

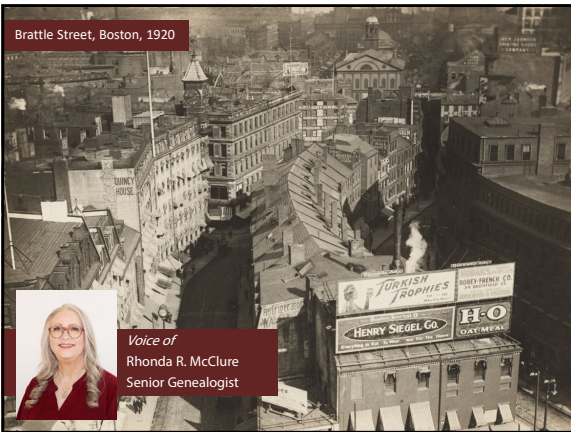
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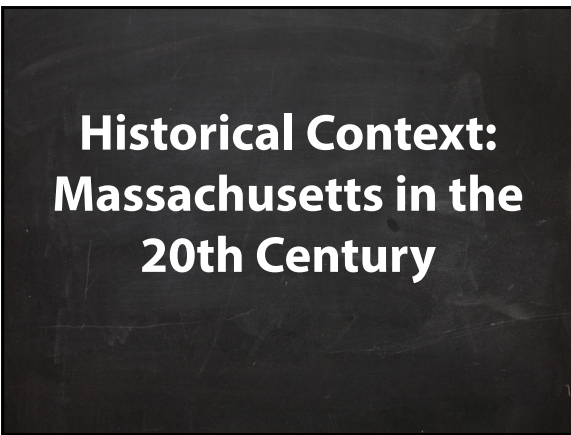
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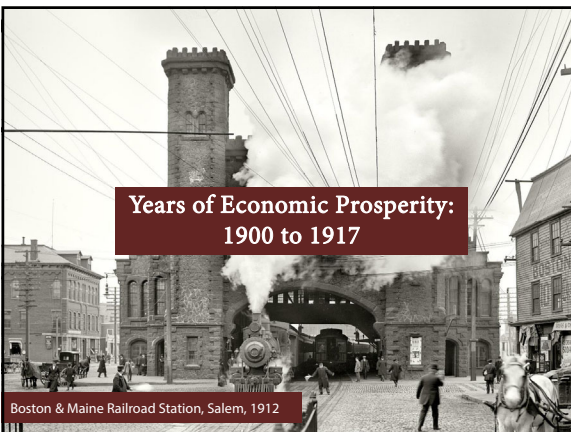
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6



Boston Harbor Bird's Eye View, 1905

7

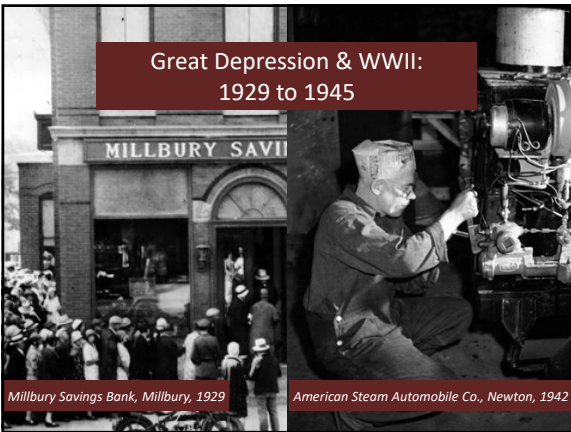


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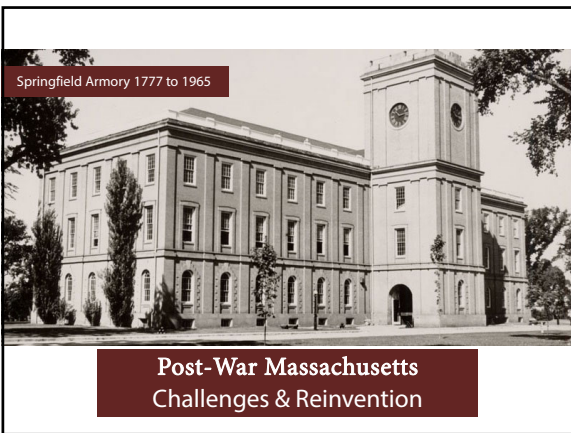


