages, and deaths, as well as land petitions, muster rolls, and other records.

Notes

- ¹ Robert M. Calhoon, "Loyalism and Neutrality," in Jack P. Greene and J.R. Pole, eds., *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (Blackwell Reference, 1991), 235; Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763–1789* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 563–564; and Thomas B. Allen, *Tories: Fighting for the King in America's First Civil War* (HarperCollins, 2010) p. xx.
- ² South Carolina loyalists' oaths of allegiance, 1781, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, MssCol 85; archives.nypl.org/mss/85.
- ³ *Boston Gazette*, December 30, 1782, 3, in *Early American Newspapers: Series I, 1690–1876* (accessed via AmericanAncestors.org>Search>Partner Databases).
- ⁴ "The New York Act of Attainder, or Confiscation Act," Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, archives.gnb.ca/exhibits/forthavoc/html/NY-Attainder.aspx?culture=en-CA.
- ⁵ Land Petitions for Upper Canada, 1763–1865 are at bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/land/land-petitions-upper-canada-1763-1865; Land Petitions of Lower Canada, 1764–1841 are at bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/land/land-petitions-lower-canada-1764-1841.



This notice in the December 30, 1782, *Boston Gazette* announced that the Boston house owned by Robert Jarvis, an "Absentee," would be auctioned. Early American Newspapers: Series I, 1690–1876.

The UELAC has an online directory of approved Loyalists, which can be searched by name. Details include the Loyalist's name; known family members (spouse, children, siblings, parents); places of birth, resettlement, and death, if known; military service (if applicable); land petitions; proof of loyalty; and more.⁹



As commemorations of the Revolutionary War continue, a variety of records allow us to embrace the full history of the era, one that acknowledges the convictions and bravery of the Loyalists and their contributions to our shared history. ♦

- ⁶ Upper Canada Land Petitions, 1763–1865, Archives of Canada, at collectionscanada.gc.ca/microform-digitization/006003-110.02-e.php?q2=29&interval=50&sk=0; and Lower Canada Land Petitions and Related Records, 1637–1842, at FamilySearch.org/en/search/catalog/500672; and Upper Canada, Petitions for Land Grants and Leases, 1791–1867, at familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/521830.
- ⁷ "UK, American Loyalist Claims, 1776–1835," Ancestry.com. Original data: American Loyalist Claims, 1776–1835. AO 12–13. The National Archives of the United Kingdom; Series I, Piece 005: Evidence, Georgia, 1786–1787, p. 1; Ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/3712/images/40939_307345-00014.
- ⁸ "American Loyalist Claims, 1730–1835," at FamilySearch.org/en/search/catalog/192412; and "UK, American Loyalist Claims, 1776–1835," at Ancestry.com/search/collections/3712.
- ⁹ See uelac.ca/loyalist-directory.

Loyalist Ancestors

In July, we asked readers of our *Weekly Genealogist* newsletter to share stories about their Canadian ancestors. A selection of the responses on Loyalist ancestors is presented here.

Tom Hughes, Cincinnati, Ohio: In 1782, my ancestor Catherine Reid Munro Leech fled to Canada with her six children between the ages of 6 and 16. Her husband, John Munro, had died at the hands of the rebels. The family traveled from near Whitehall, New York, to Crown Point, New York, on the south end of Lake Champlain, where they were picked up by a British ship and taken to St. Johns, New Brunswick. As a Loyalist who suffered loss during the Revolution, Catherine was granted 200 acres of land near Mallorytown, Ontario, in 1789. In 1870, her great-grandson (my great-grandfather) Willis C. Munro, immigrated to the United States, eventually obtaining US citizenship and settling in Cincinnati.

Kathryn Sencabaugh, Chattanooga, Tennessee: I am descended from William Sencabaugh, a Loyalist who left New York State in 1783 and ultimately settled in Murray Harbour, Prince Edward Island. My paternal grandparents left PEI in the early 1900s and settled in Massachusetts. Although I live in Tennessee, I serve remotely as Vice-President of the Abegweit Branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada. (Through my maternal lineage, I belong to the DAR.)

Tina Snell, Glenwood, Minnesota: Five of my ancestral families had to leave for Canada after the American Revolution. As Loyalists, they were either going to be jailed or killed. One of them, Luke Knoulton, even had a price put on his head by George Washington for supplying the British with critical information. Some of the families lost their properties; all settled in southern Quebec. Most of these families were there for several generations, but later settled in the US.

Bill Jameson, Yorktown, Virginia: I know the details of the life of my ancestor George Gillmore due to his entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5. He came to the American colonies from Scotland in 1769 and served as a preacher in Voluntown, Connecticut. When the Revolution began, Gillmore refused to "pipe the popular Tune of Tumult Faction Sedition and Rebellion." Denounced as a Tory by the governor and deserted by his flock, Gillmore was forced to stop preaching in 1775. Harassment by local rebels prompted him to move to Nobletown, New York, where he lived until the British surrender at Saratoga in October 1777. Gillmore



The 1606 Union Flag was used by the American colonies until the Revolution and adopted by Loyalists. W. H. Waldron, *Flags of America* (1935), 9.

taught school in Spencertown, New York, until 1782, when he fled to Quebec. In 1785, the Reverend Gillmore and his family members sailed to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and eventually settled in Grand Pre, where George continued to preach.

Robert Snyder, Midland, Michigan: My ancestor Simeon Covell (1748–1799) is listed as a United Empire Loyalist for his service to the British. He fought with General Burgoyne at the Battle of Bennington on August 16, 1777. On January 22, 1780, the state of New York confiscated Simeon's New York property in the Cambridge District of Albany County, New York, and deported him and his children to Prescott, on the St. Lawrence River in present-day Ontario. In the late nineteenth century, some of Simeon's descendants settled in north central Michigan.

Diane Blakely Saulnier, Fruita, Colorado: In about 1756, my ancestor William Blakely and his family sailed from Northern Ireland to Charleston, South Carolina, settling in Laurens County, South Carolina. His son James Chambers Blakely was a Loyalist. After the Revolution, James and his family were escorted out of South Carolina and resettled in Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia. The family flourished there, but in 1875 my grandfather came to Northborough, Massachusetts.

Debra Lawson, Clayton, California: My Rose ancestors arrived in Long Island, New York, in the 1600s. During the Revolution, the family was Loyalist. They relocated to Ernestown, Ontario, after the war and received land for their loyalty to the crown. My great-grandfather James Rose grew up on that land. He served for a short time in the Canadian Army in the 1880s, then migrated south and joined the US Army, later becoming a citizen.



“LIBERTY TO SLAVES”

Black Loyalists in the American Revolution

On November 7, 1775, Lord Dunmore, the Royal Governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation promising freedom to all indentured servants and enslaved people who were willing to join the British forces during the American War for Independence. It's hard to determine the exact number, but some historians estimate that tens of thousands of enslaved people fled to join the British Army over the course of the war. These men and women who bravely escaped bondage are now known as Black Loyalists.

At the beginning of the conflict, the colonial population was estimated to be about 2.1 million people. Twenty percent were people of African descent, and nine out of ten of them were enslaved.¹ The ideals of freedom and liberty were perceived much differently by Black and white colonists. While most white Patriot colonists fought for economic and political independence, those of African descent longed for freedom from enslavement.

In 1961, historian Benjamin Quarles wrote, “whoever invoked the image of liberty, be he American or British, could count on a ready response from the Blacks.”² Although free Black men did join the Patriot cause, General George Washington and other southern leaders opposed arming enslaved men due to fears of

rebellion.³ The British understood the potential gains of utilizing the enslaved population. Those benefits included securing much-needed manpower to help their forces while simultaneously damaging the American economy, which relied heavily on enslaved labor.⁴

Wartime service

The varied skills and resourcefulness of Black Loyalists meant that individuals contributed to the war effort in different ways. Many were trained in specialized occupations, like blacksmithing and carpentry, and performed these duties during their service. Black Loyalists commonly acted as guides and intelligence agents since they were more familiar with the local terrain than the British. Black women served as cooks and laundresses. Like the Continental Army, British Army regiments generally had a Black drummer or fifer.⁵

Some Black Loyalists served in combat. Immediately after his proclamation, Lord Dunmore formed the Ethiopian Regiment with the enslaved men who had escaped to his troops in Virginia. They wore uniforms with the words “Liberty to Slaves” across their chests. The regiment fought in several battles but was disbanded in 1776 after a series of losses and a smallpox outbreak.⁶ The remaining members of the Ethiopian Regiment later formed another unit, the Black Pioneers. Most Pioneers were not armed and primarily performed engineering duties such as building fortifications and digging trenches.⁷



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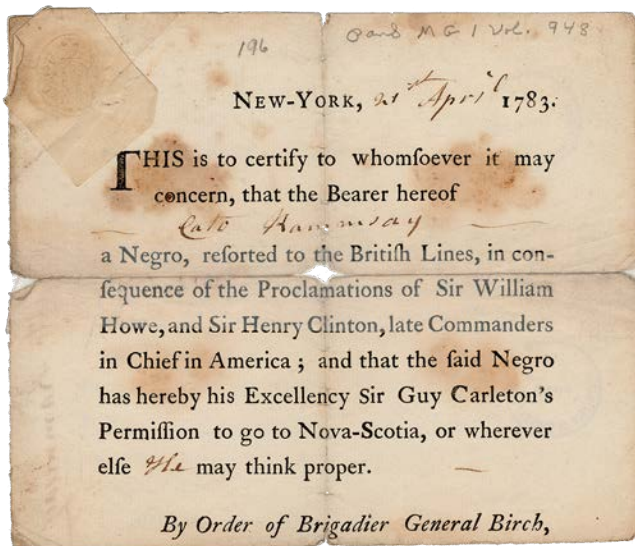
Evacuation after the war

After the British surrendered in 1781, Black Loyalists feared a return to enslavement. One formerly enslaved man, Boston King, later wrote in his memoir:

This dreadful rumour filled us all with inexpressible anguish and terror, especially when we saw our masters coming from Virginia, North-Carolina, and other parts, and seizing upon their slaves in the streets of New-York.⁸

On November 30, 1782, the American and British governments signed a provisional peace agreement, but the status of Black Loyalists remained unclear. General Washington demanded that the British return all American property, including the enslaved people who fled during the war. However, Sir Guy Carleton, commander of the British Forces, was committed to honoring the promise made to Black Loyalists through Dunmore's proclamation. He argued that any enslaved individual who was with the British by the time of the agreement had declared their freedom through the proclamation and were technically free people.⁹

After the war, thousands of Black Loyalists relocated to various British territories, including Jamaica, Florida, and England. However, most evacuations and resettlement plans were disorganized, leaving minimal records.



Opposite, left: "A Black Wood Cutter at Shelburne, Nova Scotia," 1788. Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1970-188-1090, W. H. Coverdale Collection of Canadiana. Opposite, right: Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, 1775. Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, loc.gov/item/2020769134. Above: Cato Ramsay's Birch certificate allowing him to emigrate from New York to Nova Scotia, April 21, 1783. Gideon White family fonds, Nova Scotia Archives, MG 1, volume 948, number 196.

The most well-documented group of evacuees went to Nova Scotia; approximately 3,000 sailed there from New York in 1783.¹⁰ Once their service to the Crown or their refugee status was proven, Loyalists each received a certificate of freedom, signed by British Brigadier General Samuel Birch. The certificates granted "permission to go to Nova Scotia, or wherever else [they] may think proper," allowing them to start new lives as free people.¹¹

Life in Nova Scotia

Black Loyalists founded settlements in several areas throughout Nova Scotia. About 1,500 people settled in Birchtown, which soon became the largest community of free Blacks anywhere in North America.¹² Black families also settled in Preston, Brindley Town, and Old Tracadie Road.¹³

However, life in Nova Scotia was not without difficulty for its Black residents. Most families struggled to receive their land grants issued by the provincial governors. The land they eventually received was often located on the outskirts of the main towns and of poor quality, making it almost impossible to develop livelihoods as farmers. Although some Black Loyalists found work as artisans, carpenters, and blacksmiths, they generally received lower wages compared to other Nova Scotians.

Eventually, most became discontented with their lives in Nova Scotia. Thomas Peters, a former member of the Black Pioneers, arranged free passage through the Sierra Leone Company, a British anti-slavery organization, for those who wished to resettle. In January 1792, about 1,200 Black Nova Scotians set sail once again, this time for Sierra Leone in West Africa, with the hope of a better future. This intrepid group established the colony of Freetown. Some of the descendants of those who remained in Nova Scotia still live there today.¹⁴



Researching Black Loyalists

These are the key resources for researching Black Loyalists who resettled in Nova Scotia.

The Book of Negroes

The Nova Scotia Archives refers to the *Book of Negroes* as "the single most important document relating to the immigration of African Americans to Nova Scotia following the War of Independence."¹⁵ Compiled by Carleton during the evacuation from New York, the book contains the names of the 1,336 men, 914 women, and 750 children (3,000 in all) who sailed to different ports in Nova Scotia between April and November of 1783.¹⁶

Rose Fortune (ca. 1774–1864), 1830s. She has been identified as the daughter of “Fortune — a free Negro,” who came to Nova Scotia after the Revolution. Nova Scotia Archives, Documentary Art Collection: accession number 1979-147/56.

The information was gathered from interviews conducted by Brigadier General Birch, and generally included each passenger’s name, age, gender, race, place of origin, former legal status (free or enslaved), name of former enslaver, destination port in Nova Scotia, name of ship, and shipmaster.

Two original versions of the *Book of Negroes* were created at the same time. The British version is preserved at the National Archives in the United Kingdom but is available digitally through two Canadian archives. The Nova Scotia Archives maintains a searchable database of the original images, while an indexed version can be found through Library and Archives Canada. The American version is held at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. An edited transcription was published by Graham Russell Hodges as *The Black Loyalist Directory* and is available online as an American Ancestors database.¹⁷

Land grants

After the war, the British government established a system to distribute available land in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Ontario to displaced Loyalists. Sadly, this system did not favor the new Black residents. Those who lost large estates in the American colonies were prioritized and given grants comparable to their former properties; some received as much as several hundred acres. As formerly enslaved individuals, Black Loyalists could hardly claim any lost property. In addition, Loyalists who had served in the military at a higher rank received more land. For instance, a field officer was eligible for up to 1,000 acres, while privates generally received about 100 acres.¹⁸

Black Loyalists also waited longer and ultimately received less acreage than their white counterparts. For instance, one land grant for Tracadie of 3,000 acres was split between 74 Black men, leaving each with about 40 acres.¹⁹ White Loyalists who settled in neighboring



Guysborough Township generally received at least 100 acres each.²⁰

The Nova Scotia Archives has digitized land records from 1765 to 1800.²¹ The names of all grantees are included, as well as land locations and acreage amounts. Race is sometimes noted, making it easier to differentiate Black residents.

Settlement records

Settlement records offer insight into the early experiences of Black Nova Scotians. Library and Archives Canada has two relevant online collections with correspondence, land grants, court documents,

petitions to the government, and lists of residents.

