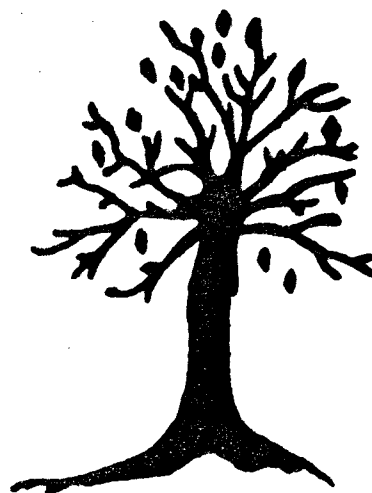


BRANCHES & TWIGS



NEWSLETTER OF GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF VERMONT
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FALLING LEAVES:

The Spring meeting of the Genealogical Society of Vermont was held May 18th in Bradford Vt. Members were present from New Mexico, Arizona, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire and New York.

Secretary and treasurers' reports were read and accepted. It was reported that our membership list has reached the figure 830. We have also added Utah, Delaware, and New Mexico to our list of fifty states. North Dakota and South Carolina are no longer represented because of transfer of members.

The four constitutional amendments which were discussed at the Fall 1973 meeting and which were printed in the Fall issue Vol 2, No 4 of "Branches & Twigs" were approved as read.

Our secretary, Mrs Joanne Nichols, passed out name tags after one out-of-state member suggested we wear them. This made it easier to identify the many people we've been corresponding with and was a nice way of connecting names and faces. Many of us would like to see name tags used at all future meetings.

Our first speaker was Mrs Patricia Haslam, a Certified Record Searcher. Her talk is reprinted here for the pleasure of all of our members.

RECORD SEARCHING IN VERMONT

First of all I would like to limit the scope of the title of my talk to record searching within Vermont records. I have been doing this work professionally for only 3 years and have been certified since March 1973. With the renewed upsurge of interest in genealogy, more competent people are needed who are able and interested in searching records for others. In order to know if you are doing a proper job you may apply to the Board of Certification of Genealogists in Wash. D.C. There are 3 categories: Genealogist, Amer. Lineage specialist, and record searcher, In the past 2 yrs I have asked 5 genealogists in the Conn & NY area for help on one of my own lines and they are all too busy to take my case. They all advertise regularly in national periodicals. So many more people are needed to search records. I got into this by accident when I put an ad in the Genealogical Helper to be listed as an amateur working on one surname from a branch of my family tree. They listed me as a professional.

Most of my own work has been requests for records before 1850 where census records in other states say their ancestors were "born in VT" These people have already checked as many places as they can, through correspondence. here is a sort of step-by-step procedure that I use from the receipt of the initial letter:

1. Evaluation. This is done at home to determine exactly what type of proof is needed. This includes checking the indexes to books I have at home and making brief notes from the Hemenway Gasetteer Index, 1790 census, Vol 5 of VT state papers which is "petitions for land", and Vol 7 of State papers which is "NY Land Patents covering lands within the state of VT." There are many Vermont names mentioned in The Yankee Exodus by Stewart Holbrook, 1950. In my answer then, I give my statement of fee or retainer paid in advance, and the possibility of amount of time it will take, the estimates of time are difficult and cannot be guaranteed.

2. After I receive their reply and check to proceed, I first check in Montpelier in Vital Records. This is mainly because of the time factor since this office is only open to the public for 3 hrs in the a.m. and 2 hrs after lunch beginning at 1:30. I check all spellings of the surname and cross-check any maiden names of brides or parents and children named further. I also try to estimate the total amount of cards for the surname as this could make a difference in the time estimate in case a card-by-card check is needed later. The client may feel he would rather not have you do this unless asked for.

3. Next place to check is at the Historical Society (downstairs) for any published or manuscript genealogies. Some people may feel this should be done before Vital Records because the answers may already have been found by someone else. But I don't feel I am duplicating work or wasting the clients money by checking in V.R. first it is always wise to at least spot check any genealogy for authenticity of dates and whether it is well documented with sources given. The same check is given to dates given by the client to his data or his group sheet.

