

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

by John A. Leppman

Vermont Genealogy is pleased to offer our readers the following reviews to help them evaluate recently published books and CD-ROMs of interest. Notices are given to reprints of out-of-print books. If you produce or sell something you would like reviewed, please mail a review copy to John A. Leppman, Book Review Editor, 20 Thwing Lane, Bellows Falls VT 05101-1608. Reviews or notices of books and CD-ROMs appear at the discretion of the editor.

REVIEWS

The Tillinghasts in America: The First Four Generations by Wayne G. Tillinghast (Greenville, R.I., 2006), clothbound, xiv, 775 pp. Order from RIGS Books, PO Box 433, Greenville RI 02828. \$39.00; R.I. residents add \$2.75 per copy sales tax. Rhode Island Genealogical Society members' price \$35.00; \$2.45 per copy sales tax. Add \$3.95 shipping and handling for the first copy, \$1.00 each additional copy.

I had to read all the way to page 2 of this handsome and encyclopedic book to find an answer to my foremost question about this Rhode Island family. I had always assumed that the personal name "Pardon" was one of those pious Puritan names like Hatevil or Thankful. Actually, it is the maiden surname of the immigrant's paternal grandmother, and comes down to him by way of his father. The family has preserved the given name through generations up to our era.

Pardon¹ Tillinghast was born at Severn Cliffs near Beachy Head, now Eastburne, Sussex, about 1622 and died at Providence, R.I., on 29 January 1717/8. He came from an educated and fairly distinguished English family but did not have a university education. He was trained as a cooper. He arrived in Rhode Island by 1645 and led a long and fruitful life there. He was married twice and had twelve children who lived to maturity. Descendants were prominent in colonial Rhode Island and spread out from there, although in the generations covered in this volume, Rhode Island is the dominant place of residence.

The nearly 1500 descendants numbered in this volume extend to the great-great grandchildren of Pardon¹. Like the "five generations" *Mayflower* books, I think the title of this volume understates its coverage by a generation. Counting the immigrant, this book accounts thoroughly for five generations (not always extending lines not carrying the Tillinghast surname), and in fact it frequently at least briefly lists a sixth.

The book is carefully arranged in good *Register* format and meticulously documented with footnotes which appear on the page where they are cited. (The capacity to do this easily is, in my opinion, the single greatest contribution that computers have made to genealogy. I do not wish to enter into arguments about whether the Internet should be ahead of it in this competition.)

High quality single-surname genealogies continue to be published for cornerstone New England families, and this is certainly an example. Present-day

principles of documentation and analysis of information make these books even more indispensable than the century-old ones which we still use and revere.

Records of Plymouth Colony: Births, Marriages, Deaths, Burials and Other Records, 1633-1689 compiled by Nathaniel B. Shurtleff (Boston, 1857; rep. with add., 2006), [8], 293 pp., clothbound. Order from Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 260, Baltimore MD 21211-1953; toll-free number for orders 1-800-296-6687. \$30.00; add \$4.00 postage and handling for the first book, \$2.00 each additional book. Maryland residents add 5% sales tax; Michigan residents add 6% sales tax. Note that the additions are from 1911 and 1913 journal articles and this has been reprinted in 1976, 1979, 1991, and 1997.

The bulk of this work is a facsimile reprint (at considerable reduction of the original page size) of Volume 8 of Nathaniel Shurtleff's beautifully compiled and printed *Records of the Colony of New Plymouth in New England*, published in 1857. In this volume were concentrated "Miscellaneous records" from various primary sources, and here are to be found birth, marriage, and death records for the Plymouth Colony from its beginnings up to its merger with Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1689. Numerous lists of freemen of the various towns are also included, as are Treasury accounts which are, by and large, of less interest to genealogists. The full set of twelve volumes of Shurtleff's *Records* is a fundamental source for Plymouth Colony history; sets of the original printing are increasingly scarce and expensive in the antiquarian book trade, and a reprint edition (AMS Press, 1968) is hardly common. The set takes up a fair amount of shelf space. The present volume focuses on the material of most interest to genealogists.