Holyoke Street Railway: Mount Tom Railroad Incline, 1912

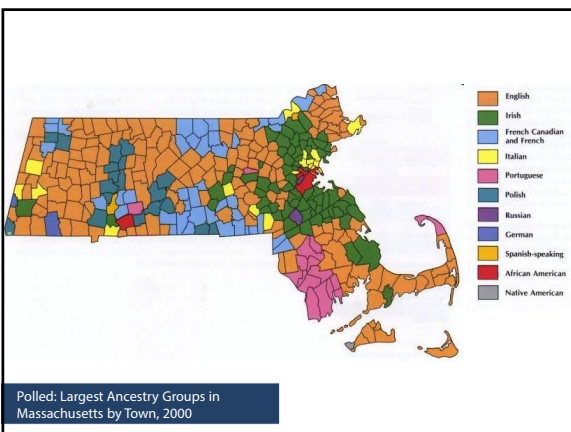
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15

Accessing Massachusetts Civic Records

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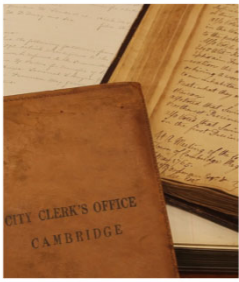
Massachusetts Civil Records

- Civil records – including vital & probate records – act as the foundation in our research
- Often there are levels of bureaucracy to navigate
- Confidentiality rules limit access & can require court intervention
- Who created the original record?
 - Local, State, or Federal Government?



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Massachusetts Vital Records



- Massachusetts is a predominantly “open record” state
- 20th century Mass. Vital Records maintained at two levels:
 - By the town clerk where the event occurred
 - Reported to the State where a second return is kept

18

Researching Vital Records at the Massachusetts Archives

- Original manuscripts of vital records for 1841 to 1935
- Delayed & corrected original records up to 1920
- Most of these records up to 1927 are digitized and available online at familysearch.org
- Request certified copies from reference archivist for \$3
 - Online form submitted via mail or email: archives@sec.state.ma.us

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Vital Records for 1921 to 1925*

Searchable as three separate collections:

Births:
www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/2859768

Marriages:
www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/3010705

Deaths:
www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1463156

***except Boston**

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Vital Records 1638 to 1927*

browsable:

Available on FamilySearch.org:

- SEARCH
- Images

Image Group Number	Place	Date	Record Type	Number of Images
00737889 (Item 1 of 3)	Salem, Essex, Massachusetts, United States	1934	Vital Records	324 images
00737890 (Item 1 of 3)	Camden, York, Massachusetts, United States	1896	Vital Records	187 images
00737888 (Item 1 of 3)	Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts, United States	1943	Vital Records	158 images
00400020 (Item 1 of 3)	Hudley, Hampshire, Massachusetts, United States	1750-1900	Declarations of Intention, Marriage Records	55 images
00400020 (Item 1 of 3)	Hudley, Hampshire, Massachusetts, United States	1681-1862	Death Records, Declarations of Intention, Marriage Records	85 images
00400020 (Item 1 of 3)	Hudley, Hampshire, Massachusetts, United States	1660-1784	Birth Records, Marriage Records	45 images
00400020 (Item 1 of 3)	Hudley, Hampshire, Massachusetts, United States	1773-1840	Birth Records, Death Records, Marriage Records	90 images
00400020 (Item 1 of 3)	Hudley, Hampshire, Massachusetts, United States	1659-1719	Town Records	108 images

***except Boston**

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FamilySearch Family Tree Search Memories Get Involved Activities

Records Full Text **Images** Family Tree Genealogies Catalog Books Wiki

Results (4,434) REFIN

Image Group Number	Place	Date	Record Type	Number of Images
007578869 (Item 1 of 3)	Salem, Essex, Massachusetts, United States	1934	Vital Records	324 images
007578869 (Item 3 of 3)	Canton, Norfolk, Massachusetts, United States	1896	Vital Records	187 images
007578869 (Item 2 of 3)	Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts, United States	1943	Vital Records	158 images
004000350 (Item 3 of 5)	Hadley, Hampshire, Massachusetts, United States	1730–1800	Declarations of Intention, Marriage Records	55 images
004000350 (Item 5 of 5)	Hadley, Hampshire, Massachusetts, United States	1661–1882	Death Records, Declarations of Intention, Marriage Records	85 images
004000350 (Item 2 of 5)	Hadley, Hampshire, Massachusetts, United States	1660–1784	Birth Records, Marriage Records	45 images
004000350 (Item 4 of 5)	Hadley, Hampshire, Massachusetts, United States	1773–1840	Birth Records, Death Records, Marriage Records	90 images
004000350 (Item 1 of 5)	Hadley, Hampshire, Massachusetts, United States	1659–1719	Town Records	106 images

Mass. State Vital Records 1638-1927

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Shift from Register to Certificate Format

