

Research in North-Central Maine

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Because of travel time and distances, genealogists doing research in Maine quickly learn the value of familiarity with archives and existing record transcripts (print, typescript, manuscript, or microfilm). Maine is so large that most of the rest of New England could fit within its boundaries. But unlike smaller areas or states, the commute to the north-central part of Maine requires some planning. And consider the largest cities, Augusta and Bangor. They offer the best opportunities for research. The Maine State Archives (MSA) at Augusta is the single state repository and holds the largest amount of published material, including filmed copies of town records. Easy access to the office of Vital Records, Department of Human Resources, is readily available just a short walk across the street.

Generally speaking, genealogical research in north-central Maine is concentrated in the repositories listed below. The collections, from the largest to the smallest, are the most popular and certainly the best known in the region. Many small-town libraries throughout the region have small collections, as do numerous local genealogical or historical societies. Owing to budget and staff constraints, the limitations are understandable. But researchers would be ill advised to shun or ignore the important role "local" libraries can play in good research. It is a given in this business that experienced genealogists make a beeline to the well-known facilities before they concentrate on the local collections. In my view, it is generally advisable to go to the largest facility first. If answers are not there, go to the local collection.

Local librarians are an invaluable resource. They know that vast numbers of people are searching for their family roots. It follows that, given budgetary constraints, they are interested in collecting any research done by local families on their ancestors but especially ancestral lines that include the towns early settlers. They also may have on their shelves family histories (published in limited quantity) that may not have found their way into the larger repositories. Vertical files are another valuable resource and can represent an assemblage of material from a variety of sources (newspaper clippings, obituaries, notes, copies, handwritten letters, military documents) and are apt to represent extremes. Many are very well organized and neatly put together. Others may be cluttered, with little or no mention of sources or specificity. But information found in localized vertical files is often pure gold and can be used to bridge a gap. It can provide important clues for the researcher to nail down the facts (and sources). Librarians can also assist the researcher by offering contact information for local historical and genealogical societies as well as for the single most informed person on genealogy or early families for the area. I like to refer to that person as the local "guru." In any event, I never give up a search without contacting that person.

The repositories discussed in this article are:

- Maine State Archives (MSA), Augusta
- Penobscot Marine Museum, Stephen Phillips Memorial Library, containing the Priscilla Jones Genealogical Collection
- University of Maine, Orono, Fogler Library
- Sagadahoc History and Genealogy, Patten Free Library
- Alvin & Whitmore Memorial Collection, Ellsworth Public Library
- Bangor Public Library

The Maine State Archives

The Maine Cultural Building in Augusta houses the State Archives, Library, and Museum. The archives house the largest centralized grouping of vital records in the state, backed by land, military, and judicial resources. There are more than 100,000 volumes of published works of interest to genealogists in the library. The Maine entries of the *Index to American Genealogies* (commonly referred to as the "Supplement to Munsell's Surname Genealogical Index") is still available. While it is no longer currently maintained or updated, it is a useful index in volumes and card files. It includes references to serials and monographs, making the record significant.

The following is a listing of materials, in general, available for research at the library:

- State, county, and town histories of Maine and other states
- Financial reports of towns and counties (town and county reports) of Maine

- Published vital records
- Cemetery records and epitaphs, early church records
- Wills, deeds, general court and probate, town and province records
- Maine census through 1850 and census indexes for other New England states
- Pension lists, military rosters and regimental histories
- Indexes, dictionaries and bibliographies
- Surname index to cemetery records
- Individual and collective genealogies and family histories, biographical collections pertaining to Maine and other states
- Passenger lists, immigration records to many Atlantic ports
- French-Canadian records of neighboring provinces
- Franco-American publications
- Catholic church registers of Maine and neighboring states
- Acadian and Huguenot records and publications
- D.A.R. and other hereditary patriotic organizations, publications, records, rosters, history
- Many periodicals published by various national, state, and local historical societies and associations
- Miscellaneous microform materials pertaining to Maine history and genealogy
- British, French, and American heraldry, including many of Burke's publications
- Books of instruction for beginners in genealogical research as well as world sources for the professional genealogist

Access to the library stacks is unrestricted. Reference librarians are available to assist researchers and can provide computer access and printouts of selected holdings, if necessary. Copy machines may be used with a controlled "key" counter, issued by a librarian. (The counter keeps track of the number of copies made and is returned to the librarian when finished; fees are 15 cents per copy.) Hours of the MSA are Monday to Friday, 9AM-5PM During school year the library is also open on Saturdays from 12-5PM.

