

GENEALOGY POINTERS (06-12-07)

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"LOCATING CHURCH RECORDS," by Val D. Greenwood

Problems and Solutions:

Church records are of no value if you cannot find the ones that fit your specific problems. In America, where church and state are separate and where people with ancestry from all over Europe lived side by side and inter-married, there are two main problems:

1. Determining the church with which your ancestor had affiliation.
2. Locating the records of that church in the locality where your ancestor lived.

Clues to solve the first problem might come from many sources. Perhaps the family's present affiliation can help you, or the national origin of the family, or family tradition. You might find your answer in a will or a deed or on a tombstone. It may be in an obituary. Or there may be a clue in the locality where your ancestor resided--it may have been the settlement of a particular religious denomination--but you must know the locality's history to determine this. (A person may have belonged to several churches during his/her lifetime. This was quite common on the frontier because if a town had only one church, that was usually where the town's residents [especially the Protestants] went to worship, regardless of former affiliation.) In later years obituaries, death certificates, hospital records, etc., contain statements of religious preference.

The second problem may be the more difficult of the two. There are some helps and reference tools to assist in locating church records, but even these are quite incomplete and may be misleading if we are not aware of their limitations. There is, in fact, no complete guide to American church records. This is an area that lies wide open to further study. The personnel at the LDS Family History Library have done some studies on the location of church records, but they have a long way to go before the true objective is attained.(1)

Some useful studies were made in the 1930s and early 1940s as part of the Historical Records Survey under the auspices of the Works Projects Administration (WPA) of the New Deal. The "Inventories of Church Archives" that resulted from these studies were

excellent for the geographic areas and the churches they covered at the time they were made, but much of the information in them is now outdated. Many of the records have since been moved, and many that were in private hands are now completely untraceable.(2)

We must not assume that church records do not exist just because we have been unable to find them; on the other hand, it would be foolish to say that no church records have ever been lost or destroyed, because many of these records are, indeed, no longer in existence. The following biographical sketch (obituary) of George Washington Bassett tells some of the history of the Immanuel Church:

"In the year 1843, soon after his removal to his estate in Hanover, Mr. Bassett became much concerned at the prostrate condition of the Church in his neighborhood and the adjoining counties of King William and New Kent. The parishes had died out and been without rectors or church services for more than half a century."

Was this common? What of records during this "more than half a century"? What about records of the earlier period before the church "died out"? All of these questions should be considered in a study of American church records. The same thing may have happened in hundreds of other churches. What does happen to the records when a church becomes defunct? It has been suggested by some that many records of the English Church met their doom during the Revolutionary War as part of an action of reprisal against the British, but I am unaware of any specific situations of this nature.

Finding the Records:

If you can find early American church records they are peerless as a source of genealogical evidence, so let's consider some steps you might take:

1. First consider that the records are still in the custody of the church where they were kept, if that church still exists.
2. An advertisement in a local newspaper will often lead to the whereabouts of available records, especially those in private hands.
3. Don't be afraid to ask questions--of ministers, chambers of commerce, old-timers; anyone who might know.
4. The records of many churches have been published, especially in genealogical and historical periodicals, and are thus available. These are generally not too accessible either from the standpoint of finding the proper magazine or of knowing that an article of value is within it. One of the best approaches is to use the various periodical indexes listed in Chapter 6 [of THE RESEARCHER'S GUIDE TO AMERICAN GENEALOGY].

A few church records are also published in book form (both alone and in conjunction with other records), and you should be aware of this possibility. Look under the locality

of interest in your library catalog, for example Hinshaw's work on the Quakers.(3) These seven volumes (in eight) contain abstracts of Monthly Meeting records, are indexed, and are quite useful as far as they go; but they certainly do not cover all Quaker records. They are, however, a representative example of published American church records. In using published church records, as with all published sources, remember that they present secondary evidence and frequently contain copying errors.

5. Many church records are now being microfilmed by the churches themselves and by other agencies. Historical societies often preserve microfilm copies as well as originals, and copies are frequently available for sale or for reading. The LDS Family History Library has microfilmed the records of many churches throughout the U.S., and you may find it worthwhile to check its holdings before making a lot of other searches.

6. Libraries and historical societies have collected many church records (especially in their local areas) and these are readily available for searching. One of the big problems is to determine just who has the records. The "National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections" can be useful in that effort.(4)

Editor's Note: Some Record Locations:

This article was excerpted from Chapter 23 of Mr. Greenwood's book, **THE RESEARCHER'S GUIDE TO AMERICAN GENEALOGY**, Third Edition. Among other things, this chapter includes an extraordinarily detailed, if still partial, list of church record depositories in states east of the Mississippi.(5)

Footnotes:

(1). See Jimmy B. Parker and Wayne T. Morris, "A Definitive Study of Major U.S. Genealogical Records: Ecclesiastical and Secular" (Area I, no. 36), World Conference on Records and Genealogical Seminar (Salt Lake City: The Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1969).