- Before 1903 all births, deaths, & marriages were recorded in register format

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Introduction of Certificates *(all towns except Boston)*

- May 1903: Death Certificates
- January 1918: Birth & Marriage Certificates

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Boston Vital Records
1904 to 1925

- After 1904, Boston Vital Records inconsistently recorded both Register and Certificate formats
- Boston Death Records
 - Before 1904: Register
 - 1904 to 1914: Certificate
 - 1915 to 1918: Register
 - 1919 to 1920: Certificate
 - 1921 to 1925: Register (Not Digitized)
- Boston Birth & Marriage Records
 - Before 1918: Register
 - 1919: Certificate
 - 1920: Register
 - 1921 to 1925: Register (Not Digitized)



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Registry of Vital Records & Statistics

- Vital Records 1936 to today
- Under the Department of Health – Separate from the Massachusetts Archives
- Offers only physical certified copies of records
- Submit record request via mail for \$32 per record
- Visit the research room to view and transcribe records – photos prohibited




Office located:
150 Mt. Vernon St.
Dorchester, MA



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Amended Records

- A “*” in the Vital Record Index indicates an amended or corrected record
 - Corresponding citation is for the amended volume
- All records amended after 1935 are held at the Registry of Vital Records & Statistics
- Records amended before 1935 (vols. 1 to 86) are open and can be accessed at the Massachusetts Archives
- Common amendments for birth certificates:
 - Adding a father’s information
 - Spelling corrections
 - Adoptions

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Located:
220 Morrissey Blvd,
Dorchester, MA


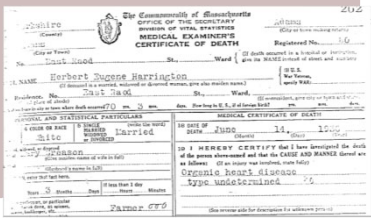



- Collects 20th century materials produced by state agencies.
 - State prisons
 - Mental health facilities
 - Public hospitals
- Massachusetts law restrict some of these records to preserve privacy.

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Medical Examiner Records 1885 – 1960


- Noted on a death certificate if an individual was seen by the Medical Examiner after their death
- May provide information as to circumstances of a person's life and death
- Provide death record to the Reference Archivist and they will send you the Medical Examiner's corresponding return

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State Prison Records


- Prison information is open upon an individual's death, but medical & mental health info is redacted
- Request a prison inmate case file by providing proof of death
- Case files often contain in-depth family histories
- The years available depend on the prison. Examples:
 - State Prison at Charlestown (1910-1941)
 - Men's Reformatory at Concord (1884-1939)
 - Prison for Women at Framingham (1913-1973)
 - State Prison Colony at Norfolk (1927-1955)



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State Hospital Records

- The Massachusetts Archives maintains records of State facilities that no longer in operation
- Many State Hospitals opened in the 1800s & did not close until the 1990s
- Access to these records may now be available



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 The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
 Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Francis Galvin
 Massachusetts Archives
 220 Morrissey Blvd
 Dorchester, MA 02125
archives@sec.state.ma.us | 617-727-2816

Massachusetts State Institution Request Form

PLEASE READ: Fill out all fields as completely as possible. Due to limited indexing, providing as much information as possible helps us conduct a thorough search. There are gaps in our collections, so not all searches are successful. You will receive a response in writing within ten (10) business days letting you know whether we have located a record relevant to your request. If a record is found, please allow additional time for review and copying. Copies will be sent as PDFs through email whenever possible, so be sure to include your email address below.

Full Name of Subject (both maiden and married name if changed): _____

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Date of Death: _____

Additional Information: _____

Copy of death record provided? Yes No

State Institution	Admission Date	Admission number

Institution Records Request

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Have questions?
 Contact the helpful
 reference team!
archives@sec.state.ma.us

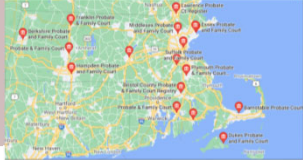
39



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Divorce Records


- 1887 to 1922: Divorces overseen by Mass. Superior Court
- After 1922, Probate & Family Courts also granted jurisdiction— have since heard most divorces in the state
- Probate & Family Courts are broken up into 14 divisions
- Each division keeps own Divorce index:
 - Statewide index (1952 to today) available at *Registry of Vital Records and Statistics*
 - Which Court & Docket Number
- Contact courthouse where divorce occurred to request copies



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Probate Records

- Where to look for 20th century MA probate records varies from county to county
- Depending on the record's age, probate may be at the Supreme Judicial Court Archives or still at Probate & Family Court where originally filed



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Online Search Tools:

How to find historic court records

GET STARTED


The best way to find the historic court record you're looking for will depend on a variety of factors, such as the type of record and the year of the document. Use this decision tree to find out how to get access to the record you're looking for.