Loyalists in the Maritimes—Ward Chipman Muster Master’s Office, 1777–1785 has a muster roll of Black Pioneers who helped clear the land in Port Roseway, later Shelburne, and built the Black settlement of Birchtown. *Black Loyalist Refugees, 1782–1807—Port Roseway Associates* includes a 1784 muster book that serves as a census for the free Black residents who settled in Birchtown. Occupations are provided for men and ages are included for most residents, which can help determine family units.²²

Newspapers

Historic newspapers can provide a fuller picture of everyday life for Black residents in Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Archives offers digitized newspapers on their website. Several of these began shortly after the Loyalist displacement, including *The Royal American Gazette*, *The Port-Roseway Gazetteer* and *The Shelburne Advertiser*, and *The Nova-Scotia Packet and General Advertiser*.²³

Church records

Black Loyalists relied on religion for a sense of community in their new homes. Many initially joined the Anglican Church but were often forced to sit in separate pews. Some later switched to the Methodist Church, which was considered “anti-slavery, highly egalitarian ... and open to Black membership.”²⁴ The Baptist Church also became popular among Nova Scotia’s Black residents. Many local church records can be found on FamilySearch.

Memoirs, diaries, and letters

Firsthand accounts, such as memoirs, diaries, journals, and letters, can provide incredible details of a person's lived experiences. Boston King published his 1798 memoir recounting the war, life in Nova Scotia, and his eventual move to Sierra Leone. David George, a formerly enslaved Baptist preacher who founded congregations in Nova Scotia, published an account of his life in 1793.²⁵ These types of sources can often be found in local historical organizations, but many are not digitized. The Black Loyalists: Our History, Our People webpage provides transcripts of letters and personal accounts.²⁶



Researching the lives of Black Loyalists can be challenging yet rewarding. New discoveries help shed a deserved light upon this group of formerly enslaved individuals who fought so hard for the opportunity to live as free citizens. ♦

Notes

- ¹ Dorrie Phillips, "Early Years of the Black Loyalists," in *Loyalists in Nova Scotia*, eds. Donald Wetmore and Lester B. Sellick (Lancelot Press, 1983), 68; and "10 Facts: Black Patriots in the American Revolution," American Battlefield Trust, battlefields.org/learn/articles/10-facts-black-patriots-american-revolution.
- ² Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 1961), vii.
- ³ Noel B. Poirer, "A Legacy of Integration: The African American Citizen-Soldier and the Continental Army," *Army History* 56 (Fall 2002), 18–19; jstor.org/stable/26306022.
- ⁴ Not all Black Loyalists were enslaved; some free Black men joined the British, partly due to Washington's early enlistment bans for Black men in the Continental Army. Massachusetts Historical Society, "Revolutionary Participation," African Americans and the End of Slavery in Massachusetts, masshist.org/features/endofslavery/rev_participation.
- ⁵ James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783–1870* (University of Toronto Press, 1992), 5.
- ⁶ Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* [note 2], 28–30.
- ⁷ Phillips, "Early Years of the Black Loyalists" [note 1], 70.
- ⁸ Boston King, "Memoirs of the Life of Boston King, A Black Preacher" (1798) in *Black Loyalists: Our History, Our People*, Canada's Digital Collections, blackloyalist.com/cdc/index.htm.
- ⁹ Walker, *The Black Loyalists* [note 5], 10.
- ¹⁰ Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *The Shelburne Black Loyalists: A Short Biography of All Blacks Emigrating to Shelburne County,*

Nova Scotia after the American Revolution 1783 (Nova Scotia Museum, 2000), 18; ojs.library.dal.ca/NSM/article/view/3899.

- ¹¹ Walker, *The Black Loyalists* [note 5], 11.
- ¹² Christopher Moore, *The Loyalists: Revolution, Exile, Settlement* (Macmillan of Canada, 1984), 158.
- ¹³ Nova Scotia Archives, "Black Loyalists, 1783–1792," African Nova Scotians in the Age of Slavery and Abolition, archives.novascotia.ca/africanns/results/?Search=&SearchList1=2.
- ¹⁴ Graham Russell Hodges, ed., *The Black Loyalist Directory: African Americans in Exile After the American Revolution* (Garland Publishing, Inc., in association with the New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1996), xxxii, AmericanAncestors.org/search/databasesearch/2823/black-loyalist-directory-1783-1788; and Nova Scotia Archives, "Black Loyalists, 1783–1792."
- ¹⁵ Nova Scotia Archives, "Book of Negroes," African Nova Scotians in the Age of Slavery and Abolition, archives.novascotia.ca/africanns/book-of-negroes.
- ¹⁶ Phillips, "Early Years of the Black Loyalists" [note 1], 71.
- ¹⁷ For the British *Book of Negroes*, see archives.novascotia.ca/africanns/book-of-negroes for the original images and bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/loyalists/book-of-negroes for the indexed version. For original images of the American version, see catalog.archives.gov/id/17337716. See note 14 for *The Black Loyalist Directory* database.
- ¹⁸ Walker, *The Black Loyalists* [note 5], 19.
- ¹⁹ "Brownspriggs, Thomas and others—1787—Antigonish County," *Nova Scotia Land Papers 1765–1800*, Nova Scotia Archives, archives.novascotia.ca/land-papers/archives/?ID=978&Doc=warrant&Page=201107720.
- ²⁰ Marion Gilroy, ed., *Loyalists and Land Settlement in Nova Scotia* (Board of Trustees of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1937), 119.
- ²¹ See the *Nova Scotia Land Papers 1765–1800* collection at archives.novascotia.ca/land-papers.
- ²² See bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/loyalists/loyalists-ward-chipman/Pages/loyalist-maritimes-ward-chipman.aspx for the *Loyalists in the Maritimes Collection*. See bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/loyalists/loyalist-port-roseway/Pages/port-roseway-associates-loyalists.aspx for the *Port Roseway Associates Collection*.
- ²³ See archives.novascotia.ca/newspapers for the digitized newspaper collection.
- ²⁴ Hodges, *The Black Loyalist Directory* [note 14], xxvi.
- ²⁵ King, "Memoirs" [note 8]; and David George, *An Account of the Life of Mr. David George, from Sierra Leone in Africa* (1793).
- ²⁶ See blackloyalist.com/cdc/index.htm.



The Revolutionary War's Hard Winter

The winter of 1779–1780 was North America's coldest, harshest eighteenth-century winter. Even so, the “Hard Winter” has received little attention, likely because other cataclysmic upheavals of the Revolutionary era overshadowed it. This wintry siege—which occurred at a time when the war appeared to have no end—had a huge impact on every aspect of daily life for civilians and American and British military forces.

The story of the Continental Army's Valley Forge encampment during the winter of 1777–1778 looms larger in popular memory. Although that winter was cold, it was not unusual. The suffering caused by the Valley Forge winter was extraordinary because of the diseases that ran rampant in the encampment. Smallpox, dysentery, typhoid fever, and typhus were endemic at Valley Forge. Between 1,000 to 3,000 soldiers and officers of the 12,000 troops stationed there succumbed to disease that winter. By contrast, only about 100 soldiers died during the following Hard Winter when the Continental Army was encamped in Morristown, New Jersey.¹

During the Hard Winter, the war was at a pivotal point. The 1777–1778 struggle for control of the Hudson River was won by the Americans. The British occupied New York City and Long Island. In the spring of 1780, the British would launch military campaigns

in the Southern colonies. But during this winter, while military operations were on hold for the winter, survival was the major struggle for everyone in North America.

David Ludlum, a noted twentieth-century historian of early American weather, observed that the ravages of the winter of 1779–1780 hit all the colonies from north to south and to the west. “Reports from Maine southward along the seaboard to Georgia, and from Detroit down through the interior waterways to New Orleans, all chronicled tales of deep snow, severe cold, and widespread suffering.”²

The Hard Winter's climate connection

Historical climatologists have determined that North America's severe eighteenth-century winters were part of the Little Ice Age, a climatic era that particularly impacted Europe and North America. Experts agree that this era began around 1400 and persisted until at least 1860 to 1880.³ The impact of the era in North America has been subjected to much less rigorous study than in Europe, although Ludlum asserted that the eighteenth century was harsher than the seventeenth in the American colonies.⁴

Scientists are still unraveling the climatic dynamics of the Little Ice Age. One of the most recent discoveries was reported in late 2021, after scientists at the University of Massachusetts Amherst discovered the trigger that initiated the climatic cooling in the North Atlantic. A period of extraordinary warmth in the region in the late 1300s caused a massive melting of ice in Greenland. The deluge of fresh water into the ocean disrupted the normal course of warm water flowing northward from the tropics to the North Atlantic. Without the usual circulation of



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warm water in the North Atlantic, Europe experienced significant cooling, which began the Little Ice Age.⁵

Another contributing factor was solar minima (steep reductions in the number of sunspots), which are associated with a decrease in solar energy emissions. Less solar radiation to warm the Earth and a significant increase in the number of volcanic eruptions in the Pacific from 1257 to 1815 prolonged the colder climate.⁶

The Hard Winter grips North America

January was the most brutal month of the Hard Winter. For the first time in recorded history, all the waterways surrounding New York City, including New York Harbor, froze solid. Shipping came to a standstill, preventing all civilian and military transport from entering or leaving the city.⁷ At month's end, horse-drawn sleighs drove across the ice of Long Island Sound from Long Island to Greenwich, Connecticut.⁸

The month began with abnormally frigid cold and a blizzard that battered New England and the Mid-Atlantic region for days. On January 2, Reverend Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale College, noted the conditions from his home in New Haven: "Excessive Cold. The Ink freezes in my pen while I am writing this by the Fireside. ... About sunset came a violent snow storm & highest Tide ever known by two or 3 feet. Wind for 4 hours blew almost every pt. of Compass."⁹

Many other diarists recorded their observations of this historic storm. Dr. James Thacher of Barnstable, Massachusetts, was the regimental surgeon for the Massachusetts 16th Regiment encamped in Morristown, New Jersey. He wrote, "On the 3d we experienced one of

the most tremendous snow storms ever remembered; no man could endure the violence many minutes without danger of his life. Several marquees [tents used for officers' quarters usually constructed of durable duck canvas] were torn asunder and blown down over the officers' heads in the night, and some of the soldiers were actually covered while in their tents, and buried like sheep under the snow."¹⁰

Throughout the Northeast, supplies of wood and other heating fuels were quickly exhausted due to the unrelenting frigid temperatures. The situation created a crisis in many communities, particularly for the poor and for the families of soldiers, whose pay was months in arrears.

On January 5, Reverend Stiles reported that snow continued to fall, and on the 7th wrote, "Snow over the Fences—Drifts high—in Woods at Amity, Carmel & Cheshire 3½ & four feet deep on Level. Destressing time for want of Wood." On January 11 Stiles noted, "The Ways are impassable on account of the Quantity of Snow, which is 3, 4, 6 & ten feet deep, estimated at four feet & half on a Level. ... The high Winds fill up the Paths." According to Stiles, a Worcester, Massachusetts, newspaper reported that the Boston to Hartford roadway was the only road passable in the entire region and all other roadways required the use of snowshoes.¹¹

When the blizzard hit the Continental Army in their encampment at Morristown, the soldiers hadn't finished building the huts for their winter shelter. The army had only arrived in Morristown in December. In order to create the winter encampment at Jockey Hollow that would house about 10,000 soldiers and officers, the men



Opposite: Revolutionary War soldier huts at Jockey Hollow National Historical Park, Morristown, N.J., 2011. B.A.E. Inc./Alamy. *Left:* Ezra Stiles (1727–1795), by Samuel King, 1771. Yale University Art Gallery. Bequest of Dr. Charles Jenkins Foote, B.A. 1883, M.D. 1890. *Center:* Abigail Adams (Mrs. John Adams), by Benjamin Blyth, ca. 1766. Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society. *Right:* Baroness Riedesel, 1867. New York Public Library Digital Collections.

A detail of *Chart and plan of the harbour of New York & the county. Adjacent*, by John Lodge, 1781. Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

were tasked with logging about 2,000 acres of woodland for huts and for fuel.¹² Once the trees were felled, construction of the huts began in earnest, most of it in miserable weather. Compounding the difficulties, many soldiers lacked the clothing necessary for such work.

Dr. Thacher later wrote, "... the sufferings of the poor soldiers can scarcely be described; while on duty they are unavoidably exposed ... at night they now have a bed of straw on the ground, and a single blanket for each man; they are badly clad and some are destitute of shoes. ... The snow is now from four to six feet deep."¹³

In Braintree, Massachusetts, Abigail Adams shared the local news with her husband, John Adams, who was in France to negotiate with British diplomats.¹⁴ On January 18, Abigail wrote:

Winter set in with all its horrors a week after you [illegible] sailed, and has continued with all its rigours ever since. Such mountains of snow have not been known for 60 years. No passing for this fortnight, only for foot travellers [and], no prospect of any as one Storm succeeds another so soon that the roads are filld before a path can be made ... The Blocade of the roads has been a sad hinderance to the meeting of the [Massachusetts Constitutional] convention, a few only of the near Members could get together, so few that they were obliged to adjourn.¹⁵

Because John Adams had drafted the new Massachusetts State Constitution, Abigail knew that any delay in its progress would concern him. Since the constant barrage of snowstorms halted the delivery of mail and newspapers, Abigail's letter was no doubt also delayed.

Attack on Staten Island

In early January, General George Washington planned a surprise attack on the British garrison on Staten Island. Due to the deep snow, the approximately 2,500 soldiers traveled from Morristown via sleighs and sleds, crossing a frozen tidal strait from New Jersey to Staten Island on January 14.¹⁶ British forces knew of the imminent attack.

Joseph Plumb Martin, a soldier in a Connecticut Continental regiment, participated in the mission.

We accordingly found them all waiting for us—so that we could not surprise them, and to take their works by storm looked too hazardous; to besiege them in regular form was out of the question. ... We then fell back a little distance and took up our abode for the night upon a



bare bleak hill, in full rake of the northwest wind, with no other covering or shelter than the canopy of the heavens, and no fuel but some old rotten rails which we dug up through the snow, which was two or three feet deep. The weather was cold enough to cut a man in two.¹⁷

The next day the Americans retreated to Morristown without ever engaging in battle. On January 17, Dr. Thacher, who was based at Morristown, related what he learned from soldiers returning to the encampment: "The snow was three or four feet deep, and the weather extremely cold, and our troops continued ... twenty four hours without covering, and about five hundred were slightly frozen, and about six were killed."¹⁸

After the Staten Island fiasco, the worst of the winter weather settled in, and extreme privation descended on the troops at Morristown. One blizzard ran into the next with little respite. Temperatures dropped further still. All transportation stopped and, for a period of time, no food and other supplies reached Morristown. Joseph Plumb Martin recalled:

Here was the keystone of the arch of starvation. We were absolutely, literally starved;—I do solemnly declare that I did not put a single morsel of victuals into my mouth for four days and as many nights, except

a little black birch bark which I gnawed off a stick of wood, if that can be called victuals.

I saw several of the men roast their old shoes and eat them, and I was afterward informed that ... some of the officers killed and ate a favourite little dog that belonged to one of them.—If this was not “suffering” I request to be informed what can pass under that name.”¹⁹

The food supplies that finally began to arrive were never sufficient, and the shortages resulted in constant hunger throughout the entire winter.

