

New Hampshire Town Histories and Genealogies

By Sherry L. Gould

New Hampshire researchers are fortunate to have an abundance of town histories and genealogies covering families who lived in the state at their disposal. This article will focus on research aids, library materials, and exemplary works to assist in the search for New Hampshire ancestors. The next installment in this series will show which New Hampshire towns have published histories, identify those histories which include genealogies, and indicate those that are currently available for sale (with purchase information and cost). It will also be noted if the histories are available to NEHGS members via the Society's circulating and research libraries.

William Copeley, head librarian at the New Hampshire Historical Society's Tuck Library, said it well in the introduction to his recent work on genealogies in New Hampshire town histories (see below): "Town histories are undoubtedly the single most useful, widely available source for research on New Hampshire families. Among all the states of the Union, New Hampshire is almost uniquely well represented by detailed town histories. In the absence of annotated bibliographies of the history of each state, it is impossible to prove this statement scientifically, but most genealogists and historians who have had an opportunity to compare printed New Hampshire sources with those of other states would probably agree." It is prudent to check these sources before heading off to reinvent the wheel (or chart as the case may be). If you are one of the many fortunate descendants of a New Hampshire family who has been covered in these resources you will want to see what other researchers have found before setting off in the rough world of primary sources. Ask a librarian at one of the repositories listed below for information regarding the reliability of the history or genealogy. Armed with these important finds you will then want to go to primary sources to check the validity of unsourced data.

- [Tuck Library](#) , located on 30 Park St. in Concord, is acknowledged as holding the largest collection of New Hampshire town histories anywhere. Their brochure boasts about 2,000 state, county, and town histories. In addition they have about 5,000 family genealogies, many of which are unpublished.
- [The New Hampshire State Library](#) , on the next block at 20 Park St., also has an impressive town history collection. They have approximately 2,400 published family histories, some of which are not found in the Tuck Library collection.
- [The Manchester City Library's](#) large town and county history collection is kept in its New Hampshire Room. Newspaper clippings for each town supplement these histories. The library is located on 405 Pine Street in Manchester.
- Baker Library at Dartmouth College in Hanover has a considerable history collection covering the towns surrounding Hanover and beyond.
- The New England Historic and Genealogical Society Library in Boston is another excellent place to find both New Hampshire town histories and genealogies of families that lived in the state.

Many other libraries across the state have collections of varying degrees.

The better part of New Hampshire town histories were written between the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Many included family histories, and others provided family tables or early vital records to assist in tracing the families who resided in the town. Bill Copeley states in the index cited below that he consulted 348 histories from 202 towns published through 1999, all found at Tuck Library. He found that only 32 towns, predominantly those with very small populations, did not have a town history.

Some of the towns that did not have their records preserved and printed in the earlier years have had various historians and genealogists complete works in more contemporary times. The bicentennial of our nation in 1976 inspired a new crop of histories. With the new millennium there appears to be yet another resurgence of genealogical works in print. A few examples of more recent works in the town history and town-wide genealogy arena are:

- *Two hundred plus, Bradford, New Hampshire in retrospect* , by the History Committee and Bicentennial Committee (Phoenix Publishing, 1976)
- *Hollis Family Album* by Joan Child Tinklepaugh (Penobscot Press, 1997)

- *Early Families of Unity, N.H., and Cemeteries of Unity, N.H.* by Kathleen C. Beals (the author, Albany, CA, 1997).

Genealogies of many New Hampshire families have been produced over the years and continue to be today. The four-volume set by historian and genealogist Ezra S. Sterns, *Genealogical and Family History of the State of New Hampshire* (Lewis Publishing Company, 1908), covers New Hampshire's noted families. Although most of these early works did not include source information, today's published genealogies are much more likely to include citations, allowing the researcher to better evaluate the information contained. A few standouts among recent New Hampshire genealogies are listed below:

- Ann Theopold Chaplin, *The Babson Genealogy* (Gateway Press, 1997).
- David Watson Kruger, *Jonathan Watson (1650?-1714) of Dover, New Hampshire: who settled there by 1672* (Newbury Street Press, 1998).
- Dean Crawford Smith, ed. by Melinde Lutz Sanborn, *The Ancestry of Samuel Blanchard Ordway, 1844-1916* (New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1990).

There are several aids to help the researcher locate family records in town histories and/or printed genealogies. The earliest are the companion volumes: *Munsell's American Genealogist* (fifth edition, Joel Munsell, Albany, NY, 1900) and *Munsell's Genealogical Index* (fifth edition, Joel Munsell, Albany, NY, 1900). The first work gives the genealogies in print on each family arranged alphabetically under the surname. The second work is arranged the same way and lists all publications containing family histories of at least three generations. These volumes give sources beyond the state of New Hampshire, but also include New Hampshire town histories. The former is available in the [Dimond Library](#) at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. The latter is available at the [New Hampshire State Library](#) in Concord and the NEHGS Library in Boston. Though these volumes were written at an early date, many of the works cited are those we use today in tracing New Hampshire family roots.

Another helpful volume is *Hammond's Check List of New Hampshire History* (New Hampshire Historical Society, 1925; reprinted New Hampshire Publishing Co, 1971). It includes all historical works for each town including books, articles, and pamphlets. The town names are arranged alphabetically. Although this book does not identify which materials contain genealogical information, it is a valuable research tool when used in conjunction with the other works cited in this article. This book is available at Tuck Library, New Hampshire State Library and the NEHGS Library. Topic areas covered in *Hammond's Check List* include:

- Biography
- Boundaries
- Constitution
- Counties
- General
- Military
- Regimental
- New Hampshire grants – Now Vermont
- Religious
- White Mountains

Elmer M. Hunt published *Families' Names in New Hampshire Town Histories* in the *Historical New Hampshire* magazine (New Hampshire Historical Society, Dec 1946). This served as a general surname index to New Hampshire town histories for many years. As the publication has been out of print for some time, New Hampshire researchers can now turn to William Copeley's *Index to Genealogies in New Hampshire Town Histories* (New Hampshire Historical Society, 1988, with a revised and enlarged edition released in 2000). He used a minimum of three generations through a male or female line as a guide to determine which names were included. The names are listed alphabetically by surname, much in the same format as the predecessor. Following each surname is a list of New Hampshire town names, referring to the town history of that name which holds the genealogical record for the family.

A list of top New Hampshire town histories and genealogies is currently being developed through an informal polling

of top genealogists and historians in the state and beyond. The results will be included in the second part of this article.