[Start →](#)

1) Mass.gov – historic court record “decision tree”
www.mass.gov/decision-tree/how-to-find-historic-court-records

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Online Search Tools:



Welcome to Massachusetts Trial Court Case Access

We've made some changes to the appearance of this site to make it easier to use.

You can use this site to:

- Look up case information
- Pay some court fees online

Please note: The information on this site is not the official record of the court. It may not include the most recent court activity.

[File fees](#) to search public records.
[Court fees](#) to access standard case search page

2) Massachusetts Trial Court Electronic Case Look-Up
www.masscourts.org

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Naturalization Records at the Supreme Judicial Court Archives

- Naturalization records for anyone naturalized in State Superior Courts after 26 September 1906
- Majority of Superior Court naturalizations for 1906–1945 available on FamilySearch.org
 - Not text searchable, use indexes to locate petitions
 - Does not include Suffolk or Dukes counties



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Naturalization Records at the Supreme Judicial Court Archives

- Naturalization records filed after 1945 have not been digitized
 - Use online index to locate petition number
 - Contact Judicial Archivist to get full record
- Declaration of Intent & Petition for Naturalization may include:
 - Name, address, occupation, date and place of birth of the applicant
 - Information regarding arrival in the US
 - Marital status & names of children, with their dates and places of birth
- Prior to 1922, married women were included on their husband's petition
- No statewide index to naturalization records at the Judicial Archives
 - Each court was responsible for indexing its own records

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Mass.gov quick links to FamilySearch naturalizations:
www.mass.gov/info-details/find-out-which-historic-naturalization-records-are-available-online

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Need more help finding a record?
 Contact the Supreme Judicial Court Archivist: archives@jud.state.ma.us

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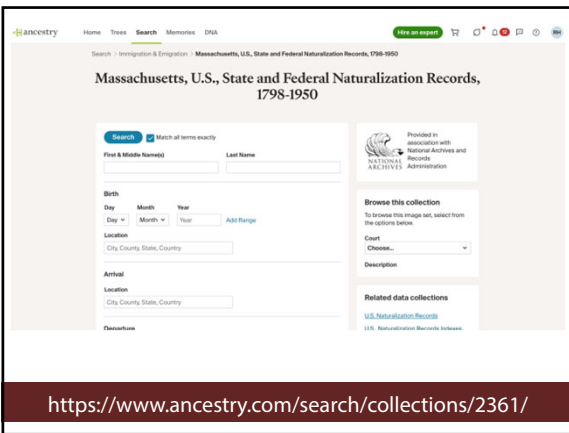
Naturalization Records at the National Archives



NATIONAL ARCHIVES
BOSTON

- 27 September 1906: All US naturalizations transferred from State to Federal Courts.
- *The Northeast Regional Branch of the National Archives in Waltham* houses naturalization filed at Massachusetts Federal Courts.
 - U.S. District Court (1790-1991)
 - U.S. Circuit Court (1845-1911)
- boston.archives@nara.gov

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ancestry.com Home Trees Search Memories DNA Hire an expert

Search: Immigration & Emigration Massachusetts, U.S., State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1798-1950

Massachusetts, U.S., State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1798-1950

Search Match all terms exactly

First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Birth Day Month Year City County State, Country

Arrival Location City County State, Country

Prohibited in association with National Archives and Records Administration

Browse this collection To browse this image set, select from the options below.

Court: Choose...

Description

Related data collections

[U.S. Naturalization Records](#)


U.S. Naturalization Records indexes

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2361/>

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Massachusetts Land Records

- Maintained at local level – 21 registry districts
- Registries of Deeds record & maintain every land transaction in each county/district
- Access most 20th-century land records online!
masslandrecords.com



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Massachusetts National Guard


- Massachusetts Archives
 - Service records of all Massachusetts Army and Air National Guard personnel discharged *before 1940*
 - Contact the Reference Archivist: archives@sec.state.ma.us
- The Military Records Branch in Milton
 - Service records of all discharged Massachusetts Army and Air National Guard personnel (*1947 to present*)
 - www.massnationalguard.org
 - phone: (508) 422-1993
 - email: military.records@mass.gov



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National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) St. Louis, Mo.

