

STATE GUIDE

NEW HAMPSHIRE

by DANA MCCULLOUGH

NEW HAMPSHIRITES LIKE being ahead of the pack—their state was the first to break off from Great Britain in 1776, and the first to have its own state constitution (1776). It established the country's first publicly funded library (1833), and (since 1952) has held the nation's first presidential primary every four years.

The Granite State's history of firsts began in the 1620s, when England gave Capt. John Mason a grant to the region. Mason dubbed the land "New Hampshire" after the county in England. Colonists established New Hampshire's first permanent settlement in 1623 and its first towns—Dover, Exeter, Hampton and Portsmouth—over the next several years. Now we'll help you continue your New Hampshire family's legacy by introducing you to the foremost resources for tracing them.

GRANITE STATE ORIGINALS

Many Brits from England, Massachusetts and Connecticut came to New Hampshire in the 1600s. An influx of Scots-Irish followed in 1719. After the Civil War, French Canadians moved south to work in textile mills and the lumber industry. In the late 1800s, Irish, Italians, Scandinavians, Polish, Greeks, Russians and Germans joined the crowd.

Look for immigrant ancestors in Boston passenger lists (1820–1943) for free at FamilySearch.org <www.familysearch.org>, or access them on subscription sites Ancestry.com <ancestry.com> and Findmypast <www.findmypast.com>. You might also want to search Canadian border crossing records (1895–1956) at FamilySearch.org and Ancestry.com. New

Hampshire naturalization records (1771–2001) are browsable at FamilySearch.org.

From 1641 to 1679 and again from 1690 to 1692, Massachusetts governed New Hampshire, even though the Granite State became a royal province in 1679. By 1700, most American Indians native to the area—Algonquin-speaking tribes such as the Pennacook and the Abenaki—had left. County boundaries fluctuated until the mid-1700s.

YOUR NO. 1 SOURCE

As with other New England states, town records are key for New Hampshire genealogy—especially these:

★ **Vital records:** Towns, not counties, record vital statistics in the Granite State. New Hampshire began requiring town clerks to report births, marriages and deaths to the state in 1866, but most didn't comply until the 1880s. Order birth, death, marriage and divorce records from the state

Division of Vital Records Administration <sos.nh.gov/vital_records.aspx> or town clerks. Birth records less than 100 years old and death, marriage and divorce records under 50 years old, are restricted.

Many pre-1900 birth and death records are on microfilm at the Family History Library and the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) <www.americanancestors.org>. New Hampshire births (from 1714) and deaths (from 1654) are indexed at FamilySearch.org and Ancestry.com.

Marriages were recorded as early as 1639. The New Hampshire State Library (NHSL) <www.nh.gov/nhsl>, FHL and NEHGS have an every-name vital-records index covering 1650 to

FAST FACTS

- ★ **Statehood:** 1788
- ★ **First federal census:** 1790
- ★ **Statewide birth and death records begin:** 1866
- ★ **Statewide marriage records begin:** 1866
- ★ **State-land state**
- ★ **Counties:** five in 1769; 10 today
- ★ **Contact for vital records:** Division of Vital Records Administration, 9 Ratification Way, Concord, NH 03301, (603) 271-4650, <sos.nh.gov/vital_records.aspx>

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about 1840. NHSL's transcriptions of town reports include residents' vital stats from the previous year. Find indexed images of marriage records from 1637 at FamilySearch.org and supplementary indexes at Ancestry.com.

★ **Land records:** Land records for the 1600s through 1800s appear in the 40-volume *New Hampshire Provincial and State Papers*. (Access digitized volumes as well as an index at <sos.nh.gov/Papers.aspx>.) After original land sales, subsequent transactions were recorded in provincial, county and some town records. Counties began registering deeds in 1769; those documents are now with town records. All pre-1772 records are held at the state archives. The FHL has microfilmed deeds and probate records from 1623 to 1772; some probates (1643–1982) are indexed at Ancestry.com.

★ **Warnings out:** In some northern New England states, including New Hampshire, towns were responsible for their residents. “Undesirable” residents and newcomers who couldn’t show personal means of support could be “warned out” by a warrant from the town constable. The town clerk kept these records. Some lists have been published and are on FHL microfilm.

timeline

1679

New Hampshire becomes a royal province

1769

The Granite State's first counties are formed

1771

Dartmouth College in Hanover grants its first degrees

1804

The first cotton mill opens in New Ipswich

1835

New Hampshire annexes the “Indian Stream Republic,” disputed land between it and Great Britain

1846

Manchester becomes the state's first incorporated city



THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN.

Leave no stone in the Granite State unturned.

