New England Research

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Sources:
Primary- a verbal or written statement of an event, which was made at or near the time the event, occurred, usually in manuscript form. It may contain more information than a certified copy.
Look for microfilms of records such as: town or proprietor meetings, school, tax, and church.
Secondary- a verbal or written statement of an event or situation made some time after the event occurred. Certified copies may have mistakes and limited information.
Time makes the difference between primary and secondary sources.
Tertiary- a reference aid used to find and/or relate primary and secondary sources.
Combination- primary and secondary good as they reinforce and back up each other.
Oral evidence- information passed on verbally.
Documentary evidence- original record of an event.
3 elements of a good reference:
Personally witnessed by a person who is reliable.
Original document recorded soon after the event occurred.
Provides direct evidence and fits with other evidence.

Resources: State Archives, National Archives NE region, New England Historic Genealogical Society, and National Society of DAR (Daughters of American Revolution), Historical Societies

Perspective of Research: Create a timeline.

Maps: Historical- older map of town or area.
Topographical- recent detail of elevation of the terrain (USGS). Shows land types, rivers, mountains, locations for settlements and farming.

Vital Records: New England- kept by town clerks in register books as early as the 1600's and compiled in the 1850's. Connecticut Barbour Collection.
NY, NJ, PA- are from church records as other records are sparse.
Marriage Certificate - basic info., names, dates, residence, officiator, parents, witnesses, ages.
4 Types of Records of Intention to Marry:
Banns- religious announcement
Intentions- public notice posted
Marriage bonds- guarantee of payment
Applications or Licenses- to proper civil authorities
Mandatory statewide recording of records: Connecticut 1897; Maine (York County until 1760, Massachusetts until 1820) 1892; Massachusetts 1841; New Hampshire 1866, more official 1901; Rhode Island 1853; Vermont 1857. Look for statewide indexes.

Census: Several early colonial census are listed for the various states.
State Censuses: Maine 1837, Massachusetts 1855 and 1865, Rhode Island 1865-1936
Mortality Schedules- all states 1850,1860,1870,1880
Primary use of census records- to determine location in which people lived and to determine the family group at the census year.
Secondary use of census records- place of birth, year of birth, years in US and citizenship, number of children, when married, name spellings, relationships.

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Census Problems- mis-transcriptions, not all people included, inexact name spelling, wrong 1st letter in names, poor system, poor condition, poor handwriting.
Soundex Code- a letter and 3 numbers, 1st letter of name, then coded by alphabet in #'s.

Church Records: Baptist, Congregational Church state church until early 1800s, Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Society of Friends (Quakers)

Court records: Preliminary steps before searching: references, location, time frame, events in life, court information available. Filed at the county level for land and probate in Massachusetts, Maine and New Hampshire. At the town level and in probate district offices in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Vermont. Deeds are usually indexed by grantor and grantee. Probates are indexed by the name of the deceased. Beware of boundary changes for towns and counties in locating records. Look for statewide indexes.

4 Major Types of Court Records:
Dockets- list of cases on court calendar.
Court Minutes- brief daily accounts of proceedings.
Orders- judgments rendered or orders given by court.
Case Files- packet or bundle of all related paperwork to a case.

Basic Process of Probating a Will:
Petition to Initiate
Will presented to court, read by all parties, probate packet created
Executor/Administrator appointed, issues letters of testimony/administration.
Bond fee paid for security.
3 people not involved appointed to do inventory.
Publication of pending probate published.
Allowance assigned for dependents
Guardian assigned for minors or incompetents.
Convert perishables to cash for support of dependents.
Accounts established to record submitted records.
Additional public notices.
Ex/Ad makes final accounting.
Distribution and settlement.
Each heir signs off after receiving distribution.
Ex/Ad is released.

Court for adoption in Massachusetts - Probate Court since 1851.
Manumission Court Process: release of a slave or when they are set free. Papers may contain marriage record, petitions, bills of sale, and certificates of freedom.

Land Records: Surveys - Metes and Bounds- by geographical features of the land.
Rectangular Survey- by exact measurement of the land after 1785.
Records that lead to land records:
probate, obituaries, tax, military, census, newspaper articles, city directories.
5 types of land entry records: Military Bounty Lands (1776-1855)
Private Land Claims (1789-1908)
Donation Lands and cash or credit sales (1800-1908)
Homestead Grants (1862-present)
Grants to States (usually at formation of state)
State-land states: New England
Federal-land states: Most of the other states

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Military Records: New England-Colonial Period (1600-1775) Local Militias-Revolutionary War, King Williams War, Queen Anne's War, King Georges War, French and Indian Wars
Colonial States Records Archives, Historical and Genealogical Societies. Focus on gathering into state repositories. Military organized on the local level during this time.
Confederate Records- NARA compiled military service record (CMSR) and state archives or equivalent agency. Union Records- indexed online at Ancestry.com and NARA. Compilations of relative unit service records are also available online. Other records to search after viewing military pension records- military service records, probate, guardianship, land, census, newspapers, cemetery records, 1840 and 1890 census veteran schedules.

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