- Repository of military personnel, health, and medical records of discharged and deceased 20th century veterans from all services
- Records from Spanish American War to 2000
- Submit record requests online: vetrecs.archives.gov



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The screenshot shows the National Archives website for the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). The page includes a search bar, navigation tabs for 'RESEARCH OUR RECORDS', 'VETERAN SERVICE RECORDS', 'EDUCATOR RESOURCES', 'VISIT US', and 'AMERICA'S FOUNDING DOCUMENTS'. The main content area features a header for 'National Personnel Records Center (NPRC)' and a large image of the building. A sidebar on the left provides links for 'About Military Personnel Records', 'Military Records Request', and 'Request Military Service Records'. A 'For the Public' section includes links for 'Access to Records Policy', 'Requesting Records and Information', 'Military Records Request', 'Requesting Records Information', and 'Visiting and On-Site Research'. A 'Natural Disaster' Requests section is also visible. A banner at the bottom of the page reads 'Celebrating the Triumph of the American Spirit' with a 'LEARN MORE' button. The URL <https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center> is displayed at the bottom of the page.

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Massachusetts Newspapers

- Newspapers offer a wealth of information about your Massachusetts ancestors & their community.
- About 4,500 newspaper titles have been published in Massachusetts over the last 300 years.
- Advancements in printing & communication technologies in late 19th century led to a boom of local newspapers being published daily in Massachusetts.

The image shows two newspaper clippings. The top one is from 'The Boston Post' dated 22nd, with the headline 'HUGE MOLASSES TANK EXPLODES IN NORTH END; 11 DEAD, 50 HURT'. The bottom one is from 'The Bellingham Herald' with the headline 'U.S. DECLARES WAR ON JAPAN'.

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Massachusetts Newspapers

- 20th century Massachusetts newspapers can include genealogical details such as:
 - Birth, Death, & Marriage Announcements
 - School announcements
 - Probate & Court proceedings
 - Town Meeting Minutes
 - Property Sales
 - Military enlistments & news
 - Everyday comings & goings

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Where to Find 20th-Century Mass. Newspapers

- Many historic Massachusetts newspapers digitized & available online
- No central online repository for searching Massachusetts newspapers
- Check with your local library for microfilms of smaller local newspapers
- Popular large national databases:
 - Newspapers.com
 - NewspaperArchive.com
 - Genealogybank.com
 - Chroniclingamerica.loc.gov
- Useful summary of Massachusetts newspapers accessible online available at: theancestorhunt.com/blog/massachusetts-online-historical-newspapers-summary



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Massachusetts City Directories

- Pin your ancestor to an exact place & time
- Follow an ancestor from year to year, filling in the gaps between censuses
- Gained more widespread popularity in the late 19th century & were being published as late as the 1980s

Where to find them online:

- Ancestry (www.ancestry.com)
- Fold3 (www.fold3.com)
- Google Books (www.books.google.com)
- Internet Archive (www.archive.org)

Where to find them in person:

- Libraries - Local History Rooms
- Universities (often also online)
- Massachusetts State Library



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Massachusetts City Directories

- Published semi-annually
- Served functional purpose: How people found each other
- Include lists of churches, hospitals, schools & government offices – Point you to other family records
- Provide year-to-year local history & information on prominent citizens

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- Alphabetically list an individual with their occupation, work address, and/or home address
- Wives may be named in parentheses after husband
- Reveal dates of marriage and death or if someone has moved out of town
- Type and amount information provided evolved over the decades.
 - Early directories focused on men with occupations; would not always include domestic servants, women, or the unemployed
 - Later, more people were included such as: students and unmarried women

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Clues found in a City Directory may point you in the right direction.

Example:

If your ancestor was married by a minister, finding their church may lead to other records.

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- **Massachusetts State Library**
 - City & Town Directories
 - City & Town Annual Reports
 - Annual Reports of State Hospitals and other State Institutions
- **City of Boston Archives**
 - Historical records of Boston city government.
 - Tax Records & Voting Lists
- **Springfield History Library & Archives**
 - Records of Western Massachusetts
 - Large collection of French-Canadian records
 - 1.3 million archival documents: diaries, deeds, account books, & photographs.
- **Worcester Historical Museum Library & Archives**
 - Collection focused on city of Worcester
 - Some Worcester County



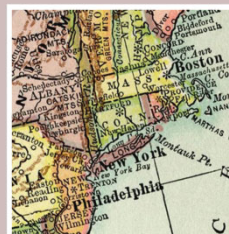
76



- **University Special Collections & Archives**
 - Unique collections of local historical manuscripts, publications, photographs, oral histories & the personal papers of notable individuals & businesses.

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Summary



- Pay attention to historical context
- Look beyond vital records
- Who created the record?
- Look offline
- Ask for help

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