Women & children, food & fuel

During the Revolutionary War, women and children were present in most American encampments and Morristown was no exception. However, journals and correspondence kept by officers and soldiers rarely mention them, making their numbers and activities difficult to estimate. Their presence was noted in local churches where a number of soldiers’ marriages and baptisms of their children were recorded. And a study of widows’ Revolutionary War pension records confirms that soldiers’ wives assisted the troops at Morristown.²⁰

Women performed key roles in the camps and were especially valued for their nursing of the sick and injured. Perhaps most importantly during the Hard Winter, women knew more about stretching meager food supplies and devising cooking methods for unfamiliar foods. Although rations usually included beef and “wheaten” bread, other foods had to be substituted. Joseph Plumb Martin recalled that coarsely ground “Indian corn” was the only food available for most of the winter. Making it edible was challenging. Martin noted that the corn was used to create a water-based hasty pudding, which at least made the corn digestible.²¹

Frederika Charlotte Louise Riedesel, Baroness of Eisenbach, was the wife of General Friedrich Adolph Riedesel, a commander of Hessian forces aligned with the British. As she and her young children followed

her husband and his troops in the northern theater she recorded her experiences in correspondence.²² During January of the Hard Winter, Riedesel was seven months pregnant and living with her children in a grand home in British-occupied New York City. Despite their stature in society, Riedesel and her family suffered, primarily from a lack of fuel.

The cold was so fierce that I often kept the children in bed, and often wood could not be bought at any price, and when it was sold it cost 10 pounds a cord ... The poor people burned lard to warm their hands and to cook over.²³

Lard may have helped to prevent frozen fingers, but it couldn’t heat a room or prevent exposure.

The flood of Loyalist refugees arriving in New York City led to increased demands and prices for fuel and food. The need for wood was so great that British soldiers completely deforested Manhattan Island.²⁴ Contemporary observers noted that it was not unusual for poor residents to perish in their dwellings for a lack of fuel.²⁵

The plight of the Iroquois

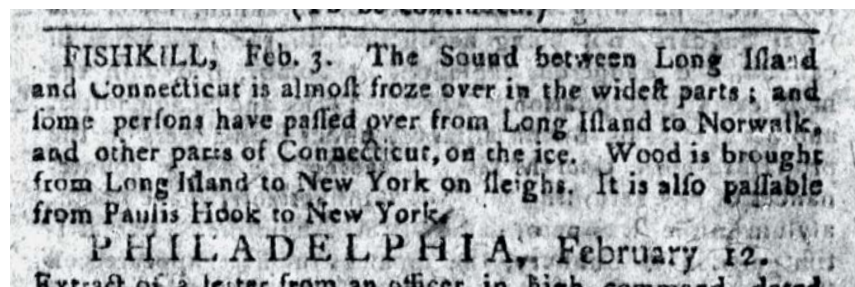
During the Hard Winter, thousands of Iroquois refugees suffered from starvation, exposure, and disease in northwestern New York, on lands surrounding the British garrison at Fort Niagara. In August and September 1779, Major General John Sullivan had led an assault into the heart of the Iroquois nations of Cayuga and Seneca.

Washington’s orders for the campaign were explicit. Troops were to effect “the total destruction and devastation of the settlements and the capture of as many prisoners of every age and sex as possible. It will be essential to ruin their crops now in the ground and prevent their planting more.”²⁶ Washington’s vehemence reflected the outrage of Americans reacting to Iroquois attacks on their settlers in central New York and Pennsylvania.

In addition to burning all crops, the soldiers reduced forty-one Iroquois towns to ashes. At the end of the

campaign—one of the largest in the entire war—General Sullivan reported his troops had destroyed 160,000 bushels (about 6,500 tons) of corn. No food source remained. In the aftermath, the Iroquois in central New York fled to the British.²⁷

When the displaced Iroquois arrived at the garrison in Niagara, the British decreed that they would



This news item begins, “The Sound between Long Island and Connecticut is almost froze over in the widest parts.” *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, February 12, 1780, 17. Readex: America’s Historical Newspapers.

have to hunt to feed themselves over the winter. After five feet of snow blanketed western New York by mid-January, burying all the wild game the refugees were supposed to live on, starvation and disease ensued.²⁸ According to estimates, at least 1,000 Iroquois refugees perished from the late autumn of 1779 through the Hard Winter.²⁹

The Hard Winter turns to spring

At the end of 1779, the British were jubilant that their naval fleet had escaped being iced in. The original plan had been to leave months earlier but supplies and troops had been delayed. The fleet set sail from New York City on December 26, headed for South Carolina in preparation for their Southern Campaign.

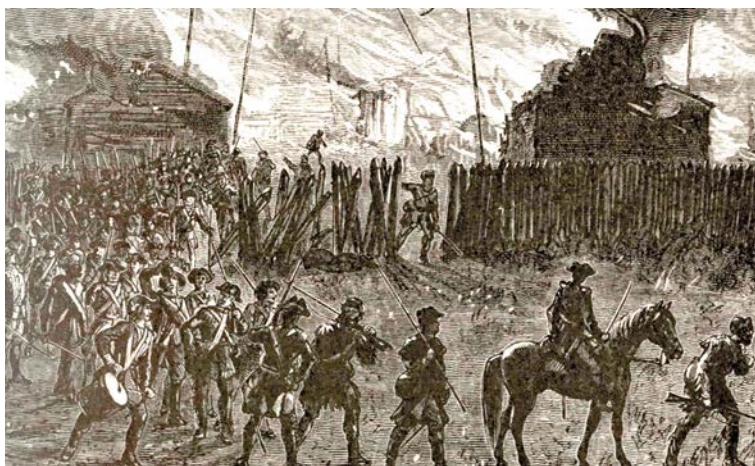
The severe storms of January 1780 made the usual ten-day voyage last five weeks.³⁰ The British fleet did not arrive at Simmons Island, south of Charleston, until February 11, 1780.³¹ These delays ensured that the British would wage most of their Southern Campaign during the “unhealthy” summer season when malaria was rife. Unlike Continental soldiers in the Southern Campaign, British troops were especially vulnerable because they had never been exposed to malaria. The disease devastated them—killing many and sickening countless others. Historians agree that malaria was an important contributing factor to British failures in the South.³²

The effects of the Hard Winter could have been catastrophic for the Americans if vast numbers of soldiers had deserted the Continental Army after a winter of severe hunger and many months without pay. The possibility of mass desertions weighed heavily on George Washington in Morristown through the Hard Winter and the spring of 1780.³³

When springtime meals at Morristown consisted of “a little musty bread and a little beef” only every other day, and were followed by days of no food, Martin explained

The men were now exasperated beyond endurance; they could not stand it any longer. They saw no other alternative but to starve to death, or break up the army, give all up and go home. This was a hard matter for the soldiers to think upon. They were truly patriotic, they loved their country ... and now, after such extreme hardships to give up all was too much, but to starve to death was too much also.³⁴

On May 25, 1780, the soldiers in Martin’s regiment participated in a mutinous action. Groups of armed soldiers marched without orders, calling for others to join



The burning of Newtown [near Elmira, N.Y.], by the Sullivan Expedition on August 29, 1779. Woodcut, ca. 1825. Wikimedia Commons.

them. For hours they ignored officers’ repeated commands to halt. Then, in the early hours of the night, the soldiers returned to their huts.³⁵ They had made their point. Not long after, Martin wrote, provisions appeared in camp. While these mutinous actions occurred in a number of regiments, American soldiers did not abandon their posts in large numbers. Despite the hardships of the Hard Winter, they persevered to the end.



In July of 1780, George Washington wrote to his brother John Augustine Washington. He reflected on the soldiers’ extraordinary resolve and refusal to give up throughout the Hard Winter and following spring, recognizing that this spirit contributed to the Americans’ earlier successes and their eventual triumph.

To tell a person ... that an Army reduced almost to nothing ... should, sometimes, be five or six days together without Bread, then as many without Meat, and once or twice, two or three without either; that the same Army should have had numbers of Men in it with scarcely cloaths enough to cover their nakedness, and a full fourth of it without even the shadow of a blanket severe as the Winter was, and that men under these circumstances were held together, is hardly within the bounds of credibility, but is nevertheless true.³⁶

“These were the times that tried men’s souls,” Thomas Paine wrote in 1776, but the American Revolution also strained and exhausted their bodies—and those of women and children, too. During the Hard Winter of 1779–1780, war and climate collided, intensifying the suffering for all populations. Nonetheless, as Washington reported with some awe, Patriots held fast to their cause, proving they were not just “summer soldiers.” ♦

Notes

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- ³ Michael E. Mann, "Little Ice Age," in Michael C. MacCracken and John S. Perry, eds., *Encyclopedia of Global Environmental Change*, Vol. 1 (John Wiley & Sons, 2002), researchgate.net/publication/239535106_Little_Ice_Age; Sam White, "The Real Little Ice Age," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 44 (2014), 327–52; and William R. Baron and David C. Smith, "Growing Season Parameter Reconstructions for New England Using Killing Frost Records, 1697–1947," *Maine Agricultural and Forest Experimentation Station Bulletin* 846 (1996), 14, digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=aes_bulletin.
- ⁴ Sam White, Christian Pfister, and Franz Mauelshagen, *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 304, at [Scribd.com](https://www.scribd.com); and Ludlum [note 2], 111.
- ⁵ "Winter is Coming: Researchers Uncover a Surprising Cause of the Little Ice Age," National Science Foundation, January 20, 2022, [nsf.gov/news/winter-coming-researchers-uncover-surprising-cause](https://www.nsf.gov/news/winter-coming-researchers-uncover-surprising-cause).
- ⁶ Sam White, *A Cold Welcome: The Little Ice Age and Europe's Encounter with North America* (Harvard University Press, 2017), 21.
- ⁷ Ludlum [note 2], 111.
- ⁸ Franklin Bowditch Dexter, ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D., L.L.D.*, Vol. 2 (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), 411, [Archive.org/details/literarydiaryofe01stil_0](https://www.archive.org/details/literarydiaryofe01stil_0).
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 400.
- ¹⁰ Thacher, James, M.D., *A Military Journal during the American Revolutionary War from 1775-1783*, 2nd ed. (Cottons & Barnard, 1827), 181. [Archive.org](https://www.archive.org).
- ¹¹ Stiles, 401–402, 411.
- ¹² "The Encampment at Morristown: Summary and Quotes," Morristown National Historical Park, nps.gov/morr/learn/historyculture/encampment-summary.htm.
- ¹³ Thacher [note 10], 181.
- ¹⁴ David McCullough, *John Adams* (Simon & Schuster, 2001), 225.
- ¹⁵ Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 18 January 1780, letterbook copy [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society, masshist.org/digitaladams/archive.
- ¹⁶ Phillip Papas, *That Ever Loyal Island: Staten Island and the American Revolution* (New York University Press, 2007), 89.
- ¹⁷ Joseph Plumb Martin, *Private Yankee Doodle: Being a Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier*, ed. George F. Scheer (Little, Brown, 1962), 171.
- ¹⁸ Thacher, 184.
- ¹⁹ Martin [note 16], 172.
- ²⁰ Olsen, Eric, "Morristown Camp Followers," Morristown National Historical Park website, nps.gov/morr/camp-followers-morristown.htm.
- ²¹ Martin [note 16], 175.
- ²² John Krueger, "Charlotte Riedesel, Mrs. General," *Threads of History* blog, Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership, March 31, 2023, champlainvalleynhp.org/2023/03/charlotte-riedesel-mrs-general.
- ²³ Frederike Charlotte Luise Riedesel, *Baroness von Riedesel and the American Revolution: Journal and Correspondence of a Tour of Duty, 1776–1783* (University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 100. [Archive.org](https://www.archive.org).
- ²⁴ Donald F. Johnson, *Occupied North America: British Military Rule and the Experience of Revolution* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 125.
- ²⁵ Blake McReady, "War Weary Nature: Environment, British Occupation, and the Winter of 1779–1780," Gotham Center for New York City History, Jan. 25, 2022, gothamcenter.org/blog/war-weary-nature-environment-british-occupation-and-the-winter-of-1779-1780.
- ²⁶ Holger Hock, *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (Crown, 2017), 281. Also, "George Washington to John Sullivan, May 31, 1779, with Instruction," George Washington Papers, Series 3, Varick Transcripts, 1775 to 1785, Subseries 3B, Continental and State Military Personnel, 1775 to 1783, [loc.gov/resource/mgw3b.009/?sp=29&st=text](https://www.loc.gov/resource/mgw3b.009/?sp=29&st=text).
- ²⁷ Hock [note 25], 281, 285.
- ²⁸ Barbara Alice Mann, *George Washington's War on Native America* (University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 107–109.
- ²⁹ Hock [note 25], 289.
- ³⁰ Rick Atkinson, *The Fate of the Day: The War from Ticonderoga to Charleston, 1777–1780* (Crown, 2025), 579.
- ³¹ "Siege of Charleston, 1780," National Park Service, nps.gov/articles/siege-of-charleston-1780.htm.
- ³² Peter McCandless, "Revolutionary Fever: Disease and War in the Lower South, 1776–1783," *Transactions of the American Clinical and Climatological Association*, 118 (2007): 225–249, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1863584](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1863584).
- ³³ Flora Fraser, *The Washingtons: George and Martha: Join'd by Friendship, Crown'd by Love* (Knopf, 2016), 32.
- ³⁴ Martin [note 16], 182.
- ³⁵ Martin [note 16], 182–185.
- ³⁶ Morristown National Historical Park website, "People: Brief Biographies," nps.gov/morr/learn/historyculture/people.htm.

up to Mr. Saml. May junr? his son Hezekiah being very
dangerously ill. — No. Old Mr Mayr? and his Wif.
in much sorrow intermix'd wth joy. Mr. Nathan's Wife
is brought to bed & has a son — But Mercy likewise. And
the latter has a black one. — Thot to V. by Mr. Mason's Essex.
A most grievous & sore Evil! God grant her Repentance &

October 1756.

her Wicked Companion also: & Support of wound-
ed Relatives, and give to each of y^e. Grace we
may be sufficient for y^e. — I believe I must walk to Mr. Dan. Adams's to

Peter Maynard

A Black Revolutionary War Soldier from Westborough, Massachusetts

On September 21, 1756, the Reverend Ebenezer Parkman of Westborough, Massachusetts, visited the home of “Old Mr. Maynard”—86-year-old David Maynard. Parkman took the “Opportunity of discharging [his] Duty to [Maynard’s] Daughter Mercy, who, though unmarried, is big with Child.” Two weeks later, Parkman noted that David Maynard and his children were “in much sorrow intermixed with their Joy.” David’s daughter-in-law Lucy, his son Nathan’s wife, had given birth to a son, “but Mercy likewise and the Latter has a black one.” The father, it was believed, was “Mr. Masons Essex.”

