

Colonial Genealogical Records - And How to Find Them

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The Colonial Period

- The Colonial Period is defined as the years between 1610 and 1776
- From the setting of Jamestown to the Revolutionary War
- The records are for the European settlers that came to what is now the original 13 states

Colonial Population Growth

- The population of Orange County CA today, is over 500,000 more people than were in all 13 colonies in 1776

Colonial Religion

- It is important to know the religious population in each of the colonies. You will have a better idea of what to look for as to the type of records.
- Anglican and Baptist
 - a. Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia
- Puritan
 - a. Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island
- Catholics, Anglicans and Baptists
 - a. Maryland
- Quakers, Catholics, Lutherans, Jewish and others
 - a. Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

Colonial Government

- All of the 13 Colonies elected their own legislature, they were all democratic, and they all had a governor, governor's court, and a court system.
- There were 3 different systems of government:
 - Royal Government: The Royal Colonies were ruled directly by the English monarchy
 - Virginia, New York, New Hampshire, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Jersey, and Georgia
 - Propriety Government: The King granted land to people who then formed Proprietary (Private) Colonies
 - Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland
 - Charter Government: The Charter Colonies were generally self-governed, and their charters were granted to the colonists.
 - Connecticut, Rhode Island
 - Massachusetts form of government was a "Royal Province under Charter".

Finding the Records

Google

- When you search using Google, be as specific as possible
 - a. If you search on "colonial genealogy records" you will get 1.39 million hits
 - b. If you are more specific with your search like "colonial genealogy records providence rhode island" you will get 149,000 hits
 - c. If you even more specific with your search like "colonial genealogy records providence rhode island birth marriage death records" you will get 25,000 hits
- For specific types of records, such Quaker or Puritan records, start out with a mega search and drill down from there
- For example, start your search with "Quaker records genealogy" and then get more specific

Google Books

- Google Books is an under used source for any form of genealogical research
- Search for “colonial america genealogy records” and get 8,490 hits
- Search on “colonial georgia genealogy records” and get 28,800 hits
- Search on “colonial new hampshire genealogical records birth marriage death” and you get 1,240 hits

Cyndi's List

- Another under used resource for finding any type of genealogical records
- Use Cyndi's List to find the locations for certain types of colonial records

FamilySearch Wiki

- A goldmine for finding what is available at FamilySearch.org and other websites.
- To search for Colonial Records in a specific colony, go to the specific colony (state) you want and look at all the options available. There is no date range qualifier so it will take you looking at the different types of records available.

FamilySearch Catalog

- Use the catalog to see what is available through FamilySearch. Again there is no date qualifier so you will need to pick a state and look at all the records.
- You should also, if possible, better your search possibilities by knowing the name of the county and possible the city of your interest. This cuts down the number of items you will need to browse.

Newspapers.com

- Search old newspapers. Not complete but many. Does have a year range to search option. Be specific in the colony you want to search.

GenealogyBank.com

- Search old newspapers back to 1690. They do have a date range option. Pick a colony (state) to search in to make it more reasonable.

Ancestry.com – Searching

- Search by state, go to the bottom of the search screen and make a selection. This will take you to every record collection that has to do with this colony. They list in major headings. Note the date range of the record in the collection to find the colonial record.

Ancestry.com – Catalog

- They have over 32,000 different databases. Filter your search by date, location, collection and language.

AmericanAncestors.org

- When searching the online collection use the ‘advanced criteria’ option. Here you get a year range to search. It is easier to find what you are looking for by know the state and county, city or town you are most interested in.

NARA – www.archives.gov/

- Start at “Research Our Records”. There are several choices here. Start with the “Search Online” box.

British National Archives – www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/

- Start with “Find our digitized collections” then enter your search criteria.

Individual States Archives

- Don't forget to search each individual states archives to see what is available.

Conclusions

- There is no one specific place to look for just colonial records
- You should at least know the colony you are interested in to make your search a little more manageable
- The sites shown are certainly not the only locations where you will find colonial records, just the ‘usual’ places
- There are other repositories available in each of the colonies and the national archives that have more information
- You will need to contact these repositories for further assistance in your quest