The reprint includes Shurtleff's meticulous index. It also includes nine pages of material from *The Mayflower Descendant*, 13 [1911]: 83-86, and 15 [1913]: 25-29, compiled by George Ernest Bowman, which adds some entries to what Shurtleff had located. That material is not indexed.

The Ricker Compilation of Vital Records of Early Connecticut by Jacquelyn Ladd Ricker (Baltimore, 2006), 1 CD ROM. Order from Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc., 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 260, Baltimore MS 21211-1953; toll-free number for orders 1-800-296-6687. \$59.99; add \$4.00 postage and handling for one item, \$2.00 each additional item. Maryland residents add 5% sales tax; Michigan residents add 6% sales tax.

Connecticut's vital records, at least up to about 1850, are probably the most accessible of any state in the nation. Since the 1930s, the Barbour index, a centralized, generally reliable card index of birth, marriage, and death records, has resided at the Connecticut State Library, where it can still be consulted. It is supplemented by indexed transcriptions of private family Bible records, cemetery records, and other useful materials. The Barbour index and its adjuncts are available on microfilm at a number of genealogical libraries, and the town indexes which are merged into the Barbour Index have been published in book form (and often noted, as they have appeared, in this column).

Now comes a single CD ROM which incorporates all the entries in the Barbour Index as well as a large number of other supplementary materials, one

alphabetical list of some 1.2 million records of births, marriages, and deaths from over 135 Connecticut towns (there are a few towns not in the Barbour Index), plus some 300,000 records from cemeteries, probate records, tax records, family Bibles, and so forth. Certainly if there is one Connecticut resource that the average researcher might wish to have available on his or her laptop, this is it.

I found using this CD a bit cumbersome. The records are in one very long alphabet for the state, as might be expected. Even on a fairly up-to-date computer, the search feature takes awhile to run. Listings are generally in last-name-first-name order, so typing in a name in first-name-last-name order does not reach most desired records. There is an index of surnames, giving one the page number to locate the entries for a given surname, which is the best way to find the mother lode for a particular surname, but the page numbers were not completely accurate. Citations at least landed me close to the desired spot.

The single alphabet, of course, loses any clustering of related records in a single town. For that, the book format compilations are still useful, and ultimately, one might want to see originals or microfilms of the actual records, which can be useful in understanding context.

For all of that, here is a place to find a huge assortment of Connecticut records without traveling to Hartford.

The Descendants of Oliver Nye (c. 1798-1883): Early Settlers in Cortland and Tompkins Counties, NY, With a History of the Henry D. Rumsey Family by James J. Carrington (Lynchburg, Va., 2006), xvi, 128 pp., clothbound. Order from the author at 1411 Madison Stree, Lynchburg, Virginia 24504. \$46.00 per copy; add \$2.50 per order for postage and handling.

Oliver Nye was born about 1798 in Whitingham, Vt., and moved westward into Rensselaer Co., N.Y., with his family at an early age. He eventually settled in Cortland County and later in adjacent Tomkins County where he died in Dryden in 1883. This account of his family focuses largely on central New York state but has various Vermont connections, both involving Oliver's beginnings and, to some extent, the homes of his descendants.

Oliver was a sixth-generation descendant of Benjamin¹ Nye (d. 1707) of Sandwich, Mass., whose descendants constitute one of the large Cape Cod families. Other common Cape Cod names, such as Tupper and Freeman, turn up in the account of Oliver's ancestry. The direct Nye lineage from Benjamin to Oliver is recounted carefully here before taking up Oliver and his descendants.

The book is carefully organized. It uses the Henry system which adds a digit with each successive generation, so sixth-generation descendants of Oliver have numbers which look like "141722." (This system can get very tedious after about six generations, as I have commented in reviews over the years.) The narrative genealogy is supplemented by neat computer-generated ancestry and descendancy charts. There are many illustrations, including family photographs, maps, and some attractive cuts from nineteenth-century books showing such features of the landscape as the Erie Canal, inserted where they are relevant to the family or local history being discussed.

