

New Resources for Massachusetts Researchers

By Maureen A. Taylor

2003 was a good year for genealogists seeking their ancestors in Massachusetts. New books showed us how to find our roots in Boston, traced the genealogy of a house and its owners, and provided new insights into significant events in the state's history. Here's a select list of the latest publications.

The 1848 Boston Cultivator: Marriages, Deaths and Miscellaneous Readings by Elaine Morrison Fitch (Heritage Books, 2003)

Includes birth, marriage, and death notices from this weekly paper as well as abstracts of notices relating to fires, crime, and shipping.

Ages From Court Records: Essex, Middlesex, and Suffolk Counties, Massachusetts 1636–1700
by Melinde Lutz Sanborn (GPC, 2003)

Researchers seeking verification of their ancestor's age and residence in early New England should reference this book, as it may offer evidence of both. Sanborn extracted the names and ages of deponents and witnesses from the records of thousands of court cases. The details of land disputes, fornication cases, depositions, wills, deeds, and other records are useful to anyone looking for ancestors in Essex, Middlesex and Suffolk counties. This volume, containing eleven thousand names, includes the year and source of the court record, making it easy for researchers to locate an original document.

The Beechwoods Confederacy, 1709–1809: The Colonial History of Beechwoods, Middleboro, Plymouth County, Massachusetts
by Kenneth Leonard (Heritage Books, 2003)

In the eighteenth century, the community of Beechwoods grew from a few houses to a thriving town complete with prosperous businesses and settled families. However, the town soon secured all property along its boundaries in an effort to keep visitors at bay. Beechwoods maintained its isolation throughout the eighteenth century and beyond by offering no public thoroughfare into the area. Religious disputes, landholding speculation, and the American Revolution all affected Beechwoods, which, to this day, preserves much of its nineteenth-century character.

Boston on Fire: A History of Fires and Firefighting in Boston
by Stephanie Schorow (Commonwealth, 2003)

Schorow pieces together dramatic details of the fires that influenced Boston's history from the seventeenth century to today including the 1834 Ursuline convent fire, the Great Fire of 1872, the Chelsea conflagrations of 1908 and 1973, and the infamous Cocoanut Grove nightclub fire. Over the years Boston's firefighters have developed innovative new ways to fight back the flames. For instance, Boston was the first in the nation to have a citywide fire alarm system. Once you've read the stories behind these events, follow the author's "Fire Trail" of the city.

Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield
by Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney (University of Massachusetts Press, 2003)

In February 1704, during the French and Indian War, Native Americans from Canada raided Deerfield, Massachusetts, burning the town and capturing a third of its population. Haefeli and Sweeney cover the incident through each moment of the attack. The authors present exciting history recreated to make the reader feel part of the action. Easy to use reference charts document the event and background data provides an introduction to this famous historical attack.

The Dark Tide: The Great Boston Molasses Flood of 1919
by Stephen Puleo (Beacon Press, 2003)

On January 15, 1919, a vat containing over two million gallons of molasses exploded and spread a fifteen-foot wave over Boston's North End, killing twenty-one people and injuring one hundred fifty more. Puleo, a regular contributor to *American History* magazine, researched the social, political, and economic climate in Boston at the time of this

event. He examined United States Industrial Alcohol lawsuits, researched the victims, and read the testimony of witnesses to present a compelling tale. Initially believed to be a terrorist act by Italian anarchists during World War I, the molasses flood was later determined to be an accident.

Essex County Deeds 1639–1678, Abstracts of Volumes 1–4, Copy Books, Essex County, Massachusetts. (Essex Society of Genealogists. 2003)

A useful abstraction of the first four books of the Essex County deeds.

Faces of Community: Immigrant Massachusetts, 1860–2000

(Massachusetts Historical Society Studies in American History and Culture 7) edited by Reed Ueda (Massachusetts Historical Society, 2003)

Various experts of immigrant studies in Massachusetts discuss the history of the immigrant communities of the state and the effects of the immigration experience on the individuals who left their homelands to settle here. The book includes essays on Irish, French Canadian, Jewish, Italian, Swedish, and African American populations in the state.

Gaining Ground: A History of Landmaking in Boston

by Nancy S. Seasholes (MIT Press, 2003)

Throughout the history of Boston, landmaking projects were responsible for the development of much of Boston's Back Bay, coverage of the tidal flats, and most recently, the land that Logan Airport was built upon. Seasholes provides the how, when, and why details of the areas of Boston situated on landfill. She examined historical documents and explored findings from archeological investigations in the city. It's a fascinating story of the history of these projects. Heavily illustrated with maps showing the original shoreline and the land development projects, this book is a joy to read. Chart the development of streets and neighborhoods and learn more about the areas where your Boston ancestors lived and worked.

Life of a Haunted House: The Barnstable House of Barnstable, Massachusetts: Genealogy of A Real Haunted House by Paul J. Bunnell, FACG, UE (Heritage Books, 2003)

This intriguing study of one house in Barnstable, Massachusetts, includes ghost stories, genealogy, and house histories. Many of the early Cape Cod families are mentioned —Paine, Howes, Davis, Savage, and Shaw.

A Researcher's Guide to Boston

by Ann S. Lainhart (NEHGS, 2003)

This research guide to Boston collections and repositories is easy to use and small enough to fit into a researcher's book bag for handy reference. Lainhart includes listings for a variety of resources including probate, land, institutional, and vital records; seamen's papers; records of the poor; voter lists; and city censuses. This is a must-have for anyone doing Boston research.

The Wampanoag: Genealogical History of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts by Dr Jerome D. Segel and R. Andrew Pierce (GPC, 2003)

Years of research went into the preparation of this volume and it shows. It is the first publication that covers the complete historical record of the Wampanoag families of Martha's Vineyard.

Notable Reprints

The Records of Oxford, Massachusetts: Including chapters of Nipmuck, Huguenot and English History, Accompanied with Biographical Sketches and Notes, 1630–1890. With Manners and Fashions of the Time

by Mary DeWitt Freeland (o.p. 1894, repr. Heritage Books, 2003)

Vital Records of the Towns of Barnstable and Sandwich : An Authorized Facsimile Reproduction of Records Published Serially 1901–1937 in The Mayflower Descendant With an Added Index of Persons

by Leonard H. Smith Jr. and Norma H. Smith (o.p. 1900–37, repr. Heritage Books, 2003)

Nantucket Genealogies: Excerpted from The History of Nantucket County, Island, and Town, Including Genealogies of First Settlers

by Alexander Starbuck (o.p. 1924, repr. Clearfield 2003)

Keeping current with new publications is easy once you know where to look. The following publishers all regularly offer either new books on Massachusetts or reprints of older volumes.

- [Heritage Books](#)
- [Colonial Society of Massachusetts](#)
- [Genealogical Publishing Co. and Clearfield](#)
- [Higginson Books](#)
- [New England Historic Genealogical Society](#)
- [Picton Press](#)

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