Parkman wrote, “A most grievous and Sore Evil! God grant her Repentance and her Wicked Companion also: and Support the wounded Relatives, and give to each of that Grace which may be sufficient for them!” On October 18, the minister visited “poor, Miserable Mercy Maynard,” whom he found “in Some Penitent Way, which may God please to forward and ripen!”¹

While premarital pregnancies were not uncommon in eighteenth-century New England, the case of Essex and Mercy was quite unusual.² Mercy Maynard, the youngest of the eleven children of David and Hannah Maynard, was born on March 4, 1725.³ Her mother died twelve days later, and her father, then 55 years old, did not remarry. Mercy was nearly 31 when she became pregnant early in 1756. By that time, eight of her surviving siblings had married, leaving Mercy and her 38-year-old sister, Hannah, at home caring for their aging father. For women in their thirties, spinsterhood was often a permanent condition.

The responsibilities of caring for an aging parent, loneliness, and the frustrations of dependence may have played a role in Mercy’s involvement with Essex. “Mr. Mason,” Essex’s enslaver, was probably Daniel Mason, Mercy’s brother-in-law, and visits to the Mason home may have been a regular part of Mercy’s life. Mercy’s sister Martha, a widow, had married Mason, a 54-year-old widower, in 1752, three years after her husband’s death, bringing into her new marriage two small children, aged three and four.⁴ Mercy would have been welcome in her sister’s household for companionship and help with the children and household chores. And that would have put Mercy into contact with Essex. Were it not for the survival of Ebenezer Parkman’s diary, we would have no idea what happened to Mercy Maynard, and Parkman’s only reference to “Mr. Masons Essex” is the sole record of that enslaved man’s existence.

A year after Mercy’s son was born, David Maynard died, and on November 12, 1757, his heirs, including Mercy, consented to his will.⁵ Maynard’s will, signed on August 14, 1755, provided for his two unmarried daughters, Hannah and Mercy. In addition to £10 each, Hannah and Mercy were to have the use of the east end of their father’s house, “from Garrett to Cellar,” with use of the “Yard room and the Well,” as well as wood for



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their fires and a cow apiece, the latter to be kept, “both Summer and Winter,” by David’s sons Ebenezer and Nathan. “But,” wrote David, “if my said Dauters Shall marry, or when they shall decease,” the east end of the house would belong to Ebenezer. David Maynard did not change his will after the birth of Mercy’s son.

While Mercy may have been “in Some Penitent Way” following the birth of her child, that did not “ripen” to the point of making a confession before the Westborough church, and her son was not baptized.⁶ Her son’s birth was not registered with the town clerk. Only two additional references to Mercy Maynard exist. On January 15, 1772, Parkman noted that a Captain Howard from Canada Parish of Windham, Connecticut, gave him “some Account of Mercy Maynard, who lives, and has done for some years, at his House.” Howard visited Parkman again in 1774, with Parkman noting that Howard “has been a kind Friend to the unhappy Mercy Maynard.” By that time, Mercy was 49 years old. When and where she died are not recorded.⁷

Mercy’s son, however, apparently remained in Westborough. On December 9, 1776, the Massachusetts House of Representatives instructed the selectmen of each town to compile a list of their male inhabitants who were 16 years old and older, “distinguishing those Persons who had before the nineteenth Day of April,

Anno Domini, 1776, been by Law deemed to be of the Denomination of Christians called Quakers, Indians, Negroes and Melattoes, from other People.” The towns were required to submit their lists by January 31, 1777.⁸ In response, the town of Westborough compiled a list of 223 men, including “Peter Maynard a Mulatto.”⁹

Peter Maynard had been documented there six months earlier, on July 17, 1776, when he was one of twenty-six men who signed a receipt, acknowledging the payment of £9 by the town of Westborough “for our Inlisting into the Contanential Service and passing Muster.” The back side of the receipt noted that the men “went with Lt. James Godfry.”¹⁰

A town meeting on March 27, 1777, voted “to give each man 30 pounds who Shall Inlist and past Muster for the Tarm of 3 years or during the war in Behalf of Said Westborough.” Maynard was one of the men “who enlisted on the Towns encorougment,” and received £30.¹¹ He was on pay accounts from April 28, 1777, to December 31, 1779 (“credited to town of Westborough”), and on a muster roll for Col. Timothy Bigelow’s regiment dated September 1, 1777, at Van Schaick Island on the Hudson River, with the “Roll sworn to in Camp near Stillwater.”¹² (Bigelow’s regiment participated in the Battle of Saratoga, but there is no record of Maynard’s presence there.)

In early 1778, Peter Maynard was at Valley Forge. He was one of twenty-five soldiers who received a “free Will offering” of clothing from the town of Westborough. A town committee enlisted 23-year-old Stephen Fay to carry the clothing to Valley Forge, a distance of about 300 miles, instructing him, on January 29, 1778, “to take a Receipt that Each man hes Received his proportion.” If any of the soldiers could not be found, Fay was to deliver the clothing “to the Commander of the Company to which Such persons belonge” and get a receipt. On February 13, Henry Marble signed a receipt acknowledging that he had received clothing for four men, including Peter Maynard, who were “att Present Absent from the Camp.” These four men were likely in one of the hospitals. Maynard received a pair of shoes, a pair of stockings, a shirt, and “Mitts.”¹³



Camp at the Valley Febr 13-1778
then recd of M^{rs} Stephens Fay sundry articles
of Clothing for 4 men Being att Present
Absent from the Camp & this receipt I Give
in this Behalf Recd for
Joseph M^{rs} Cutlar 1 shirt 1 pair of shoes 1 pair of stockings 1 pair of Mitts
Mr. Fitchell 1 shirt 1 pair of shoes 1 pair of stockings 1 pair of Mitts
Benny Godfry 2 pair of shoes 1 pair of stockings 1 pair of Mitts
Peter Maynard 1 shirt 1 pair of shoes 1 pair of stockings 1 pair of Mitts
I Jay Recd by Mr Henry Marble

Opposite: Rev. Ebenezer Parkman’s October 6, 1756, journal entry on the birth of Mercy Maynard’s son. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society. Left, top: Detail of Soldiers standing in snow-covered military camp, possibly in Valley Forge, Pa., during American Revolution by George Peter, 1920. Library of Congress. Left, bottom: The February 13, 1778, receipt showing Peter Maynard (last line) received clothing from Westborough at Valley Forge. See note 13.



Detail of *The State of Massachusetts* by George Franklin Cram, 1811. David Rumsey Map Collection.

On February 2, 1778, Maynard appeared on a return for Captain Daniel's Barns's Company in Bigelow's regiment. The next year Maynard was back in New England, still under the command of Barns, whose company was at Providence. In November 1779, Maynard enlisted to serve in Captain Bowman's Company in the 5th Massachusetts Regiment, "During War."¹⁴

Continental Army pay accounts place Maynard in Captain Dow's Company as part of Colonel Bigelow's Regiment from January 1 through December 31, 1780, and in January 1781, he was on a muster roll as a private at West Point, New York, in Captain Phinehas Bowman's Company in Col. Rufus Putnam's 5th Regiment. Peter Maynard appeared in a "Descriptive List" at West Point, dated January 10, 1781. Aged 24, he was noted to be five feet, ten inches, with a "brown" complexion and black hair and eyes. He was still at West Point in April 1781.¹⁵

After the war, Maynard moved to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where his five-member family appeared in the 1790 census under the heading, "All other free persons," a category for non-white people.¹⁶ On March 5, 1801, the Massachusetts General Court passed a resolution giving 200 acres of land or twenty dollars to non-commissioned officers and soldiers who served for three years and received an honorable discharge. Maynard appeared on the "list of men entitled to \$20 or 200 acres of land, agreeable to resolve of General Court of March 5, 1801." The offer of 200 acres was likely impossible for a man of limited means to accept: the cost of acquiring animals and tools to clear land, plant crops, and build a home would have been insurmountable. Not surprisingly, Maynard chose the twenty dollars.¹⁷

By 1801, Maynard and his family were living in Lenox, Massachusetts, just north of Stockbridge.¹⁸ Lenox vital

records include the name of his wife, Asenath, and the births of their four children: Mary (March 16, 1785), Daniel (August 6, 1789), James (February 23, 1794), and Fanny (September 28, 1797).¹⁹ Asenath, whose maiden name is unknown, was born in 1764 and died on August 6, 1809.²⁰

Peter Maynard later moved to Oneida County, New York, where his pension application, dated March 28, 1818, stated that he "was Sixty Six years old and upwards—that by reason of his reduced circumstances in life, he is in need of assistance from his Country for support—that he served as a Soldier, in the War of the Revolution for Six years and upwards" and "never had any pension allowed him by the Laws of the United States."²¹

Maynard returned to Lenox and on June 29, 1820, appeared before the Circuit Court of Common Pleas to establish his eligibility for a veteran's pension. In the form that was filled out for him, he was described as "a Farmer" who was "able genarally to perform light work." He had no family living with him and "no property except a small chest" in which he kept his clothing. The Clerk of the Court, who gave a value of one dollar for Maynard's belongings, signed the form on Maynard's behalf.²² Three months later, he stated under oath that he had moved back to Massachusetts and asked that his pension be paid to him there.²³

Peter Maynard died in Lenox on July 15 or 16, 1822. He left no will, and his estate, appraised at \$4.63, was insufficient to pay his debts. Among his effects were three books, including a life of Washington appraised at 18 cents. According to a probate record, he had "three children who all reside in the state of New York" and who "have neglected to administer upon his said Estat, or in any ways to make a settlement of the same."²⁴

Peter Maynard's service as a soldier reminds us of the complex nature of the Revolution. Recruitment of soldiers tended to reach down the social scale to men who had few prospects and certainly lacked the means to avoid service by paying a fine. While Maynard's initial recruitment may be seen as a way to earn £30, his later ownership of a biography of Washington suggests pride in the role he played in his six years of service.

As a Black man, Maynard's life was hardly ordinary, and, beyond the shared experience of service during the Revolution, he likely had little in common with the dominant white population either in Westborough or in western Massachusetts. His life began under extraordinary circumstances. The evidence from the dates in his service records and his pension applications roughly coincide with the birth of Mercy Maynard's son in early October 1756, and, given his association with Westborough and his designation as a "Mulatto," one may reasonably, but not conclusively, state that Peter Maynard was indeed Mercy Maynard's son.

An additional intriguing bit of information helps make the case. Like the Lenox town vital records, the Parsons collection of vital statistics for Lenox lists Peter and Asenath Maynard and their four children, but instead of an eldest daughter named Mary, this record set shows a daughter named Mercy.²⁵ ♦

Notes

- ¹ Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, Sept. 21, Oct. 6, 18, 1756. Transcriptions of the diary are at ebenezerparkman.org and colonialsociety.org/documents/ebenezer-parkman-world/diary-links.
- ² Daniel Scott Smith and Michael S. Hindus, "Premarital Pregnancy in America, 1640–1971: An Overview and Interpretation," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5, no. 4 (1975), 537–70.
- ³ *Vital Records of Westborough, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849* (1903), 71; archive.org/details/vitalrecordswes00ricegoog.
- ⁴ *Ibid.* Martha Maynard married Hezekiah Tomlin, June 18, 1749 (p. 182). Their children, Hezekiah and Resigne, were born, respectively, on May 10, 1748, and July 17, 1749 (p. 98). Hezekiah Tomlin died Sept. 29, 1749 (p. 254). Martha's intention to marry Daniel Mason (1698–1768) of Concord was recorded Nov. 9, 1752 (p. 212).
- ⁵ David Maynard died Oct. 2, 1757. *Ibid.*, 246.
- ⁶ David Maynard was one of the twelve members who founded the Westborough church on Oct. 28, 1724, but no record exists of his daughter Mercy's baptism. Mercy was

one of a group of young women who met with Parkman to be catechized on June 15, 1741.

- ⁷ Diary of Ebenezer Parkman [note 1], Oct. 21, 1774.
- ⁸ *Independent Chronicle* (Boston), Dec. 19, 1776, [2].
- ⁹ "Peter Maynard a Molatto" appears on "A List of Male persons Belong [sic] to Westboro January the 1 A.D.: 1777 who are 16 years old." Digital Commonwealth, ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/z316sd686. (image 1). Peter Maynard was the only man identified as "a Mulatto."
- ¹⁰ "Certifications of Service in the Continental Army, 1776–1780." Digital Commonwealth, ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/z316sd88p (images 5–6).
- ¹¹ "Names of Person [sic] who enlisted on the Towns encouragement." Digital Commonwealth, digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:z316sd79q (image 2, right column).
- ¹² Mass., Muster rolls (index file cards) of the Revolutionary War, 1767–1833, FamilySearch film 2030579, at FamilySearch.org, images 613 and 614 of 2706.
- ¹³ "Receipts for Donated Clothing Sent to Soldiers at Valley Forge, 1777–1778," Digital Commonwealth, ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/z316sf275 (image 4).
- ¹⁴ Mass., Muster rolls [note 12], images 617 and 621 of 2706.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, images 619, 622, 623, and 624.
- ¹⁶ *1790 United States Federal Census*, Stockbridge, Berkshire, Massachusetts, Peter Maynard household, Ancestry.com.
- ¹⁷ Massachusetts, Revolutionary War, Index Cards to Muster Rolls, 1775–1783, "Massachusetts, United States records," FamilySearch, familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSQ8-99LM-T, image 626 of 2706.
- ¹⁸ *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War: A Compilation from the Archives*, vol. 10 (1902), 401; catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008555379.
- ¹⁹ *U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620–1988*, Lenox vital records, image 196 of 523; Ancestry.com.
- ²⁰ Asenath Maynard, FindaGrave memorial #214032275, New Lenox Cemetery, Lenox, Berkshire County, Massachusetts.
- ²¹ *U.S., Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, 1800–1900*; Ancestry.com, image 471 of 521.
- ²² *Ibid.*, image 478 of 521.
- ²³ *U.S., Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, 1800–1900*; Ancestry.com.
- ²⁴ *Berkshire County, MA: Probate File Papers, 1761–1917*, AmericanAncestors.org (from records supplied by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Archives and digitized images provided by FamilySearch.org); case 4259: image 5 for inventory; image 22 for date of death and children.
- ²⁵ Parsons collection of vital statistics, Lenox, Massachusetts, 1750–1849, FamilySearch film 238335, at FamilySearch.org, image 126.

The Great Migration Directory

Updated and Improved

We are pleased to announce the publication of a new and improved edition of *The Great Migration Directory: Immigrants to New England, 1620–1640*. Upon its debut in 2015, the first version of the *Directory* quickly became indispensable for New England genealogists.

