

Books for the Connecticut Researcher, Part 2

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Connecticut researchers are fortunate in many ways, not the least of which is the breadth of town-wide genealogies that have been published for the earliest settlements. This column introduces our discussion of town-wide genealogies. The discussion will cover some important issues to keep in mind when using this genre to fill in your pedigree. The column looks more carefully at the books by Donald Lines Jacobus. Finally it lists the genealogies developed for the towns founded in the seventeenth century in Connecticut.

Town-Wide Genealogies, an Introduction

Once you have your research back to the Revolutionary War era, there is a high probability that you can rapidly fill out a large slice of your pedigree using Connecticut's town-wide genealogies. Of course, secondary sources like these are of differing levels of reliability. You might fill in your pedigree using these books, but be sure to use pencil rather than pen.

Among the most famous authors of this genre was Donald Lines Jacobus, who wrote books on New Haven and on early Fairfield County. As town-wide genealogies go, these set the standard. Not only has he covered nearly all the earliest settlers, but he includes citations to primary documents.

Samuel Orcutt and Henry Stiles are two other prolific publishers of town-wide genealogies. These men worked in an earlier era than Jacobus, an era when citations to primary records weren't the first focus of the genealogical writer.

Orcutt covered towns in which my ancestors lived along and near the Connecticut shoreline. These include Stratford, Bridgeport, and Derby. Orcutt is very reluctant to link people of the same name together in a family, that is, to equate a head-of-household to a son of the same name in an earlier family. Thus, you have to make these links on your own when using Orcutt to pencil in your pedigree.

Henry R. Stiles wrote about the important Connecticut River valley towns of Wethersfield and Windsor. His books are rich resources of family information. He often takes family down to the time in which he is working. This implies that he was often working from submissions from living descendants.

Town-wide Genealogies, Two Examples

When I first began doing genealogy, I frequently used town-wide genealogies to fill out my pedigree. In so doing, I learned from my own mistakes a few of the ins-and-outs of using the genre. My ancestors lived in the areas treated by Donald Lines Jacobus in his two major works, *Families of Ancient New Haven* and *History and Genealogy of the Families of Old Fairfield*. The New Haven book is nearly all based on the research of Jacobus, and rates as the best town-wide genealogy I've ever used.

The Fairfield book is compiled and edited by Jacobus. In the first paragraph of his introduction, he provides the start and finish dates of the project for Volume I. These dates are May 22, 1929 and November 27, 1929 - six months and five days in total. Jacobus discusses the schedule in the first paragraph of the introduction which surely must be a warning to the reader and researcher. Jacobus often names the submitter of family information in those cases where such information might include dates from sources that he himself could not check, such as baptisms in England.

One nice thing about the Fairfield book is that Jacobus evidently made extensive use of land and probate records in checking out the earliest generations. He mentions dates and events, although he does not provide volume and page citations for town land deeds or probate district records.

The focus of the Fairfield work changes from the first volume to the second pair of volumes. The first volume looks at the earliest families in the county of Fairfield. The second and third volume add on to the families living within the original town of Fairfield only.

Here are a few things to look for as possible sources of incomplete information or error:

- *The family lived part of the time in a town outside the scope of the book* . This was true in the case of the family of Joseph(2) Darwin, which lived in Branford and Litchfield as well as Wallingford, a town included in the

New Haven book. Jacobus had only covered the events which are recorded in Wallingford vital records. This means that he missed the children born in Branford and the wife's death in Litchfield, as well as the marriage found only in probate records in Wallingford¹.

- *Jacobus places a child in a family without a citation to his source record.* This is often a signal that the name came from a printed genealogy. Jacobus did not include citations to family histories even when he used them. The absence of citations is thus your signal that the information came from a secondary source.
- *In the New Haven book, Jacobus does not cite probate records or land deeds.* It's quite likely that he was aware of much of this information, but the lack of a citation could also point to one of these record sources.
- *In the Fairfield book, Jacobus did not cite his use of vital records.* Then, again, not so many of these records still exist for Fairfield County towns.