Directly across the street from the Cultural Center is the Vital Records, Department of Human Services, where uncertified copies of births, marriages, and deaths (post 1923), can be obtained for a \$6 fee. Certified copies are \$10. Written requests may be directed to Vital Records, 221 State St., Augusta, ME 04333. VISA/MC are accepted for a \$5 additional charge and may be sent via mail, or facsimile to (207) 287-1907.

The State Archives (located at street level) is separate from the library (downstairs). Researchers are required to sign in and are issued a pass by staff. No bags, attache cases, or purses are permitted beyond the sign-in desk. Only pencils and note pads can be used within the collection. The most common research tool used here are the Maine censuses (1790-1920) and filmed copies of town records, containing vital records, meetings, petitions, and so forth. Generally speaking, these are the same records that have been filmed by the Mormon Church. Researchers may also ask to use the Civil War Soldiers Index. This card index contains the names of all Maine soldiers who served in the Civil War and are more definitive than the published Adjutant General Reports. The card shows the age of the soldier, where he was born, residence, occupation, personal features, and more.

Requests for photocopies of birth, marriages, and deaths (1892-1922) should be directed to the Maine State Archives, State House Station #84, Augusta, ME 04333-0084; telephone (207) 287-3184. Requests should be explicit, showing the full name of the individual, the date and location of the event. If a birth record is requested the staff need to know the father's name.

A little-known resource at the State Archives are records submitted by town clerks in compliance with the Maine Vital Record Act of 1865. It required the registration of births, marriages, and deaths. Though the act was soon repealed, many towns continued to forward records to the state. The approximate dates vary, but most begin 1863 and end 1865-67. Some, however, extend (with gaps) into the 1880s. Some commenced in 1885-86. A complete list by town and approximate date can be found in the *Maine Genealogist* (Nov. 1996): 153-160. By legislation, Maine again instigated the registration of vital statistics and records in 1892. The records generated by the 1865 Act are organized by town and are filed in eighteen boxes, with contents of each numbered box followed by the towns included within:

1. Abbot-Augusta
2. Aurora-Barnard
3. Bath-Bradford
4. Brewer-Buxton
5. Cambridge-Charleston
6. Charlotte-Cutler
7. Dallas Plantation-Etna
8. Falmouth-Guilford
9. Hancock-Knox
10. Lagrange-Lyman
11. Machias-Moscow
12. Newburgh-Oxford
13. Palmyra-Plymouth
14. Portland
15. Pownal-Rumford
16. Saint Albans-Swanville
17. Temple-Vinalhaven
18. Waldo-York, also Plantation 14, E.D., Washington Co.

Penobscot Marine Museum, Stephen Phillips Memorial Library

This unique facility is a museum and a maritime and genealogical research center. The museum is intent on collecting, preserving, and presenting documentation of life in coastal Maine from Wiscasset to Calais, focusing on the Penobscot Bay. The existing collection was built primarily from donations.

The library and the Priscilla Jones and Justice David A Nichols Genealogical Collections are preserved on three floors. There is a work area (the Phyllis E. Dillon Reading Room), security system, and humidity control for preservation. The research collections offer a diverse selection of archival and genealogical materials, including imprints and manuscripts. In addition to a collection of 3,000 genealogical works, the library holds approximately 12,000 books on maritime history, naval science, marine art, marine fiction, Maine history and lore, fisheries, yachting, navigation, life at sea, shipwrecks, wars.

The Priscilla Jones Genealogical Collection consists of two filing cabinets of folders, and about 1,000 linear feet of notebooks that identify more than 1,000 families of Waldo County and beyond. An index of names is available. The core collection is supplemented by vital records and statistics, Maine and Massachusetts town and family histories, NEHGS *Registers*, *Mayflower Descendants*, and other reference works. The collection includes the handwritten research files and notes of Priscilla Jones, wherein the researcher will find bits and pieces of data on families, sources, and remarks concerning any need for further documentation.

The Museum collects, preserves, and makes available to researchers numerous collections of business and personal papers documenting industry and leisure in the history of Down East Maine. The Manuscript collections and archival materials, often on fragile paper, date from the nineteenth century. Manuscripts include log books, diaries, letters, ships papers, nautical charts (3,000 items), and town records. Specifically, the collection includes custom records of Castine, Machias, and Bath; family papers related to Searsport, including unpublished genealogies; a large photographic collection (15,000 items); Pickering business papers of Deer Isle; Searsport house register; Starrett Papers of Belfast, Wester Operating Co.; and inventories and data on Penobscot Bay ships and captains (Applebee, Bassett, Pendleton, and Richardson collections), with a manuscript index to vessels and captains.