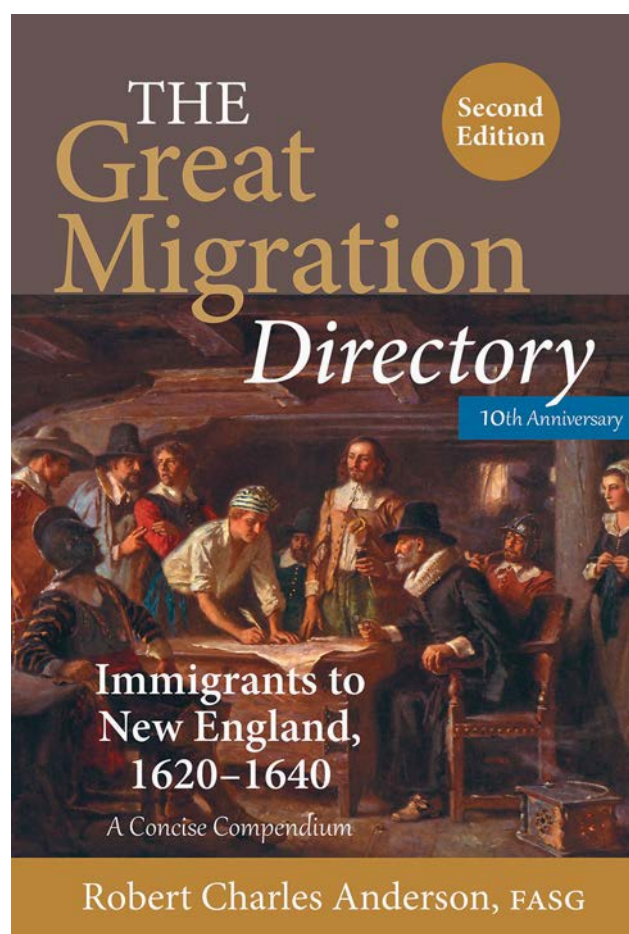
The *Directory*, a comprehensive listing of Great Migration immigrants, represented the culmination of over three decades of painstaking research. In 1988, Robert Charles Anderson, FASG, launched the Great Migration Study Project under the auspices of the New England Historic Genealogical Society and began serving as the project's director. By 2010, he had researched and written ten volumes of sketches on immigrants who arrived in New England between 1620 and 1635.

In September 2010, Bob had just completed the last 1635 volume and was thinking about the future of the project. According to his estimates, the ten books already published included somewhat less than half of all those who came to New England during the entire Great Migration period. Given the time required to see the project through the year 1640, Bob reluctantly concluded that he would not be the person to write the sketches for the 1636 to 1640 immigrants.

Bob later recalled, "I did not want to abandon the project at that point and so began to cast about for a mechanism by which I could at least survey the remaining immigrants."¹ A plan emerged from his ruminations that was refined further during a conversation over a pub lunch during a walking tour of the Yorkshire Dales with trusted friends Sherry Atkinson-Mallory, Kate Van Demark, and Peter Van Demark.

Bob first compiled a preliminary checklist of all immigrants who came to New England between 1636 and 1640 by surveying all surviving records generated in New England for those years. He then merged this list with the names of immigrants who appeared in the three volumes of *The Great Migration Begins: Early Settlers to New England, 1620–1633* and the seven volumes of the second Great Migration series covering 1634 and 1635.

Bob created short entries—rather than detailed sketches—for each head of family or isolated individual, with each entry containing limited but key information about the immigrant, including English origin (if known), year of arrival, and the best available treatment of the immigrant in the secondary literature. For immigrants with sketches in previously published volumes, Bob created entries by extracting information from the published sketches (and, when relevant, taking note of



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Sharon Inglis, Robert Charles Anderson, and Sherry Atkinson-Mallory.

more recent research). For those who arrived between 1636 and 1640, Bob compiled entries with data derived solely from contemporaneous sources and then added references to the most useful and reliable modern treatments of each of these immigrants (if any existed).

Using these methods, Bob created a complete survey of all individuals known to have come to New England during the Great Migration period, 1620–1640. The *Directory* entries present enough information to provide researchers with an easy path to the best treatments of each immigrant (or to indicate that no useful treatment yet exists).²

The Great Migration Directory received both critical and popular acclaim and quickly became a bestseller for American Ancestors. Immediately after the *Directory*'s 2015 publication, Bob began collecting information for an update. The succeeding ten years produced many discoveries that were incorporated into the 2025 volume. The second edition adds eighty-two new immigrants, provides new details, removes eleven invalid entries, and corrects a number of small errors and typos.

→ → → *The Great Migration Directory: Immigrants to New England, 1620–1640, Second Edition*, by Robert Charles Anderson, FASG, is available for \$69.95 (members \$62.95) from AmericanAncestors.org.

“Anderson has combined all the available sources, be they passenger lists, town records, land grants, or letters and diaries. No one could be more demanding or precise in his methods and evaluation of the evidence.”

—John W. Tyler, former Editor of Publications, Colonial Society of Massachusetts, on the first edition of the *Directory*

Bob had completed work on the alphabetical entries for the update to the *Directory* before his unexpected death on February 17, 2025. Unfortunately, he had not delivered a new introduction or an updated Key to Titles. A month after Bob's death, three American Ancestors staff members—AMERICAN ANCESTORS Managing Editor Lynn Betlock, Vice President of Publishing Sharon Inglis, and Conservator Todd Pattison—made a poignant visit to Bob's home in New Hampshire. We were received warmly by two of Bob's siblings, Larry Anderson and Barbara Brammer, and the whole group traded stories and memories of Bob throughout the day. In addition to assessing and packing files and books

that Bob left to American Ancestors, Sharon searched for relevant files on Bob's computer. While some useful materials were retrieved, the missing material was never recovered.

Sharon turned to a team of experts, inside and outside American Ancestors, for assistance in reviewing the manuscript and creating the Key to Titles. A small group undertook this all-out effort, and the emails flew back and forth across the country. In addition to Sharon, the members of this team were Nathan W. Murphy, FASG, Bob's successor as Director of the Great Migration Study Project; Robert Battle, FASG, Editor of the *Register*; Lynn Betlock, Managing Editor of AMERICAN ANCESTORS magazine; and Randy West, FASG, a frequent contributor to the *Register*. Our primary objective was to produce a volume that would have made Bob proud. In the process, we also shared our grief over the loss of our friend.

It was Bob's desire to publish the second edition of the *Directory* for the book's tenth anniversary in 2025, and we believe it would have made him very happy to know that we all worked together to get it over the finish line.

We are confident that this piece of Robert Charles Anderson's significant scholarly legacy will continue to inform and engage genealogists and historians for generations to come. ♦

Notes

¹ Robert Charles Anderson, “Documenting New England's Founders in *The Great Migration Directory*” 16 (spring 2015) 2: 25–30.

² More background on the *Great Migration Directory* is available in Anderson, “Documenting New England's Founders ...” [note 1].

A New Great Migration Study Project Director

American Ancestors is pleased to announce that Nathan W. Murphy, MA, AG, FASG, is the new director of the Great Migration Study Project. Nathan worked closely with Robert Charles Anderson, FASG, from July 2022 until Bob's recent passing and helped put the finishing touches on Bob's 2nd edition of *The Great Migration Directory: Immigrants to New England, 1620–1640*.

Nathan was first introduced to the Great Migration Study Project as an undergraduate at Brigham Young University. In the genealogy computer lab at BYU, the Great Migration books occupied a shelf of their own, with empty space reserved for forthcoming volumes. A professor once told him that it would take “more than one lifetime” to complete the series. And now Nathan is part of that legacy!



Nathan W. Murphy and Robert Charles Anderson.

Nathan was trained as a Southern United States and England genealogist at BYU and holds accreditations in both regions through ICAPGen.TM His graduate studies in English Local History at the University of Leicester focused on the Atlantic world.

In addition to his work for American Ancestors, Nathan is a master genealogist at AncestryPro-Genealogists. He was formerly a senior researcher at FamilySearch and Price Genealogy. Nathan's work is of the highest caliber, as evidenced by Bob Anderson's hand-picking him to carry on the Great Migration Study Project. Nathan's careful scholarship is evident in his articles in the major genealogical journals and his work as a verifying genealogist for various hereditary societies. Nathan was elected to the Fellows of the American Society of Genealogists in 2016.

Q & A with Nathan Murphy

What was your genealogical background prior to beginning your work on the Great Migration Study Project?

I have been a professional genealogist in Salt Lake City for about twenty years. Clients typically hire me to conduct Southern United States, English, and Y-DNA research. I'm passionate about tracing the English origins of American colonists.

What did you learn from Bob Anderson?

I particularly appreciate his writing style and the way he captured so many of his thought processes in Great Migration sketches, *The Great Migration Newsletter*, and in his book *Elements of Genealogical Analysis* (2014). I have always loved this insight that the Colonial Society's John Tyler provided into Bob's historical imagination: “One can almost imagine him walking down the street in Roxbury, Plymouth, or Salem in 1635 and greeting them all by name: ‘Good day, Goody Chilton.’ ‘Good day, Master Robert.’”¹

Has any of your Great Migration research surprised or intrigued you?

Though my sample size is small, I have been intrigued to observe higher percentages of lay religious

participation in England among New England immigrants compared to Chesapeake Bay immigrants. I've used service as a churchwarden as a measuring stick.

What do you know about Great Migration immigrants now that you didn't know when you began this work?

I've been impressed by their level of education and community involvement. I've felt a kindred spirit between many Puritan religious beliefs and my own upbringing in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Now that the new version of *The Great Migration Directory* has been published, what Great Migration volume will be published next?

My focus will be on working with VP of Publishing Sharon Inglis to publish Volume II and continuing to research the subsequent volumes of the Third Series of *The Great Migration: Immigrants to New England, 1636–1638*.

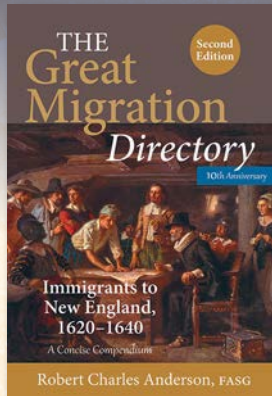
—Managing Editor Lynn Betlock

Note

- ¹ Great Migration Study Project, Book Review by John W. Tyler, Editor of Publications, Colonial Society of Massachusetts (AmericanAncestors.org/publications/great-migration-study-project/critical-acclaim).



New Titles from American Ancestors



The Great Migration Directory: Immigrants to New England, 1620–1640—A Concise Compendium, 2nd Edition

Robert Charles Anderson, FASG. 6 x 9 hcvr, 540 pp., 2025; \$69.95, member \$62.95

Eighty-two immigrants have been added to this 10th-anniversary edition. Each of the 5,700 entries provides identification of the head of household, English or European origin (if known), date of migration, principal residences in New England, and the best available sources of information for the subject. New origins have been discovered, sketches have been expanded by recent research, and errors from the 1st edition have been corrected. Includes an appendix of eleven 1st-edition sketches retired by the author.



Portable Genealogist: Tracing Your Newfoundland and Labrador Ancestors

Judith Lucey. 8½ x 11 laminated, 4 pp., 2025; \$10.95, member \$9.85

Newfoundland and Labrador's cod fishery has helped shape the province's distinctive history, and its culture is a unique blend of its Indigenous people and those of English, Irish, and French heritage. This Portable Genealogist will introduce you to the records and resources available online and highlight some of the unique sources for the province, with tips to assist in discovering your Newfoundland and Labrador roots.

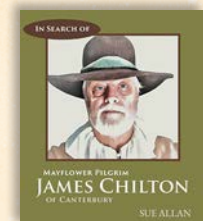
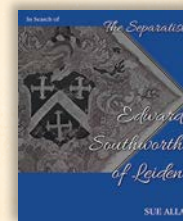
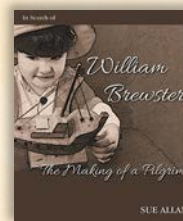
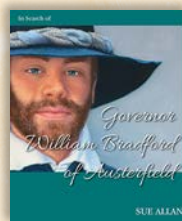


Genealogica & Heraldica XXXVI: Origins, Journeys, Destinations

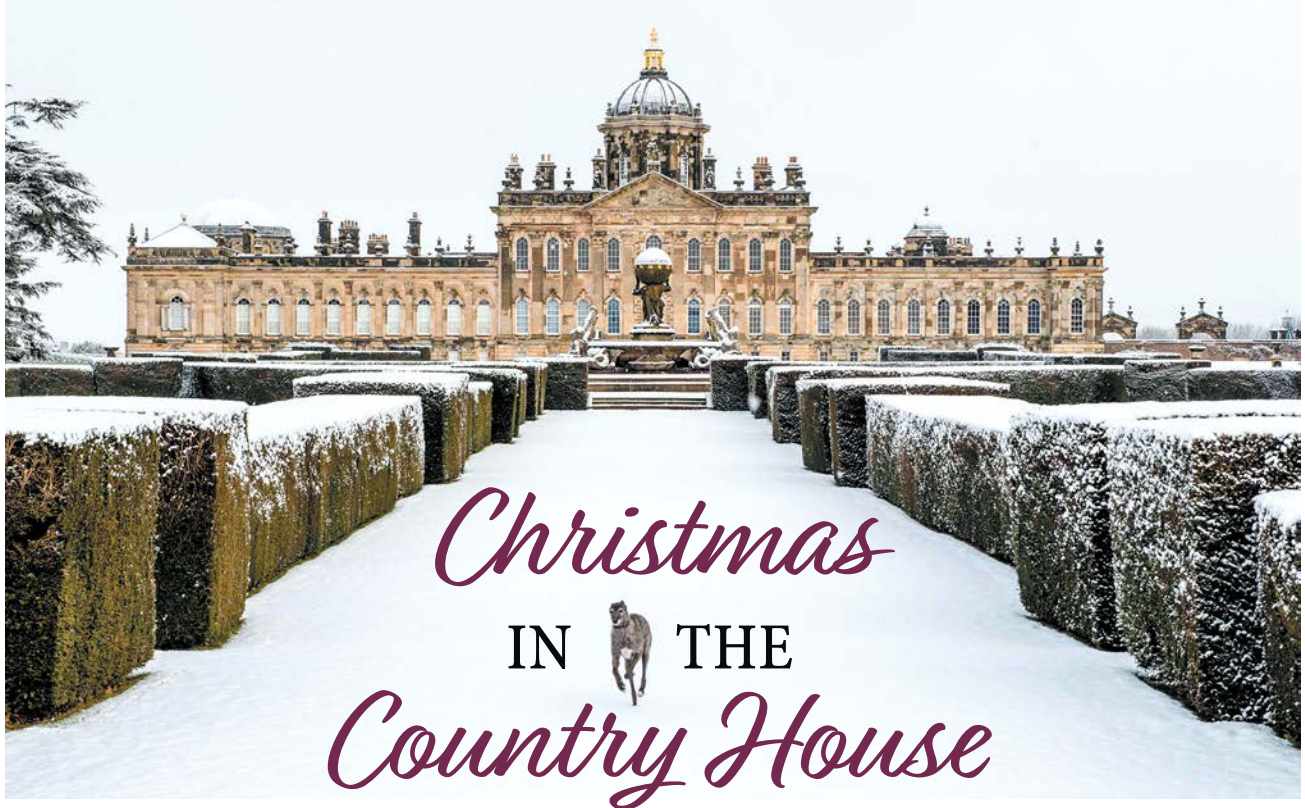
7 x 10 hcvr, 546 pp., illus., 2025; \$69.95, member \$62.95

The 36th International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences hosted by American Ancestors in Boston in 2025 was the first ever held in the United States. This beautiful hardcover volume contains the 49 papers presented at the congress in their entirety and with full-color illustrations, as well as the text of the opening remarks, photos from the five-day event, an illustrated guide to the *Heraldic Treasures at American Ancestors* exhibit on view during the congress, a list of delegates, and contributor biographies.