4. From here I try the card catalog for all other references, in periodicals, books, etc. to this surname. If there is no known geographical location (again "Born VT.") the county histories may have clues, or the gazetteers may have had notations in the indexes from my notes made at home. If early enough, the 1790 or 1800 census indexes may show where certain families settled. Sometimes a name may show up in the military rolls published.

5. If the place of residence is known at least by county, it may pay to try the index to county probate records on microfilm at the Public Records Office. Not all probate districts are indexed, but I found what I needed in one case last week. We could not find one man anywhere in the records except he was "of Shaftsbury". The probate records file said he had died in 1790 which means he missed the VT census which was not actually taken until 1791. The estate file listed place of residence, some heirs, and a son-in-law for a guardian for the minor children. The inventory listed as the first item, 80 acres of land with a log house and barn. So this man did own land and so the next place to check would be

6. Land Records in that particular town to see if the first grantee deed might tell the place of former residence. Another estate listed next to the man I was looking for and the same surname is a possible brother and his previous place of residence was given. These records can be a goldmine of information. A last grantor deed of a person may give his new place of residence. "John Doe, late of Shaftsbury VT, now of Potsdam NY..." In researching a branch of my own family in Conn & NY I sent for copies of the complete index to id records for the surname. In Conn I received these pages from the State Library. In NY I received them from the County Clerk and you can obtain them from town clerks. This gives you the book and page, names of grantors and grantees, type of deed, and the date. From here you may order copies of any desired deed from the earliest recorded until about 1800 and after, an extremely valuable resource to have at home. Be sure you write first to ask the cost and send check in advance.

There are many, many other places to check which you learn from clues turned up as you go along, but the above 6 steps usually produce at least some documentation and is a begining which leads to further records. About once a year I try to review old customers' files in the light of some new method or new knowledge I've learned. Occasionally a clipping in a recent newspaper would interest them.

Why should one hire a record searcher or genealogist? I would hire this person only after I had tried to get all I could personally or by correspondence. Some of the reasons are: 1. The data can be obtained more quickly and less expensively than personal travel. 2. Try to hire someone in the same general area as the work involved. 3. A local searcher has more intimate knowledge of what records are available and can do an on-the-spot search. 4. He or she is more adept at extracting the genealogical information, abstracting or getting copies of originals. 5. He can better interpret the significance of the findings, evaluation, and discovering more clues. 6. This person can cover more types of records more quickly than many contacts by letter. 7. He may have access to local records unknown to the average person. Or private papers, collections, local descendants, etc.

Naturally the record searcher cannot guarantee that the needed information will be turned up. He must charge on the basis of time spent and expenses involved. So when you write the person for his fee send enough detailed information for an evaluation as to the possibility of finding the needed data. Another thing: I don't think any work is really wasted because it is helpful to have checked and found out where the person "isn't" as well and so narrow the search.

And then the question arises: should the genealogist or record searcher do work not asked for by the client? Many times the client has no idea what is available or what information will lead to the answer to the problem. The client will simply have to trust the judgement of the researcher to avoid duplication and time wasting wherever he can.

Here is a list of things to watch for in estate records. 1. Get copies of the original if possible and note the book, page, and location or office of the record, and type of record. 2. Again, extract all names dates and locations. 3. Watch for relationships between people. 4. Is marital status mentioned? Widow or widower? 5. In a will, note whether the writer is "sound in mind but weak in body" as this gives some idea of his age and/or health. 6. Note whether the wife's dower is mentioned. The widow usually gets 1/3 of the estate plus privilege of the house and her maintenance for the rest of her life if she does not remarry. 7. Note the type of document such as a guardianship of a minor child, letters of admission, a bond, etc. 8. Be careful of name spellings that vary and become familiar with the old handwriting. 9. Note the county and state given as boundaries could have changed. 10. Copy down all witnesses. In early records they may be related to the deceased. 11. Get the date of making of the document as well as the recording date. They may be the same or the recording date may be years later. 12. An inventory can tell many interesting things about their possessions and what types of lives they led. It may also tell if the land is owned or leased. 13. The distribution of the estate is one of the most important parts of estate records as it may name heirs or at least part of them. If there is no distribution it may be that the estate had nothing left after all the bills were paid and for the same reason there is sometimes no date of the final decree.