The Penobscot Marine Museum is located on Route 1, Church Street, Searsport, Maine, and has different operating hours than the Library. During winter months, the library is closed on Mondays (November-May). Normal hours of operation of the library are: Monday to Friday, 9AM-4PM from June to Oct., and Tues to Fri, same hours, November to May; and on the second Saturday of each month throughout the year, from 10AM-3PM, by appointment. Researchers may wish to phone in advance, or write to the Stephen Phillips Memorial Library, Penobscot Marine Museum, PO Box 498, Searsport, ME 04974-0498, telephone (207) 548-2529 (fax: (207) 548-2520). Copy machines

are available (25 cents per copy). There is a daily admission charge for visitors of \$6 (seniors \$5). Admission is free to members of the Marine Museum.

University of Maine, [Fogler Library](#)

The Fogler Library is an academic library, serving the needs of the University faculty, staff, and students. It is generally organized by *subject* matter or *discipline*. There is no single genealogical section.

Each of the United States censuses of Maine, 1790 to 1920 is available on film. Many, if not all, of these pre-1850 films, include the censuses of the other states. For instance, the reel containing the 1810 census of Maine also contains CT, DE, KY, LA, MD, MA, NH, NY, NC, PA, RI, SC, TN, VT and VA. The reel of the 1830 census contains Maine as well as CT, MA, NH, RI and VT. Also available is an index and finding aid to the Maine 1800-1850 censuses. The Soundex (index) to the 1880, 1900, and 1920 Maine censuses are also available on film.

Name and geographic indexes are also available for Ontario, Canada. Additionally, the nominal censuses of Lower Canada (1769-1835, 1825, 1831, 1842, 1851), New Brunswick (1851-1901, every ten years), Nova Scotia (1851-1901, every ten years), Prince Edward Island (1841, 1861, 1881, 1891, 1901), and Quebec (1851-1901, every ten years) are also available on film.

Among the most popular resources is the vast collection of Maine Newspapers. They are coded as either available on microfilm or not. The latter require a weeks advanced notice. Many of the papers have huge date gaps. The number of titles is too extensive to present here, but an index to the entire collection can be found on the [Internet](#). To take advantage of the collection, and before visiting the library, the researcher should initially focus on the town (or the newspaper *name*). First, identify the location where a particular genealogical problem exists. Then go to this web address for that location. See if the newspaper for that year is available on film. When navigating the index, keep in mind that many newspapers provided *regional* coverage and were not confined to a local market. So the *Goodtime Gazette* may cover a region not readily identifiable by the name of the paper. Or the town of *Happy* may be included in the region covered by the *Goodtime Gazette*. The internet source also has another index by newspaper name. For example, in Biddeford there is the *Biddeford Journal* as well as *La Justice de Biddeford*, the *Union and Eastern Journal*, and *Union and Journal*, each of which are available on film, but for drastically different periods (some extended, some short). There is an extensive collection of the *Biddeford Weekly Journal* covering more than fifty years (1877-1930), but the *Union and Eastern Journal* consists of a single issue (8/18/1854).

Typically, the buzzword for using this collection is *familiarity*. Know your research and your problems. If all other resources have been exhausted, the researcher would be well advised to visit the library to use this extensive collection. It could very well help solve a mystery. The library is located on the grounds of the University of Maine, Orono, ME 05729, telephone (207) 581-1110. Copy machines are available as well as microfilm reader/printers (10 cents per copy). Library hours for the Special Collection are Monday to Friday, 9AM-4pm; Saturday, closed; Sunday, 1-5PM

[Sagadahoc History & Genealogy Room](#) , Bath

This neat little research center holds a collection of more than 1,000 books, which are mostly common to Sagadahoc County (Arrowsic, Bath, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Georgetown, Macmahan Isl., Pejepscot, Perkins Twp, Phippsburg, Richmond, Sebasco Estates, Small Pt., Topsham, West Bath, West Bowdoin, Woolwich, Longreach, and Second Parish, Georgetown). The volumes can be found on a computerized catalog and cover mostly the history and vital records of towns in Sagadahoc County. There are 125 family histories and genealogies in addition to three useful notebook series on the genealogy of Bath families of the nineteenth century. Copies of the Maine censuses for Lincoln County (1800-1850) and Sagadahoc County (1860-1920) are on microfilm. The Maine Old Cemetery (MOCA) inscriptions from all counties in Maine are available, as well as a variety of numerous Bath newspapers from 1824 to 1995 (with gaps). Researchers may consult a CD-ROM for marriages (Maine 1892-1966) and an index of marriages and deaths from an assortment of newspapers: *Eastern Argus* (1803-1830); *Maine Inquirer* (1824-1833); *Lincoln Telegraph* (1838-1842); *Daily Northern Tribune* (1847-1848, 1856-1857); the *Bath Daily Tribune* (August 1857-August 1858); and the *Kennebec Journal* (January-March 1853). There is also a map collection and assorted periodicals, as well as photos and profiles of more than 2,000 houses and buildings in Bath, compiled in 1974-1980 by Sagadahoc Preservation Inc.