Discover *Mayflower* History Through the Works of Sue Allan



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Castle Howard. Photograph by Nicholas Howard.

One hundred years ago Christmas in an English country house would likely comprise a large family party (probably with one or two awkward relatives), and all the accoutrements of the festive season: greetings cards, a decorated tree, wrapped gifts and substantial meals featuring a turkey or a goose, as well as mince pies and a plum pudding and—if the weather obliged—a covering of snow outdoors.

Today Christmas is celebrated in country houses up and down Britain but in recent decades many properties have thrown open their doors to the visiting public, offering spectacular Christmas experiences that run between November and January. Notwithstanding winter weather and hours of darkness, this time of year plays an enormous part in the visitor cycle of a country house. Unsurprisingly, these events have proved hugely popular with families, and the public flocks to grand houses festooned with traditional decorations. Castle Howard—dating to 1699 and located fifteen miles from York—is no exception.

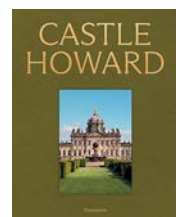
Christmas at Castle Howard always relies on a number of time-honored factors, but each holiday season also sees a push to amplify the spectacle, making it more arresting and distinct from the previous year.

Certain traditional elements remain, including the tall Christmas tree, usually between 20 to 30 feet high, as a centerpiece in the Great Hall. The tree has grown in scale from those displayed by the family at the end of the nineteenth century. Now it takes about a week to dress and is adorned with literally thousands of brightly colored baubles.

Having grown in size and popularity in recent years, the annual Castle Howard Christmas spectacular now runs for seven weeks, through the first week in January. In 2024, 100,000 people visited during the holiday season. That number represents one third of our annual visitor total and helps raise vital income towards many restoration projects.

In early years, the house was dressed simply with a few trees, some tinsel, and ornaments, but in 2016 a more ambitious cycle of events was launched. A gingerbread Castle Howard, in its eighteenth-century Baroque form, was commissioned from confectionary designers Bompas & Parr. Encircling the scene was a model railway with a locomotive running through the snowy landscape. The gingerbread buildings were lit in the darkened space. In addition to being visually exciting, the space was suffused with the spicy aroma of ginger.

Christopher Ridgway is Head Curator at Castle Howard. In his new book, *Castle Howard: A Grand Tour of England's Finest Country House*, Dr. Ridgway offers readers a lavish and exclusive tour of this famous English historic house. This book is available from [RizzoliUSA.com](https://www.rizzoliusa.com) and other booksellers.



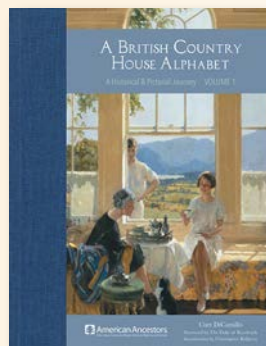
The following year, Castle Howard began working with CLW Event Design Ltd. For the past seven years, the company has devised themed trails involving decorations, props, lighting, and sound effects throughout the entire building. Planning begins at the beginning of January when a theme is chosen. The team then mocks up concepts on storyboards until the final design is approved and production of the sets begins by the middle of the year. In 2017, the *Angels on High* theme featured gilded fretwork figures blowing trumpets in the Long Gallery beneath a rainbow of ribbons.

The Christmas experience inside the house follows the customary free-flow route through the building, which means that twenty interiors must be decorated. On arrival, visitors see the Grand Staircase dressed in winter greenery with a decorated archway at the top. Beyond are the bedrooms and dressing rooms with displays that evoke family life: piles of presents and toys, or perhaps costumes, suggesting that a Christmas ball is about to take place. As visitors progress through the building, the narrative is developed in further detail in a dozen more rooms and tableaux.

Other themes have included *The Twelve Days of Christmas* (2018); *A Christmas Masquerade*, with a Venetian focus, including a recreation of the Grand Canal and Rialto Bridge (2019); *Narnia* (2021); *Into the Woods*, *A Fairytale Christmas* (2022); *Christmas in Neverland*, telling the story of Peter Pan (2023); and *Alice in Wonderland* (2024). A number of these themes draw on timeless stories known to children and adults alike, either through original books or recent screen versions. Soundscapes and lighting effects by theatre production company Imitating the Dog produce animated interiors. Projections on the walls and ceilings have included a sword fight between Peter Pan and Captain Hook, a



A Narnia scene at Castle Howard during the 2021 holiday season.



Explore country houses all year long!

Continue to learn about Castle Howard and other British country houses in Curt DiCamillo's **A British Country House Alphabet: A Historical and Pictorial Journey**.

This beautiful book introduces readers to the fascinating stories, art, architecture, and events connected with Britain's country houses. The first volume (of three), covering the letters A through H, is available now.

Save 20% on this book through December 31, 2025! Use code **AlphabetHol25** at checkout.

shop.AmericanAncestors.org

Darling family food fight, and a kaleidoscopic Alice's tea party, complete with White Rabbit and a ticking clock.

Not all of these narratives have a Christmas focus but these stories have a long tradition of being staged in play or pantomime form in the winter. Visitors relate to them readily, following the narrative elements through the house whilst immersed in a panorama of light, sound, and music. When combined with the customary seasonal elements of baubles, tinsel, trees, carols, and the traditional Christmas crib scene in the chapel, the house is truly transformed.

We always say that people who want to see the art and architecture of Castle Howard should not come at Christmas, but if they want to be immersed in a memorable spectacle then this is the time to visit. And, of course, Christmas would not be complete without Santa Claus. Each year he and his troupe put on over 100 performances in the house, at the height of the season running to seven shows a day for families and children, with a chance for them to meet him in person afterwards.

This year's spectacle will conclude an exciting year for Castle Howard, which has seen the completion of a spectacular five-year project, Castle Howard's 21st Century Renaissance, which restored a number of interiors. For 2025, the Christmas theme is *The Wizard of Oz*. Soon, we will lay down the yellow brick road and await the drama that Dorothy, the Scarecrow, Cowardly Lion, Tin Man, and the Wicked Witch will bring to Castle Howard. ♦

From our collections

The Tyler Portraits



Gerald W. R. Ward is the Katharine Lane Weems Senior Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture Emeritus, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Curt DiCamillo is Curator of Fine Art at American Ancestors.

Many wealthy married couples in the colonial period commissioned joint portraits. In the case of the Tyler portraits at American Ancestors, we have images of a husband and wife painted about twenty years apart. The Rev. Andrew Tyler's oil portrait was created by an unknown artist around 1740–1745, while Mary Tyler, his wife, had her pastel portrait painted by the Boston artist John Singleton Copley¹ circa 1765–1767.

Andrew Tyler was born in Boston on August 20, 1719, a son of Andrew Tyler, Esq., and Miriam Pepperrell. His mother was the daughter of William Pepperrell (1648–1733), a native of England who settled in Kittery, in the District of Maine, where he became a prominent civic leader, a colonel in the local militia, and the owner of a major shipping firm. His son (Andrew Tyler's uncle) Sir William Pepperrell, one of the wealthiest men in America, was famous for his 1745 victory at the Siege of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island. He was created a baronet in 1746 by King George II, the only American ever to receive such an honor.

The Rev. Tyler graduated from Harvard College in 1738 and remained there, studying theology, for the following year. He was ordained into the Congregational Church on November 30, 1743, and later that year became the second minister of the Clapboard Trees Parish in Dedham (today Westwood), Massachusetts.

On March 20, 1745/6, Andrew married Mary Richards, who was born in Dedham on March 20, 1731. Mary was the daughter of Colonel Joseph Richards, a Dedham physician and first clerk of the parish, and Mary (Belcher) Richards. Between 1746 and 1763, the couple had nine sons: Andrew, Joseph, William, Pepperrell, George, Belcher, John, David, and one whose name is unknown.

The Rev. Tyler became a respected clergyman, and two of his sermons were published in 1756. But that respect didn't last.

Characterized by his contemporaries as “handsome, sensitive, easily excited, politically conservative, and sharp-tongued,” the Rev. Tyler fell afoul of his parishioners in 1769. An ugly dispute began, apparently prompted by Tyler's Loyalist sympathies during the



Portrait of Rev. Andrew Tyler by an unknown artist, ca. 1740–45.

“present Difficulties” with the British Crown. Tyler’s opinions differed from most of his congregation, who voted to reduce his salary, then decided to not pay him at all, thinking he might take the hint and depart. Tyler presumably dug in his heels and remained in his position.

Eventually, the church leaders resorted to character assassination: it was said that he had been a “very indifferent Scholar” at Harvard, that he had become “noisy, boisterous, and turbulent,” that he was possessed of a “haughty and overbearing Carriage,” and so forth. He simply had to go. In December 1771, the congregation offered him £180 as an incentive to leave, which he declined. After almost a year of negotiations, Tyler accepted a payout of £332.16.0 and resigned on December 17, 1772. Rev. Tyler died in Boston on May 3, 1775, just two weeks after the Battles of Lexington and Concord ignited the Revolutionary War.

Most Massachusetts Loyalists fled when the British departed Boston in 1776. Recent research by David Allen Lambert, Chief Genealogist at American Ancestors, suggests that the next generation of this Tyler family did not share Rev. Tyler’s Loyalist sympathies, as his wife and sons remained in Massachusetts. Several of the Tyler sons took up professions in Boston. George became a goldsmith, Joseph was a housewright, and Pepperrell became a merchant. Belcher served as a private in the 6th Massachusetts Regiment (also known as the 4th Continental Regiment) during the Revolutionary War. Their mother, Mary (Richards) Tyler, died on August 24, 1783, according to an obituary published in *The Boston Gazette*.

A decade after the war ended, Belcher Tyler had moved to Deer Isle, Maine, where he was later joined by his brothers Joseph and George. (The sons who do not appear in later records likely died young.)

During his research, David Lambert also discovered that Rev. Tyler had enslaved multiple people, including a woman named Flora, over approximately thirty years. It is not uncommon to find that Massachusetts clergy of the era were enslavers.

The portraits of Andrew and Mary Tyler passed to their grandson, George Jackson Tyler, who presented them to American Ancestors in 1850, only five years after the organization was founded as the New England Historic Genealogical Society. These portraits, which are among the most important pieces of art in the American Ancestors collection, are complemented by a portrait of Andrew’s uncle, William Tyler, a well-to-do Boston brazier and hardware merchant. William’s portrait, which is attributed to Joseph Badger, was donated



Portrait of Mary Tyler by John Singleton Copley, ca. 1765–67.

to American Ancestors in 1874 by General John Steele Tyler, William’s great-grandson.

Today, 175 years after our institution acquired them, the portraits of Rev. Andrew and Mary Tyler hang in the Kristin and Roger Servison Gallery, right outside our much-used boardroom. Seen by many viewers, these paintings take on new meaning when context and history is added. The stories of these portraits hold much more than meets the eye. ♦

Note

- ¹ John Singleton Copley (1738–1815) was one of the greatest early American artists. Born in Boston, he became one of the colonies’ most famous portrait painters, much sought after by prominent figures like Paul Revere and Samuel Adams. The artist spent his early career in Boston but, because he was a Loyalist, he left America in 1774. Copley settled in England, where he painted members of the British royal family and numerous British and American notables. As a dedicated realist, Copley gave foundation and form to the American tradition of realism and was noted for incorporating symbols that indicated the vocation of the sitter, such as showing Paul Revere with a piece of silver.



State Spotlight



Kyle Hurst is a Senior Genealogist of the Newbury Street Press at American Ancestors. She authored *Ancestors & Descendants of Lester Lowry Mays and Peggy Pitman* for a Texas family.

Researching Independent Texans

March 2, 2026, will mark the 190th anniversary of Texas's Declaration of Independence. In 1836, delegates from seventeen municipalities unanimously adopted a resolution to break from Mexico. The split occurred because President Antonio López de Santa Anna failed to uphold the 1824 Mexican Constitution adopted after the country gained independence from Spain. The Republic of Texas lasted a mere decade before Texas joined the United States, but that era produced record sets essential for tracking early Texan settlers and soldiers.

Many of these collections, all created in the 1830s and 1840s, must be used in tandem because claims to land were based on settlement or service. Thus, two of the best places to research are the Austin-based Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) and the Texas General Land Office (GLO). Both offer online access to useful guides and records. This article highlights the offerings most likely to enhance the biographies of Republic of Texas residents.

Settlers

Censuses, character certificates, and land grants can help determine if an ancestor lived in Texas by March 2, 1836. All three types of records document dates of residence.

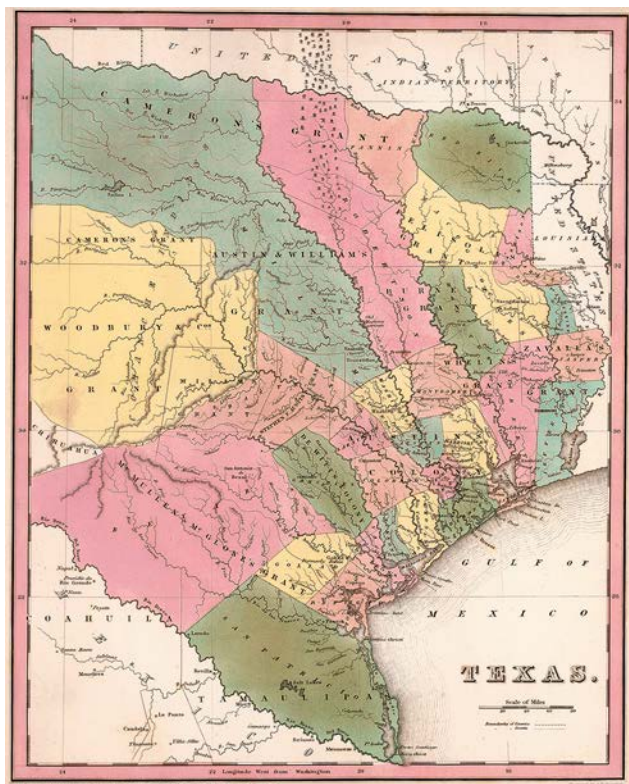
Censuses taken during Mexico's governance of Texas provide information on where people lived from as early as 1826 to as late as 1835. Surviving pre-Republic enumerations vary by district. The primary collection held by TSLAC is in the Nacogdoches Archives Record Group. In addition to full censuses (*padrones*), the collection includes mission rolls, reports and lists of foreigners, and ranch censuses.

A search undertaken for Texas resident James M. Roebuck in the 1835 enumeration located the 17-year-old living in Bevil District (in Jasper County).¹ The digital record showed that James resided in the household of B. H. Mudd, a 43-year-old married farmer, with married 36-year-old "Elizabeth Robuck," and James's three younger siblings. The household also included seven male and two female "Negroes."² This record, then, indicated that James Roebuck had a mother named Elizabeth and a stepfather named B. H. Mudd.³

Character certificates were created in the years prior to Texas independence because Mexico required that each immigrant's petition for admission include place of origin and family size, among other data. Most of these certificates were issued from Nacogdoches, representing East Texas, in 1834 and 1835. The applications were tied to land titles, so after the Texas Revolution, the records were sent to Texas's GLO.