Land records give an estimated time of arrival and departure in a given area. Some things to watch for in searching land records: 1. Get copies of the complete document so you can refer back to it. 2. Read the whole land record completely at least twice. Phrases may be in it that describe relationships, occupation, or even religion- such as in areas where Quakers lived, their dates on documents refer to the number of the month of the year and not Jan. Feb. Mar. etc. 3. Witnesses may often be relatives. Check these names in genealogies in case there may be a marriage to a member of your family previously unknown to you. 4. Be sure you know the terminology. Watch for mention of a homestead or dwelling house or message which is a dwelling with adjacent land and buildings. With the help of these deeds and boundaries given plus an old map, if you are lucky, you could locate an old family dwelling. I have located 2 old family dwellings in what is now Westport, Conn. dating between 1732 & 1746. I have contacted the owners and have seen the interiors of the houses. 5. Be sure to get all dates and what they are for: On one recent deed I found the date of making, a later date it was witnessed, a date nearly a year later when it was received by the town clerk, and 3 months after that the date it was finally recorded. 6. Check the boundary names. It may be a family who has married into your family. Land may have come down to your family as dower to the wife and not be recorded which sometimes accounts for why there may be no first grantee deed to an ancestor. 7. Don't forget the atlases and maps, especially when owners names were given.

Helpful hints on searching generally: 1. If you have a family known to be in a certain area, even as large as a county for instance, check to see if there is a genealogical or historical society which publishes a quarterly. If your budget permits, write and ask them what the cost is of the indexes only to these periodicals. That way you may order from them copies of articles that interest you by volume and page and gain a lot of interesting information and perhaps even some records themselves which are usually printed in continued form. Be sure you write first to see how much it will cost. In questions such as this when an answer can be brief I enclose a government post card, self addressed, instead of a self addressed stamped envelope. Write the question at the top for which you need an answer. I find I get answers back more quickly than when they need to write a complete letter. 2. Watch for inaccuracies, generalities, and the lack of specific details and dates. 3. In the library don't forget to check the manuscript file and ask for possibility of uncatalogued material on your subject. 4. Again, if your budget permits, join a historical society that has a book loan by mail service to their members. The NEHGS in Boston has this as well as the Conn. Hist. Soc. The books may have helpful bibliographies. In order for you to know what to send for get one or two catalogs from booksellers such as Tuttle or Goodspeed. You send for a list longer than you may have so that if they don't have what you need they go onto the next title. At Boston you may borrow 2 titles at one time. 5. Spot check all indexes for reliability. Pick several names, preferably obscure ones in the text, and see if they appear in the index with page. Do the same for map texts. 6. In searching records make all notations as to the source and title of the material including where you found it, call number, office, building, town, state, and the date you did the work. 7. A trick in doing vital records is to do each on a separate file card. Then you may rearrange them by family groups, dates or geographical locations. 8. If you can't find the person you are searching for in the records of the town where you thought he would be, try the surrounding towns or find out if the town's boundaries or town name was changed about that time. The same for a change of county. 9. Don't overlook records of court minutes especially if you can visit the courthouses personally. Many times some special event, recorded nowhere else, may give that needed clue, such as a suit over land ownership or finances. 10. Bob Hagerman of Morrisville just recently completed the indexing of one of our local newspapers, The News and Citizen since its beginning in 1881. Check these local papers, an obituary may give the maiden name of a wife, or a death date, or even a feature article or biography. Without indexes, such records are rarely used. 11. When writing to public offices or archives, be brief, send that self addressed stamped envelope or postcard, and do ask where the records can be found in case they don't have them.

I haven't begun to cover all the different types of records. And everyone develops their own ways of searching the records. So I hope some of the ideas from some of the major records that I have given you