An appendix relates a general survey of the settlement of central New York. Another added chapter covers descendants of Henry David Rumsey (1824-1903),

born in Steuben Co., N.Y., with Vermont roots, died in Homer, Cortland Co., N.Y. His family and the Nyes have various interconnections.

This is a carefully researched and well presented account of a family up to the present day. One trivial gripe: the term “township” is incorrect for a New England or New York town unless it is not formally organized. This book gets the distinction right most of the time but does not escape “Whitingham Township” (p. 9) and “Bennington Township” (p. 10), among other slips.

North American Wills Registered in London 1611-1857 by Peter Wilson Coldham (Baltimore, 2007), [12], 156 pp., hardbound. Order from Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 260, Baltimore MD 21211-1953; toll-free number for orders 1-800-296-6687. \$25.00; add \$4.00 postage and handling for the first book, \$2.00 each additional book. Maryland residents add 5% sales tax; Michigan residents add 6% sales tax.

Genealogists have long known that the Prerogative Court of Canterbury was the entity that handled wills and probate administration of persons living in North America but having property in Great Britain from the early seventeenth century up to 1858. Its records, now in the United Kingdom’s National Archives, include some two thousand files involving American connections, among something like a million PCC files in total. Access to this information has been available through Mr. Coldham’s *American Wills and Administrations in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1610-1857* (published in 1989) and *American Wills Proved in London 1611-1775* (published in 1992). An important advance in access to this information comes now with the development of online access to a digitized image of any PCC file. This new and convenient index by Coldham updates his previous work and allows streamlined and accurate access to the online archives. It includes careful instructions about how to reach the file you want. (There is a charge for downloading a file.)

The listings in this book provide enough information about each file that one can be reasonably sure of whether the person will be of interest and can focus on the right file in the online archive. There is an index of names noted incidentally, of places, and of ships.

The existence of online access to PCC files is, of course, also of great interest to researchers looking for files on British persons who did not have American ties. They are not to be found here but form the vast majority of the PCC records.

Rutland County Vermont Probate Extracts: Rutland District: Part 1: Volumes 1-8, 1781-1814 compiled by Margaret R. Jenks and Danielle L. Roberts and edited by Dawn D. Hance (Granville, N.Y., 2007), vi, 142 pp., paper covers with comb binding. Order from Margaret R. Jenks, 24 Mettowee Street, Granville NY 12832. \$25.00 postpaid. New York residents add applicable sales tax.

Probate courts for Rutland County are divided between the Rutland and Fair Haven Districts. Records for the Rutland District start at about the time of the establishment of the county in 1781, although some relate to persons deceased in previous years. (An example is noted in this compilation of a soldier who died at the Battle of Bennington in 1777, but probate administration was still going on some years later. Benning Wentworth’s 1769 estate settlement turns up, too,

presumably because he had land interests in Rutland County.) As indicated in the title, this transcription of summaries of probate court records carries them up to about 1814.

What is extracted here is material from the bound volumes of records. Original documents survive in many cases and are in packets in separate files. These are available for inspection and may in many cases include information not transcribed into the record books. An alphabetical list of the document packets from this time period is appended to this book. The book has a thorough name index, which should be searched for names of people living in and near Vermont who might have been involved in one way or another in a Rutland County probate matter in this time period.

The extracts here are thorough and careful, and the work represents the efforts of a trio of well established Rutland County genealogical experts. Additional such compilations, including coverage of this time period for the Fair Haven District, will be eagerly awaited. With efforts like this and Scott Andrew Bartley's *Windsor County Vermont Probate Index* (St. Albans, Vt., 2000) and "Abstracts of Bennington District Probate Records, Book 1, 1778-1792" (published in the previous issue of *VG* and finished in this one), Vermont's probate records are gradually coming better to the surface.