The character certificate files, available in searchable abstracts and digitized via the Texas GLO website, confirmed that in September 1834, the San Augustine office issued a certificate for B. H. Mudd, "a native of the U. States" and a "man without a family." A month later, widow Elizabeth Roebuck's character certificates from the Precinct of Sabine and Nacogdoches showed that she was a native of "Georgia of the United States of America"

Above: Detail of Indian Territory, New Mexico, South Dakota, Texas, 1889. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection.



Texas, by Henry S. Tanner (Philadelphia, 1838). David Rumsey Map Collection.

with four children. Each certificate proclaimed that the applicant was of “good moral character and industrious and a good citizen and friendly to the Laws and religion of the country.”⁴ Viewed together, the certificates and census identified a six-month window during which Elizabeth remarried.

The Republic opened the General Land Office in February 1837, specifically to grant lands to “old settlers” and veterans. Eligibility for the four classes of headrights—land claims granted to early settlers—was based on the arrival date (ranging from pre-1836 to 1842) of the family head or unmarried male over 17. The program was so popular that during the first two years the GLO received about 38,000 claimants for over 50 million acres.⁵

The GLO granted first-class headrights to those who had settled in Texas before March 1, 1836. Heads of families received one league and one labor (4,605 acres) while unmarried men received a third of a league (1,476 acres). The Roebuck family lived in Jasper County in 1835, so their head of household qualified—even after his death. In August 1838, “Mrs. Elizabeth Roebuck, Natural Guardian for the Heirs of Wm. Roebuck,” proved that she had arrived in 1834. Thus, this record named William Roebuck as Elizabeth’s former husband and James’s father. William’s heirs received a certificate

for land that was not patented, with official ownership assigned, until January 25, 1856.⁶

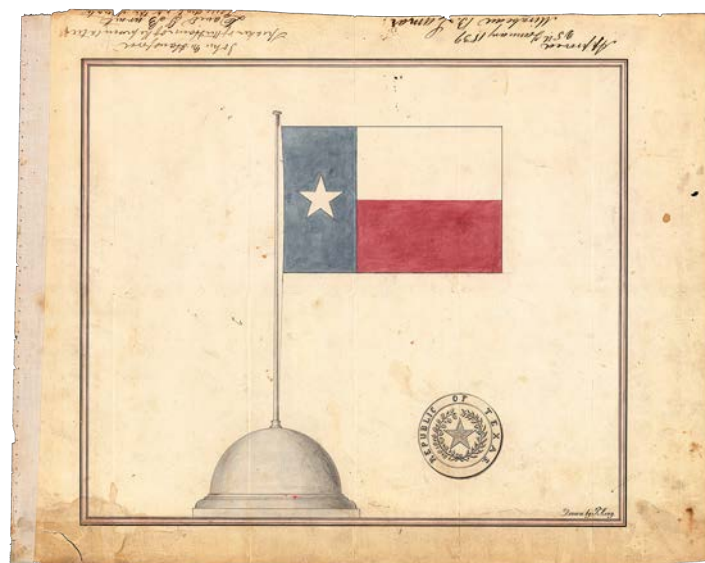
Soldiers

Another way to determine when and where a male ancestor lived in Texas is by researching whether he served on behalf of the Republic. To research veterans, look for bounty and donation land grants, Republic claims, and muster rolls.

The GLO’s other top priority was granting lands to Texan Revolution veterans. When land was promised as payment for service, bounty grants were owed. Starting in November 1835, laws were passed that set acreage amounts based on duration and type of duty.

Both James Roebuck and his stepfather referenced military service in their land grant claims. Although his mother applied for a headright on his behalf, in August 1838 James claimed his own third of a league as a single man who arrived in 1834. To prove his eligibility for a headright, he stated that although he was under 17 at Independence, he was entitled to the land for “having volunteered in the service of his Country and rec’d an Honorable discharge.” With his stepfather as witness, James immediately sold his granted Jasper County lands.⁷

The bounty land claim filed by B. H. Mudd, James’s stepfather, stemmed directly from his military service. In December 1837, the Republic of Texas issued him a certificate for 320 acres because he served for three months and was honorably discharged. Mudd transferred his claim in July 1838.⁸



Texas flag and seal designed by Peter Krag, approved January 25, 1839. Courtesy of Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Archives and Information Services Division, Historic Flags Collection.

Texas created the Comptroller's Office in December 1835 to examine, approve, or reject monetary claims. During the Republic, the office recorded audited Republic claims, Republic pension files, Republic of Texas public debt claims, and unpaid and miscellaneous Republic claims. These records can be accessed through the "Republic Claims Custom Search" at the Texas Digital Archive (TDA).

B. H. Mudd had two claims. In July 1836, he gave his horse worth \$70 to a military company at Zavalla. In August 1837, Sergeant Mudd was honorably discharged from a company of Rangers stationed at the post at Sabine. He was owed \$44 for his service dating back to

the first anniversary of the Declaration. However, Mudd neglected to provide his own affidavits, so the auditor rejected both claims.⁹

Republic-era military records held at TSLAC are searchable through databases such as their *Texas Adjutant General Service Records* and TDA's "Muster roll index cards" collection. However, the existing lists are not comprehensive, and most muster rolls were destroyed in the Adjutant General's office fire of 1855. Neither Mudd nor Roebuck could be found in surviving lists, which at a minimum provide each soldier's name and rank.



In the face of repeated attacks by Mexico and its refusal to recognize Texan independence, Texas considered annexation to the United States throughout the Republic decade. Anxious about losing Texas to outside influence, the US admitted Texas as a state on December 29, 1845. Mexican rejection of Texas's new status and American expansionism resulted in the outbreak of the Mexican-American War in 1846. Two years later, the resulting Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo shaped the boundaries of today's American Southwest and set Texas's border at the Rio Grande. Moving forward from a republic to a state, Texas continued many of its record-keeping practices, allowing researchers to continue tracing descendants of their early settlers and soldiers. ♦

Republic of Texas resources

- Texas General Land Office (GLO), glo.texas.gov
- Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC), TSL.Texas.gov

"Resources of the Republic of Texas and Pre-Republic Era (1820–1845) at TSLAC," at TSL.Texas.gov/ref/republicoftexasresources

Texas Digital Archive (TDA),
TSL.access.preservica.com

Notes

- ¹ Marion Day Mullins, *The First Census of Texas, 1829–1836; To Which are Added Texas Citizenship Lists, 1821–1845 and Other Early Records of the Republic of Texas* (Washington, D.C., 1959), 21–27.
- ² "Padrones: Coahuila y Texas," Bevil District, 1835, in *Nacogdoches, Texas, U.S., Spanish and Mexican Government Records, 1729–1836*, at Ancestry.com, images 557–568 (565), citing Nacogdoches Archives Record Group, reels NAC–22—23, TSLAC.
- ³ Sylvia Owen Garner, *The Roebucks of Virginia: A Genealogical History of the Descendants from Robert, George, James, and Benjamin Roebuck (Robuck)* (Gateway Press, 1979), 218–220; and Kyle Hurst, *Ancestors & Descendants of Lester Lowry Mays and Peggy Pitman* (Newbury Street Press, 2018), 20, 25.
- ⁴ Gifford White, ed., *Character Certificates in the General Land Office of Texas* (1985; reprint, Baltimore: Clearfield Company, Inc., 1998), 127, 158, 240, digitized at Ancestry.com/search/collections/48419; Character Certificates, SC 75:20 and SC 76:32, and Unfinished Titles, SC 60:26, petition no. 145, p. 114, in *Land Grant Database*, at GLO.Texas.gov/archives-heritage/search-our-collections/land-grant-search.
- ⁵ Carolyn R. Ericson, *First Settlers of the Republic of Texas*, 2 vols. (Ericson Books, 1982), 1:i–iv.
- ⁶ Ericson, *First Settlers of the Republic of Texas*, 1:220; Fannin 1st Class, certificate no. 246, file no. 651 and Jasper County, Clerk Returns, 1st Class, file no. 9, in *Land Grant Database*, at GLO.Texas.gov/archives-heritage/search-our-collections/land-grant-search.
- ⁷ Milam 1st Class, certificate no. 486, file no. 403 and Jasper County, Clerk Returns, 1st Class, file no. 9, in *Land Grant Database*, at GLO.Texas.gov/archives-heritage/search-our-collections/land-grant-search.
- ⁸ Jasper County Bounty Class, certificate no. 1220, file no. 14, in *Land Grant Database*, at GLO.Texas.gov/archives-heritage/search-our-collections/land-grant-search; Thomas Lloyd Miller, *Bounty and Donation Land Grants of Texas, 1835–1888* (University of Texas Press, 1967), 491.
- ⁹ Texas Comptroller's Office, Audited Republic claims, no. 2212 and no. 5302, via "Republic Claims Custom Search," at TSL.Access.Preservica.com/tda/reference-tools/republic-claims-custom-search-home.

10 Million Names

10 Million Names aims to recover the names and restore information to families of the estimated 10 million people of African descent who were enslaved in America before 1865.

10MillionNames.org

The Treasury of the Weary Souls: Digitizing the history of slave insurance in the United States



American Ancestors is excited to partner with Howard University, one of the nation's leading historically Black universities, on The Treasury of the Weary Souls—a transformative initiative to document and digitize the history of slave insurance in the United States.

The project traces the evolution of slave insurance during the nineteenth century, from maritime policies that treated enslaved people as cargo, to life and labor policies on enslaved workers and their descendants in some of America's most dangerous industries.

The goal of The Treasury of the Weary Souls initiative is to build a publicly accessible, searchable database that uncovers the hidden financial infrastructures that profited from slavery and labor exploitation. The resulting database will also be integrated into 10 Million Names, becoming part of its growing collection of searchable resources dedicated to restoring the names, lives, and family histories of enslaved African Americans.

This partnership is led by Dr. Michael Ralph, a distinguished scholar at Howard whose work explores the intersections of race, finance, and the afterlives of slavery. Under Dr. Ralph's guidance, a group of student interns will join the American Ancestors research team as part of a paid internship program over one academic year. These students will gain hands-on experience with historical documents and digital tools while contributing to a project that amplifies the stories of enslaved and exploited individuals whose lives and labor were commodified through insurance.

The interns will engage directly with primary source material from institutions such as the Massachusetts Archives, Lloyd's of London, and the Library of Congress. These records include shipping manifests, underwriter documents, insurance company ledgers, lawsuits, and policyholder correspondence.

With its long-standing commitment to academic excellence, Black intellectual traditions, and social justice,

Howard is an ideal partner in this work to surface hidden histories and train the next generation of scholars.

Our partnership with Howard represents a broader commitment to reparative historical research. By involving students from a historically Black university in this work, we are investing in the next generation of Black historians, genealogists, and cultural stewards. Together with Dr. Ralph and Howard University, American Ancestors is proud to ensure that the people whose lives were insured—but whose stories were buried—are recognized, remembered, and honored through responsible scholarship.

The Treasury of the Weary Souls interns



Clockwise from top left: Imani Bishop, 2027; Fari Cannon, PhD candidate; Keshawna Washington, 2027; and Raven Shaw, 2027.

Branches of our Family



Mary Tedesco

My journey in family history and volunteering

Some of my fondest childhood memories were made around my Italian grandparents' kitchen table in Gloucester, Massachusetts, as I

listened to family stories passed down through the generations. I was captivated by tales of my ancestors—their joys, struggles, and experiences. That early curiosity evolved into a passion for genealogy and a deep exploration of both my paternal Italian roots and my mother's American lineage.

In 2007, a coworker introduced me to online genealogical resources. I discovered the passenger lists documenting my Italian grandparents' journeys to the United States. The records listed the ships' names, number of passengers, their next of kin back in Italy, and the amount of money each of them had.

Revealing these records to them felt like a moment made for television! My grandfather recalled vividly his 1929 journey in steerage with his father, pregnant mother, and younger sister. He later returned to Italy as a soldier in the United States Army during World War II. My grandmother arrived in 1946 as a "war bride." My grandfather met her ship in New York City. He brought her to a steakhouse for her first American meal and she was overwhelmed by the amount of food served.

My research reached a pivotal point in the fall of 2010, when I visited the American Ancestors (then New England Historic Genealogical Society) research library for the first time to explore Italian records. At the time, the records weren't available online, so I spent many long hours poring over FamilySearch microfilm reels and stacks of books. I remain deeply grateful to the American Ancestors staff, past and present, including Marie Daly, David C. Dearborn, David Allen Lambert, Rhonda R. McClure, D. Brenton Simons, and Ryan Woods, for their encouragement and expert guidance.

To strengthen my research skills, I enrolled in Boston University's Genealogical Research Certificate program in 2011. The program was a transformative experience and ultimately led me to pursue genealogy professionally.

In 2014, I had the honor of joining the national PBS series *Genealogy Roadshow* as an on-camera co-host for seasons two and three. The show, filmed in thirteen US cities, helped everyday Americans uncover their family histories. It was an extraordinary experience for me that opened many exciting doors.

In 2015, one of those doors led me to Lynn Forney Young, then President General of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). My mother and I had joined DAR in 2011 to honor our Patriot ancestors. During our meeting, Mrs. Young invited me to speak about *Genealogy Roadshow* at DAR's 2016 Continental Congress in Washington, DC, a truly inspiring experience that deepened my involvement in the organization. Since then, I've been honored to serve DAR at the local, state, and national levels. Most recently, I was elected State Regent of Massachusetts for the 2025–2028 term. I look forward to leading our 2,400 dedicated volunteer members across forty-one chapters in promoting historic preservation, education, and patriotism throughout the Bay State.

My commitment to both genealogy and volunteerism also led me to join the American Ancestors Council in 2016, thanks to an invitation from then-President and CEO Brenton Simons. It has been a joy to give back to the organization that has played such a vital role in my genealogical journey. As I look ahead, I'm excited to continue mentoring and inspiring the next generation of genealogists at American Ancestors, in DAR, and beyond. ♦

Mary Tedesco is a professional genealogist, speaker, author, and former television co-host of the national PBS series *Genealogy Roadshow*. She is honored to serve as State Regent (2025–2028) of the Massachusetts Daughters of the American Revolution and as a Councilor of American Ancestors.

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* Bonus: A portion of the payout is tax-free income for a number of years!

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To schedule a time for Ted to call you, please visit www.meetme.so/tedm

Legacy.AmericanAncestors.org/CGA

2025 JHC benefit dinner honored *The Jews of Boston*

The Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center (JHC) held its annual benefit dinner on June 5 at Boston's Lenox Hotel, honoring the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of *The Jews of Boston*. More than eighty people attended the event, which featured an extraordinary panel of speakers—*The Jews of Boston* co-editors Dr. Jonathan D. Sarna and Professor Ellen Smith, and Rabbi Daniel Judson, provost of Hebrew College and member of the JHC Advisory Council—who discussed the book's themes and lasting impact. The program also included remarks by Rabbi Marc Baker and Barry Shrage, the current and immediate past leaders of Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston.