HEADFIRST INTO HEAD COUNTS

New Hampshire's first population tallies weren't true censuses, but provincial tax lists. These may include the taxpayer's name and residence; property description; and numbers of males older than 21, schoolchildren and farm animals. Tax lists for 1744 and 1767 as well as a 1776 list of men who pledged to defend the cause for independence are listed in the *New Hampshire State Papers*. The 1776 list is also online at NEHGS and Ancestry.com. Various other tax books and lists are on FHL microfilm (1727–1788, 1849–1874). The New Hampshire Historical Society (NHHS) <www.nhhistory.org> and the FHL have lists for 1849 to 1874 on microfilm.

Decennial federal census records began in 1790 for New Hampshire. Note that several towns are missing from Strafford, Rockingham and Grafton counties' 1800 and 1820 enumerations. And since many Coos County residents considered themselves Canadians, some of that county's earlier enumerations are incomplete.

ON THE FRONT LINES

New Hampshirites have served in the military since the French and Indian War (1754–1763). Records from this war are on FHL microfilm and in volumes 5, 6, 14 and 16 of the state papers series.

Get service and pension records for Revolutionary War,

1916

New Hampshire holds its first presidential primary

1917

The Navy finishes its first submarine at Portsmouth Navy Yard

1946

Berlin native Earl Tupper invents Tupperware

1986

Space shuttle Challenger explodes with Concord resident Christa McAuliffe aboard

2003

New Hampshire's hallmark Old Man of the Mountain rock formation on Cannon Mountain collapses

TOOLKIT

Websites

Cyndi's List: New Hampshire

<cyndislist.com/us/nh>

New Hampshire Genealogy

<www.newhampshiregenealogy.com>

**New Hampshire Old Graveyard Association
Master Burial Site Index**

<rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nhoga/burial.htm>

NHGenWeb Project <www.usroots.com/usgwnhus>

Publications

**Directory of Repositories of Family History in
New Hampshire** by Scott E. Green (Genealogical
Publishing Co.)

**Genealogical Dictionary of Maine and New
Hampshire** by Sybil Noyes, Charles T. Libby and
Walter G. Davis (NEHGS)

Genealogist's Handbook for New England Research,
5th edition, by Michael J. Leclerc (NEHGS)

New Hampshire Families in 1790 by Diane Florence
Gravel and David Watson Kruger (New Hampshire
Society of Genealogists)

New Hampshire Name Changes: 1768–1923 by
Richard P. Roberts (Heritage Books)

Archives & Organizations

National Archives at Boston, 380 Trapelo Road,
Waltham, MA 02452, (866) 406-2379,
<www.archives.gov/boston>

New England Historic Genealogical Society
101 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116, (617) 536-5740,
<www.americanancestors.org>

**New Hampshire Division of Records Management
and Archives** 71 S. Fruit St., Concord, NH 03301,
(603) 271-2236, <sos.nh.gov/arch_rec_mgmt.aspx>

New Hampshire Historical Society, 30 Park St.,
Concord, NH 03301, (603) 228-6688, <www.nhhistory.org>

New Hampshire Society of Genealogists Box 2316,
Concord, NH 03302, <nhsog.org>

New Hampshire State Library 20 Park St., Concord, NH
03301, (603) 271-2144, <www.nh.gov/nhsl>

War of 1812 and Civil War soldiers on FHL and NARA microfilm. Revolutionary soldiers are also in the state papers (volumes 14 to 17), and you can search an 1835 pension list at Ancestry.com. Search for Civil War ancestors in the Civil War Soldiers and Sailors database <www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>. The state archives have Civil War enlistment cards and muster rolls, and NHHS has a name index and abstracts for all New Hampshire residents who received pensions.

WWI draft registration cards for men age 18 to 45 list each soldier's address, birth date, birthplace, race, nationality, citizenship and next of kin. NARA holds the originals and the FHL has microfilm copies; they're also searchable on FamilySearch.org and Ancestry.com.

The New Hampshire Veterans Home <www.nh.gov/veterans> kept records of residents after the Civil War. Some have been sent to the state archives, but you'll want to contact the veterans home first.

IN THE LEAD

All these records are just for starters, of course. Early recordkeeping can be spotty, so leave no stone in the Granite State unturned. Also search for your family in newspapers, town histories, and church, cemetery and court records.

You'll have a wealth of additional resources to explore, including the state archives' court records, marriage intentions and naturalizations (see a guide to its holdings at <sos.nh.gov/genealogy.aspx>); NHSL's town and county histories, city directories and military indexes <www.nh.gov/nhsl/services/public/genealogy.html>; and NHHS' newspapers, photos and genealogies. Search NEHGS' databases of colonial and later church member lists and town books, and Ancestry.com's collections of probates and city directories. Contact town historians, too: They may be able to provide details on townspeople not included in other records. You'll be taking the first steps toward extending your family tree. ●