Research is available by written request to the Bath Historical Society, 33 Summer Street, Bath, ME 04530-2687. The application may be [downloaded](#). A donation of \$10 for the initial hour is requested, in advance, with subsequent hours (up to four) at the same rate.

The hours at the Patten Free Library, 33 Summer Street, Bath, 04530-2287, are Monday to Saturday 12-4PM (Thursday 12-8PM), closed Friday. The library is closed Saturdays from June to September. Telephone inquiries may be directed to (207) 443-5141 (facsimile (207) 443-3514). A copy machine is available (15 cents per copy).

Alvin S. Whitmore Memorial Collection, [Ellsworth Public Library](#)

This small collection of less than a thousand items has a surprising list of genealogical titles peculiar not only to Hancock County but covering a range of topics of interest to Maine researchers, e.g., *Maine Families in 1790*, *Sprague Journals* and *Bangor Historical Magazine*. There are many "how to" titles as well as those especially for beginners. Other resources include the DAR Patriot Indexes, family histories, and genealogies, including a unique series of papers (Dr. Albert Hill), containing the early families of Surry, a town that was later set off to Ellsworth. The NEHGS *Register Index* (4 vols., 1995) and *The Great Migration* volumes by Robert C. Anderson (NEHGS) are available, as are several volumes of works by Charles E. Banks, noted Maine genealogist, and Peter Wilson Coldham's popular *Immigrant* book series and *New England Families* (Cutter, 4 vols.). The Ellsworth *American* newspaper is available on film, or in bound volumes, from 1851 to date, with some gaps.

Especially useful are numerous published and non-published vital records from Hancock County and beyond (Thorndike, Prospect, Brooksville, Sedgwick, Tremont, Winslow, Lubec, Deer Isle, and more), supplemented with independent manuscripts containing selected VRs. I am struck also by the variety of little-known titles such as "Castine Cemetery, a Census," *The Burying Places of Blue Hill, Maine: A Gravestone Registry from the 1700s to 1986*, or *Cemetery Inscriptions of Otis, Maine, Hancock County*, or *Cemeteries of Waldo County* -- all of which can be used to pinpoint an elusive event.

The library is located at 20 State Street, Ellsworth, ME., 04605; telephone (207) 667-6363, facsimile (207) 667-4901. Hours of operation are 10AM-5PM, Monday through Saturday, and until 8PM Wednesday and Thursday. From Memorial Day until Labor Day, the library closes at 2PM on Saturday. A copy machine and a microfilm reader/printer are available (both 10 cents per copy). Written requests for information should be directed to the attention of Charlene Clemmons, Asst. Director. A desktop computer and *Family Tree Maker* CDs are available to researchers.

Bangor Public Library

The [Bangor Public Library](#), considered the best collection in northern Maine, houses a large collection of about 12,000 volumes. Free access to the stacks is permitted in the popular Bangor Room. A variety of published and non-published genealogies and family histories is available, with town histories, state reports, city directories and vital records for Maine and other New England states. The Maine census, Maine Old Cemetery Association (MOCA) records, *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War* volumes, *Mayflower* series, *Bangor Historical Magazine* and the Maine Adjutant General Reports volumes are also available. The *Maine Civil War*, with Regimental histories, are part of the collection, as well as a unique index to the *Bangor Daily News* (1930s-1990). This includes a surname index, which may lead to an obituary or marriage announcement. There are many other old newspapers on film and in bound volumes. The various DAR indexes and New Brunswick vital records are also available.

The library is located at 145 Harlow Street, Bangor, 04401; telephone (207) 947-8336; facsimile (207) 945-6694. Hours of operation are 9AM-9PM, Monday through Saturday, but on Friday and Saturday closing is at 5PM. Summer hours are the same, except from mid-June until Labor Day, when the library closes at 7PM and is closed on Saturday. A copy machine (10 cents per copy) and four microfilm reader/printers (25 cents per copy) are available.