

Congregational Church Records in Connecticut

By Barbara Jean Mathews, CG

Thomas Hooker founded Connecticut Colony, and John Davenport founded New Haven Colony. Both men were important ministers in the Puritan movement. Church records from those early times until recently -- particularly Congregational Church records -- are a rich source of genealogical information. Connecticut was created by Congregationalists especially to incorporate their worldview.

The Puritan viewpoint also drove many of the concerns of the legislature. The legislature, for example, was able to control church growth. A church couldn't be gathered unless it had permission from the legislature and the surrounding churches. Each church raised taxes for its minister from all residents in the town, church members or not. The intertwined nature of church and state was informal. The Fundamental Orders, which served as the first constitution of the colony, actually mandated that the church and the state government would go about their business independently.

Connecticut's history until 1818 was closely entwined with that of the Congregational Church. It was only at that late date, long after the United States Bill of Rights separated church and state, that Connecticut's Congregational Church was disestablished by a new state constitution. Until then, the Act of Toleration of 1708 prevailed. This act permitted those people who were not Congregationalists to so declare themselves. They could then attend services of their own churches, but they still had to pay taxes to support the Congregational minister. Beginning in 1727, Episcopalians could opt out of taxes and Baptists and Quakers could do so starting in 1729. In spite of this toleration of other religious views, until 1818 Connecticut residents still had to pay taxes to support Congregational ministers unless they could prove they were supporting other ministers.

Other Protestant churches did make in-roads in Connecticut. The first Anglican (today Episcopalian) church was established at Stratford in 1707. The first Methodist Episcopal (today Methodist) missionary appeared in Connecticut in 1767. The first Baptist church was established in Groton in 1704. Although Scottish ministers were found in early Congregational churches, the first church established as a Presbyterian church was founded in 1839 in Thompsonville. Unitarianism was also espoused by some ministers within the Congregational churches, but it wasn't until Brooklyn's church voted to become Unitarian and evict the Congregationalists that the group had a foothold in Connecticut. A Universalist society was organized in 1792 in Southington. The early Quakers in Connecticut were a part of Annual Meetings in New York and Rhode Island. The Catholic Church appointed its first pastor to Connecticut in 1829 and later saw great growth with the immigrations of the 1880s.

Today Connecticut is a fully pluralistic society. There are many religious faiths and many institutions to support them. In fact, a full discussion of church and synagogue records in Connecticut is beyond the scope of this column, which will serve as a brief guide to the records left by the established Congregational Church.

Where to Find Church Records

Because the Congregational Church was essentially a state church until 1818, its earliest records are, for the most part, deposited at the [Connecticut State Library](#) (CSL). Where the state library lacks the original record, it often has a photocopy of records stored elsewhere. Microfilm copies of these records are available at CSL or through [Family History Centers](#).

Not every church had a record book to microfilm. And not every church followed the decree to submit their record books to the Hartford facility. For example, the Thompson Congregational Church kept its book. The church later brought the book to the Utah Genealogical Society's microfilm team [then in New Hampshire] to be filmed. No microfilm copy of the Thompson book is available at CSL, only a later transcription of some events. However, a team is now working on indexing those events in the church book that are not included in the Thompson vital records. This will be published in a future issue of the *Register*.

Early Connecticut Marriages as Found on Ancient Church Records Prior to 1800. The records of each church are arranged chronologically. The marriages covered in this book also appear in the International Genealogical Index (IGI).

The Church Records Slip Index

Records of some Connecticut churches have been indexed and combined into one large statewide index. CSL estimates that about one-quarter of its church records are included in the statewide church records index, which includes other materials as well. There are "private records" held by the Connecticut State Library. These records include Bible records and journals kept by residents and covering events on a town-wide basis. The church records slip index is also available at NEHGS and at Family History Centers on microfilm. The original slips are at CSL.

The slip index covers only the following churches. Note that the old towns of New Haven and Stratford are not covered in the index even though many records exist.

- Avon: West Avon Congregational Church Records, 1751-1941
- Berlin: Kensington Congregational Church Records, 1709-1889
- Bethlehem: Congregational Church Records, 1738-1850
- Bloomfield: Congregational Church Records, 1738-1924
- Bolton: Congregational Church Records, 1725-1922
- Bozrah: First Congregational Church Records, 1737-1845
- Branford: First Congregational Church Records, 1687-1889
- Bridgeport: United Congregational Church Records, 1695-1911 (originally the Stratfield church set off from Stratford and Fairfield)
- Bristol: First Congregational Church Records, 1742-1897
- Brooklyn: First Congregational Church Records, 1731-1913
- Canaan: Church of Christ Records, 1752-1817 (moved to Stillwater, New York)
- Canterbury: First Congregational Church Records, 1711-1821 (births, marriages, and admissions only)
- Canton: Canton Center Congregational Church Records, 1785-1953
- Colchester: First Congregational Church Records, 1732-1937
- Colebrook: Congregational Church Records, 1783-1959
- Columbia: Congregational Church Records, 1722-1917 (church also called the Northwest or Crank Society)
- Coventry: North Coventry Congregational Church Records, 1740-1917
- Cromwell: Congregational Church Records, 1715-1875
- Danbury: First Congregational Church Records, 1754-1930
- Durham: First Church of Christ Records, 1756-1938
- East Haddam: First Congregational Church Records, 1702-1927
- East Hampton:
 - 1. Congregational Church Records, 1748-1930
 - 2. Haddam Neck Congregational Church in Middle Haddam Records, 1740-1944
- East Hartford: First Congregational Church Records, 1699-1913
- East Haven: First Congregational Church Records, 1755-1905 (also called the Old Stone Church)
- East Lyme: First Congregational Church Records, 1719-1914
- Ellington: Congregational Church Records, 1785-1941
- Essex: Centerbrook Congregational Church Records, 1722-1931
- Fairfield: First Congregational Church Records, 1694-1806
- Farmington: First Congregational Church Records, 1652-1938
- Franklin:

1. Congregational Church Records, 1718-1932
 2. Pautipaug Hill Congregational Church Deaths, 1763, 1784-1802
- Glastonbury:
 1. First Church of Christ Records, 1731-1924
 2. South Glastonbury Congregational Church Records, 1836-1950
 - Goshen: First Congregational Church Records, 1791-1855
 - Granby: First Congregational Church Records, 1739-1919
 - Greenwich: First Congregational Church Records, 1785-1936
 - Griswold: First Congregational Church Records, 1720-1887
 - Groton: First Congregational Church Admissions and Baptisms, 1727-1811
 - Guilford:
 1. Christ Episcopal Church Records, 1744-1909
 2. First Congregational Church Records, 1717-1921
 - Haddam: First Congregational Church Records, 1739-1908
 - Hampton: First Congregational Church Records, 1723-1897
 - Hartford: First Church of Christ (Congregational) Records, 1685-1811
 - Hartland: West Hartland Congregational Church Records, 1779-1899
 - Harwinton: Congregational Church Records, 1791-1861
 - Hebron: Gilead Congregational Church Records, 1752-1941
 - Kent: Congregational Church Records, 1741-1915
 - Killingworth: Congregational Church Records, 1735-1893
 - Lyme: First Congregational Church Records, 1787-1932
 - Madison: First Congregational Church Records, 1707-1917
 - Manchester: Center Congregational Church Records, 1772-1931
 - Mansfield: First Congregational Church Records, 1710-1927
 - Middlebury: Congregational Church Records, 1790-1915
 - Middletown:
 1. Church of the Holy Trinity Records, 1750-1947
 2. First Congregational Church Records, 1668-1871
 - Milford:
 1. First Church of Christ (First Congregational Church) Records, 1639-1926
 2. Plymouth (formerly Second) Congregational Church Records, 1747-1926
 - Montville: Congregational Church Records, 1722-1909
 - Morris: Congregational Church Records, 1767-1892
 - New Canaan: Congregational Church Records, 1733-1899
 - New Fairfield: Congregational Church Records, 1742-1900
 - New Hartford: First Congregational Church Records, 1739-1853
 - New London: First Church of Christ Records, 1670-1916
 - Newtown: Congregational Church Records, 1715-1946
 - North Branford: Northford Congregational Church Records, 1750-1926
 - North Haven: Church of Christ Records, 1716-1910
 - North Stonington: Congregational Church Records, 1727-1887
 - Norwich: First Congregational Church Records, 1699-1917
 - Old Saybrook: Congregational Church Records, 1736-1935
 - Oxford: Congregational Church Records, 1741-1929
 - Plainfield: First Congregational Church Records, 1747-1899
 - Plymouth: First Congregational Church Records, 1739-1949
 - Pomfret: Abington Congregational Church Records, 1749-1923

- Portland: First Congregational Church Records, 1710-1925
- Preston: First Congregational Church Records, 1698-1917
- Putnam: First Congregational Church Records, 1715-1904 (formerly North Killingly Congregational Church)
- Redding: Congregational Church Records, 1729-1882
- Ridgefield: First Congregational Church Records, 1761-1931
- Rocky Hill: Congregational Church Records, 1726-1930
- Roxbury: Congregational Church Records, 1742-1930
- Scotland:
 1. Brunswick Separate Church Records, 1746-1846
 2. Congregational Church Records, 1732-1915
- Sharon: First Church of Christ (Congregational) Records, 1755-1879
- Shelton: Huntington Congregational Church Records, 1717-1946
- Sherman: North Congregational Church Records, 1744-1949
- Somers: Congregational Church Records, 1727-1890
- Southbury: Congregational Church Records, 1732-1922
- Southington: First Congregational Church Records, 1728-1930
- Sprague: Hanover Congregational Church Records, 1760-1915
- Stamford: First Congregational Church Records, 1747-1907
- Stonington:
 1. First Congregational Church (the Road Church) Records, 1674-1925
 2. Second Congregational Church Records, 1809-1929
- Thompson: Transcript of Congregational Church Baptisms, 1730-1795
- Torrington: First Congregational Church Records, 1741-1901
- Trumbull: Church of Christ (Congregational) Records, 1730-1937
- Union: Congregational Church Records, 1759-1922
- Vernon: Transcript of Congregational Church Records, 1763-1889
- Voluntown: Voluntown and Sterling (the Line) Church Records, 1723-1905
- Wallingford: First Congregational Church Records, 1758-1894
- Warren: Congregational Church Records, 1765-1931
- Washington: First Congregational Church in New Preston Records, 1757-1845
- Watertown: First Congregational Church Records, 1786-1887
- West Hartford: Congregational Church Records, 1713-1933
- West Haven: First Congregational Church Records, 1724-1916
- Wethersfield:
 1. First Congregational Church Records (Welles copy), 1706/7-1733
 2. First Congregational Church List of Members (Tillotson copy), 1694-1908
- Willington: Congregational Church Records, 1759-1911
- Wilton: Congregational Church Records, 1698-1820
- Windsor: First Congregational Church Records, 1636-1932
- Woodbury: First Congregational Church Records, 1670-1920
- Woodstock:
 1. First Congregational Church Records, 1727-1783
 2. North Woodstock (Third) Congregational Church Records, 1727-1900
 3. West Woodstock Congregational Church Records, 1743-1937