Town-wide Genealogies, A List of Books on Seventeenth Century Towns

- **Branford:** See New Haven and Guilford.
- **Derby:** Rev. Samuel Orcutt, *The History of the Old Town of Derby, Connecticut, 1642-1880 with Biographies and Genealogies* (Springfield, Mass.: Springfield Printing Co., 1880).
- **Fairfield County:** Donald Lines Jacobus, compiler and editor, *History and Genealogy of the Families of Old Fairfield* (Fairfield, 1930-1932).
- **Farmington:** See Hartford.
- **Glastonbury:** See Wethersfield.
- **Greenwich:** Spencer P. Mead, *Ye Historie of ye Town of Greenwich...with Genealogical Notes...* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1911). Mead also abstracted probate, vital, church and cemetery records from many towns in southern Fairfield County.
- **Guilford:** Alvan Talcott, compiler, Jacquelyn L. Ricker, editor, *Families of Early Guilford, Connecticut* (Baltimore: GPC, 1984).
- **Haddam:** See Guilford.
- **Hartford:** Lucius Barnes Barbour, *Families of Old Hartford, Connecticut* (Baltimore: GPC, 1977).
- **Middletown/Cromwell:** Charles Collard Adams, *Middletown Upper Houses* (New York: Grafton Press, 1908).
- **Killingworth:** see Guilford.
- **Milford:** Susan Woodruff Abbott, compiler, Jacquelyn L. Ricker, editor, *Families of Early Milford, Connecticut* (Baltimore: GPC, 1979).
- **New Haven:** Donald Lines Jacobus, compiler, *Families of Ancient New Haven*, originally published as the first nine volumes of *The American Genealogist* and reprinted in a three-volume set (Baltimore: GPC, 1974).
- **New London and Vicinity:** Col. Charles Dyer Parkhurst, Manuscript, *Early Families of New London and Vicinity*, a photostatic copy available at the Connecticut State Library (bound in 1938).
- **Norwalk:** see Fairfield.
- **Norwich:** see New London.
- **Preston:** see New London.
- **Simsbury:** see Windsor.
- **Stamford:** see Fairfield.
- **Stonington:** Richard Anson Wheeler, *History of the Town of Stonington...with a Genealogical Register of Stonington Families* (New London: 1900).
- **Stratford, genealogy:** Rev. Samuel Orcutt, *History of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of Bridgeport, Connecticut*, Part II contains genealogies (1886).
- **Stratford, history:** Lewis G. Knapp, *In Pursuit of Paradise: History of the Town of Stratford, Connecticut* (West Kennebunk: Phoenix Publishing, 1989). Although this book contains no genealogies, it does clearly delineate the parishes and daughter towns of Stratford.
- **Suffield & Enfield:** Thomas B. Warren, Manuscript, *Springfield Families*, Connecticut Valley Historical Society and NEHGS (bound in 1935).
- **Wallingford:** Charles Henry Stanley Davis, *Early Families of Wallingford, Connecticut* (Meriden: 1870). The reprint (Baltimore: GPC, 1979) has a new index and a "Guide to Families."
- **Waterbury:** Henry Bronson, MD, *The History of Waterbury, Connecticut,...with an Appendix of Biography*,

Genealogy and Statistics (Waterbury: Bronson Press, 1858).

- **Wethersfield:** Henry R. Stiles, *The History of Ancient Wethersfield, Volume II* (New York: Grafton Press, 1904).
- **Windsor:** Henry R. Stiles, *The History and Genealogies of Ancient Windsor, Connecticut,...1635-1891*, Volume II (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1892).
- **Woodbury:** William Cothren, *History of Ancient Woodbury, Connecticut...*, three volumes (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1854-1879). All three volumes have been reprinted (Baltimore: GPC, 1977), and the third volume reprinted alone (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Press, 1991). Family genealogies are scattered through the first two volumes, while the third contains vital records for Stratford, Woodbury and all her daughter towns. Not indexed.
- **Woodstock:** Clarence Winthrop Bowen, Ph.D., *The History of Woodstock, Connecticut* (Norwood, Mass.: The Plimpton Press, 1926).

Notes

¹"The Wives of Joseph² and Joseph³ Darwin/Durrin/Derrin of Guilford, Wallingford, Litchfield and Branford, Connecticut," *The American Genealogist*, 71:28-35; and "More Wives for Joseph² Darwin and Samuel² Darwin of Connecticut," *The American Genealogist*, 73:194-195