Published in 1995, *The Jews of Boston* offered the first comprehensive exploration of Boston's Jewish history. The book inspired pride in Boston's Jewish community and helped community members understand their own unique story, which was both distinct from and deeply connected to the wider American Jewish story.

The benefit was moving, educational, and joyful. During the cocktail hour, guests were treated to words from Justin "Jerry" Wyner, longtime supporter and advocate for whom the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center is named. The gathering then erupted into a hearty rendition of "Happy Birthday" in anticipation of Jerry's 100th birthday in August. The lively evening brought a deeper awareness of the JHC's work and was a celebration of both Jewish history and community.

Thank you to all our benefit sponsors

Editor Benefactors

Lia and William Poorvu
Vivian and Lionel Spiro
Justin L. Wyner



Top to bottom: American Ancestors President and CEO Ryan J. Woods, Justin Wyner, and JHC Executive Director Rachel King; Dan Judson, Ellen Smith, and Jonathan Sarna in a panel discussion about *The Jews of Boston*; Guests at the 2025 JHC Benefit Dinner mingling during cocktail hour. Photos by Claire Vail.



2025 DiCamillo Rendezvous

On Thursday, May 1, fifty-five guests joined us at the Chilton Club in Boston for a DiCamillo Rendezvous. (Since 2019, alumni of our Heritage Tours as well as interested friends have gathered at least once a year for an engaging presentation by tour leader and Curator of Fine Art Curt DiCamillo.) At this event, we were treated to a fascinating and fun lecture by Curt on his "Cabinet of Curiosities: A Journey through his Favorite Art, Architecture, and Memorabilia." After Curt's lecture, guests enjoyed an afternoon tea and engaging conversation.

ON THE ROAD AND AT HOME

with American Ancestors

See page 10 for upcoming programs and tours.



Chief Genealogist David Allen Lambert with Come Home to New England walking tour participants in the Boston Public Garden.

Come Home to New England

We welcomed members back to our headquarters from July 15 to 19, 2025, for our first “Come Home to New England” since our reopening. Participants devoted five days to exploring resources at American Ancestors and benefiting from the expertise of our staff. In addition to daily lectures, one-on-one consultations, and orientations, this special “Come Home” program included a walking tour of Revolutionary Boston led by Chief Genealogist David Allen Lambert.

National Genealogical Conference

From May 23 to 26, 2025, American Ancestors participated in the National Genealogical Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, hosted by the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. Chief Genealogist David Allen Lambert presented “Adopting the Regiment—A Call to Action!,” which discussed learning about the service of Revolutionary War ancestors through the voices of their compatriots. President and CEO Ryan J. Woods presented “Stories and Sources for Exploring Patriots, Loyalists, the Diverse Heritage of Soldiers in the American Revolution.”



Connecticut Research Tour participants on the steps of the Connecticut State Library with tour leaders Jennifer Shakshober and Christopher C. Child.

Connecticut Research Tour

American Ancestors staff joined participants in Hartford, Connecticut, from May 21 to 23, 2025, for the Connecticut Research Tour. Participants spent the three days of the tour researching in the genealogy room of the Connecticut State Library, receiving assistance from the library staff and one-on-one consultations from American Ancestors experts. The American Ancestors staff leading the tour were Researcher Jen Shakshober and Christopher C. Child, Senior Genealogist of the Newbury Street Press and Associate Editor of the *Register*.



Chief Genealogist David Allen Lambert giving a consultation to Washington, DC, Research Tour Participant Tina Dudley in the DAR Library.

Washington, DC, Research Tour

Twenty-seven attendees participated in an American Ancestors tour to the National Archives and the DAR Library from March 23 to 29, 2025. Tour participants received orientations to the repositories and consultations with Senior Genealogists Rhonda R. McClure and Melanie McComb and Chief Genealogist David Allen Lambert. Participants made discoveries about ancestors who fought in the Revolutionary War and the Civil War and advanced their *Mayflower* lines.



staff profile

MEET

LINDSAY FULTON

CHIEF RESEARCH OFFICER

I joined the staff at American Ancestors in 2012, fresh out of my MA program at UMass Boston and thrilled to land what I thought was the perfect “quiet” research role on the Research Services team. Thirteen years and several positions later, I am the Chief Research Officer, leading Research Services, Library Services, the Database team, and 10 Million Names—a collaborative effort to recover and document the names and family stories of the estimated 10 million men, women, and children of African descent enslaved in the United States prior to emancipation.

I also represent American Ancestors at conferences and in the media, a role I didn’t envision when I was a history major preparing for a career that I expected to be more of a solitary pursuit. My research and commentary have appeared in the Emmy-winning web series *Finding Your Roots: The Seedlings*, the PBS program *Samantha Brown’s Places to Love*, and in publications such as the *Boston Globe*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times Magazine*, where I recently contributed to a piece on the ancestry of Pope Leo XIV. It turns out family history research is not necessarily solitary after all—it can be a team sport that demands networking skills, persistence, and, occasionally, a healthy serving of humble pie.

My interest in genealogy began in 1992, when my fifth-grade teacher David Brown and his friend Richard DeAvila introduced my class to Cesar Chelor, an eighteenth-century enslaved African American plane maker from Wrentham, Massachusetts. My classmates and I examined the lives of Cesar; his wife, Judith Russell; and their children. We then wrote and illustrated a children’s book, petitioned for a US postage stamp, appeared on local cable television, and even won an award from the JFK Library. Most of all, I experienced the power of connecting people personally to history, whether through family ties or by walking the same streets as someone from the past.

For me, that early spark grew into a career built on honoring the past and making history personal. Family history is more than names and dates; it is stories, struggles, and triumphs. It is the joy of finding a name long overlooked, the emotion of reconnecting a family line, and the transformation that comes when someone sees themselves as part of a bigger story.

Through my work at American Ancestors, I have the privilege of helping others experience those powerful connections. It is work that reminds me daily that, no matter who we are, we share in the same human story. ♦

Spotlight on summer interns

Jewish Heritage Center interns

This past summer, the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center (JHC) at American Ancestors welcomed four fantastic interns. Each intern brought an open mind, excellent questions, and an excitement about preserving New England Jewish history.

JHC collections

Reuben Glassenberg, a senior at Clark University majoring in American History, served as an onsite Jewish cemeteries resource in addition to processing an archival collection, creating an inventory, and coding a finding aid. He also assisted the JHC archivists at the Jewish American Heritage Month celebration with Governor Maura Healey (see page 18) and attended the JHC's annual benefit dinner (see page 58).

Eliana Lippman, a junior at Brandeis University double majoring in history and theater arts, processed two archival collections from start to finish, created inventories, and coded the finding aids.

JHC digital archives

Erin Han, a high school senior at Phillips Exeter Academy, digitized and created metadata for twenty-five folders of materials from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Boston Port Records.



Interns Eliana Lippman, Reuben Glassenberg, and Erin Han in the JHC office.

JHC outreach

Lane Rosenzweig, a sophomore at Skidmore College, joined the JHC for a second summer and worked with staff on enhancing educational materials and developing marketing resources.

— Sarah Dauer, Digital Marketing Associate at the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at American Ancestors

American Ancestors interns

This summer, three talented interns—working virtually or on-site at our Boston headquarters—made significant contributions to digitization, research, and transcription projects that advanced the mission of American Ancestors in meaningful ways.

Database projects

Kaitlin Tyler, a senior at Brigham Young University, worked on the scanning and transcription of the second volume and index of the “Account books of John Hull” (Mss 600). She also scanned hundreds of Massachusetts York Rite Masons membership cards for a forthcoming database.

Harvard Slavery Remembrance Program

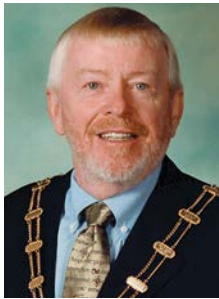
Sulaiman Jamil, a senior at Klein Cain High School in Klein, Texas, worked on the transcription of the second volume of the “Account books of John Hull” (Mss 600). Sulaiman also examined probate, church, and vital records of enslavers listed in the account book to learn more about the people they had enslaved.

R. Stanton Avery Digital Library and Archives

Claire Peterson, who holds an MA in library and information studies from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, scanned and wrote metadata for family vital data in Bible records. She also undertook digitization of “Isaac Willey and his descendants” (Mss A 4399). After Conservator Todd Pattison scanned this fragile notebook, Claire wrote technical and descriptive metadata and published the collection online in our Digital Library and Archives.

— June Henry, Digital Archivist at American Ancestors

We are grateful to our 2025 summer interns for the dedication and enthusiasm they brought to their work here and their many contributions to American Ancestors.



OBITUARY

Thomas Robert Crowley, 1941–2025

Thomas “Tom” Robert Crowley of Carefree, Arizona, and Akron, Ohio, died April 21, 2025, aged 83. Tom was born April 25, 1941, in Wyandotte, Michigan, to Frank and Veronica Crowley. He was the first of five children. He attended St. Patrick’s School in his early years and graduated from the University of Detroit High School in 1959.

Tom earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Detroit in 1962. In the mid- and late-1960s he served in the U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, and the National Guard. His service ended in 1970 with an honorable discharge from the Air Force Reserve.

Tom held various executive and managerial positions at companies including Eagle Picher Industries before purchasing Gasko Products in Medina, Ohio, in the mid-1970s. He ran the company, retired as chairman and president, and then sold it in 2000.

Tom conducted extensive genealogical research into his Irish ancestry. In 2011, he published *Dear Barney, Love Ileen: The Correspondence of Charles Marr and Tessie Sullivan from 1892 to 1902*, a two-volume set of annotated letters between his grandparents that documented their courtship and painted a detailed picture of life at the end of the nineteenth century.

Tom joined the New England Historic Genealogical Society in 2003 and soon became a Life Member. He served as a Councilor from 2007 to 2014 and was a member of the Henry Bond Society in recognition of his legacy philanthropy.

Tom was instrumental in supporting efforts to digitize *The Search for Missing Friends: Irish Immigrant Advertisements Placed in “The Boston Pilot,” 1831–1920* for our website. In 2012, Tom facilitated the purchase of the Riobard O’Dwyer Papers (Mss 1097) for American Ancestors. In her “Reminiscences of NEHGS, 1976–2012” [AMERICAN ANCESTORS (2013) 2:52–53], Senior Genealogist Marie Daly called him one of “the most memorable Trustees I have worked with ... and [a] great [supporter] of Irish genealogy at NEHGS.”

Tom is survived by his wife, Mary Lynn; his daughter, Kate Crowley, and her husband, Marc Lascko; and his sisters Ellen Crowley, Anne Ronco, Margaret Kundahl, and Mary Gutowski.



OBITUARY

David H. Souter, 1939–2025

David Hackett Souter of Hopkinton, New Hampshire, died May 8, 2025, aged 85. He was born September 17, 1939, in Melrose, Massachusetts, to Joseph Alexander and Helen Adams (Hackett) Souter. He grew up in Weare, New Hampshire, and attended Concord [N.H.] High School, where he was second in his class.

David attended Harvard College, graduating *magna cum laude* in 1961 with a BA in philosophy. He was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to study jurisprudence at Magdalen College, Oxford University, in 1963. In 1966, he achieved a Bachelor of Laws degree from Harvard Law School.

After working in the private sector from 1966 to 1968, David served first as Assistant and then Deputy Attorney General of New Hampshire; from 1976 to 1978, he served as Attorney General. In 1978, he was appointed to the New Hampshire Superior Court, and, in 1983, he was appointed to the New Hampshire Supreme Court.

In 1990, he was nominated by George H. W. Bush to the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. Later that year, President Bush nominated him to the Supreme Court of the United States. David served as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court until 2009.

David served as trustee and president of Concord Hospital in Concord, New Hampshire; an overseer of Dartmouth Medical School; and a trustee and vice president of the New Hampshire Historical Society.

David was an avid genealogist with deep New England roots. His forebears are detailed in “Notable Kin: Ancestors of Supreme Court Justice David Hackett Souter” in *NEHGS NEXUS* (1994): 31–36, accessible at AmericanAncestors.org. David was a longtime member and donor at American Ancestors.

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GENEALOGIES

The Three Stephen Binghamms of West Point, King William County, Virginia, 1750 to 1850 and Beyond, Donna Bingham Munger (the author, 2025). eBook, PDF, free. 126 pp. Illustrations. The author wrote this book to demonstrate how researchers can use original records for accurate information and to disprove any relationship between colonial New England and Virginia Binghamms. Available at donnabinghammunger.com.

The Immigrant Rodolphus Elmes, His Wife Catherine Whitcomb, and Their Descendants, Robert G. Elms (Legacy Books, 2024). \$85 + \$8 shipping. 346 pp. Index, citations. This book traces the descendants of Rodolphus Elmes through twelve generations and includes detailed biographical documentation. Available from Robert G. Elms, 2101 Bennington Ct., Thousand Oaks, CA 91360; contact relms@ix.netcom.com.

The Nickerson Family: Part 5: Samuel (Nickerson Family Association, Inc., 2024). \$100 + \$9.56 shipping. 626 pp. Index, color photos. Announcing the latest volume in the Nickerson Family Association's acclaimed series on the descendants of Cape Cod founders William Nickerson and Anne Busby. This edition goes beyond names and dates with detailed biographical sketches of eighth-generation descendants through son Samuel Nickerson and vital statistics for the ninth generation. Available from nickersonassoc.com.

OTHER BOOKS

Uxbridge, Massachusetts in the Revolutionary War, Michael R. Potaski (the author, 2025). Softcover \$19.95. 105 pp. Endnotes and index. This book examines Uxbridge's support of the Revolution in terms of men and materiel provided for the various deployments and operations during the war. Available from Amazon.com.

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The American Ancestors cartoon



"I think you need to take a break from genealogy.
You're seeing family trees everywhere!"

Caption submitted by Michele Procenti Van Swol. Drawing by Jean Powers.

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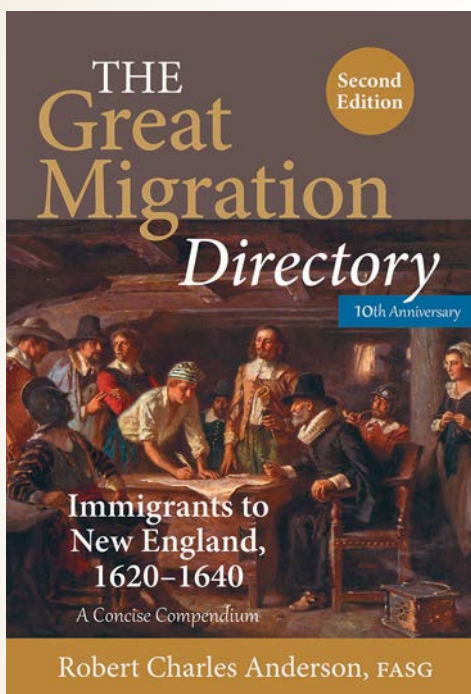
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The #1 resource for family historians with
early New England immigrant ancestors!



The Great Migration Directory: Immigrants to New England, 1620–1640 — A Concise Compendium, 2nd Edition

By Robert Charles Anderson, FASG

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