(2). See chapter 10 of **THE RESEARCHER'S GUIDE TO AMERICAN GENEALOGY** for a list of the guides to the WPA inventories of church records in the several states.

(3). William Wade Hinshaw, "Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy," 7 vols. (in 8), 1936. (Vols. 1-6 have been reprinted by Genealogical Publishing Co., Baltimore. Vol. 7 is available from the Indiana Historical Society.)

(4). See bibliographic references under "bibliographies" in chapter 6 of **THE RESEARCHER'S GUIDE TO AMERICAN GENEALOGY** and footnote number five in chapter 9, and the textual discussion relating thereto.

(5). The researcher should become familiar with Peter G. Mode, "Source Book and Bibliographical Guide for American Church History," 1921 (Boston: J. S. Canner & Co., 1964 reprint). This scholarly work is a peerless reference for the genealogist and historian

who seek a better understanding of church history and religious development in America. Another important reference work is E. Kay Kirkham, "A Survey of American Church Records," 4th ed. (Logan, UT: Everton Publishers, 1978).

For more information about THE RESEARCHER'S GUIDE TO AMERICAN GENEALOGY, please access the following link:

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=2362&NLC-GenPointers1

SPEAKING OF CHURCH RECORDS (CDs & Books)

Over the years, we have published scores of church records collections. You will find a number of them, arranged by religious denomination, at

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=products_categories_all&NLC-GenPointers1

We have consolidated still other bodies of church records (births, marriages, deaths, baptisms, etc.) into expanded consolidations of "vital records." Look for them in CD-ROM publications, such as:

VIRGINIA VITAL RECORDS (CD)

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=7174&NLC-GenPointers1

or

PENNSYLVANIA VITAL RECORDS, 1700s-1800s (CD)

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=7172&NLC-GenPointers1

Finally, here is a sampling of church records publications pertaining to a variety of denominations. You might just discover some that have heretofore escaped your notice!

THE COLONIAL CLERGY of the Middle Colonies, 1628-1776 (Low in stock)

This is an annotated alphabetical list of approximately 1,250 clergymen who settled in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania during the colonial era.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=6205&NLC-GenPointers1

OLD CHURCHES, MINISTERS, AND FAMILIES of Virginia. In Two Volumes

The Episcopal bishop William Meade compiled this famous work from parish and vestry records, official documents, family records, and tombstone inscriptions, as well as from records in Lambeth Palace, London. Meade's narrative focuses on the history of the early Virginia parishes and provides details concerning the origins of the parishes and the lives of the ministers and selected church members. Each chapter also contains family histories and extensive lists of vestrymen, communicants, justices, and prominent figures. The index is a guide to 7,000 proper names, as well as a digest of important facts recorded in the book.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=3840&NLC-GenPointers1

ST. LUKE'S RECORDS, 1829-Early 1900s, Danville, Knox County, Ohio

In this volume the researcher will find more than 2,000 records of baptism, arranged in chronological order, giving the date, the names of the child and parents (including the wife's maiden name), and the names of the child's sponsors. The baptisms are followed by several hundred marriage records, giving the date of the marriage, the names of the bride and groom, and witnesses to the marriage. Also included are two membership lists from the 1830s; a number of communion and confirmation records, starting in 1853; and a table of surname variants and a list of St. Luke's pastors at the front of the book. Most of the death records found in the volume commence with 1876 and continue to 1947.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=9692&NLC-GenPointers1

CATHOLIC FAMILIES OF SOUTHERN MARYLAND: Records of Catholic Residents of St. Mary's County in the Eighteenth Century

St. Mary's residents played a key role in the development of the Catholic Church throughout the whole of America. In 1785, for example, the first of many Catholic families from St. Mary's crossed the mountains to find land in Kentucky, while a few years later, driven by economic necessity, others migrated to Georgia, Louisiana, Missouri, and Texas. The most significant portion of this work contains the marriages and baptisms from the Jesuit parishes of St. Francis Xavier and St. Inigoes, which, in the case of baptisms (1767-1794), give the names of children, parents, and godparents, and the date of baptism; and in the case of marriages (1767-1784), the names of the married partners and the date of marriage.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=4337&NLC-GenPointers1

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AMERICAN QUAKER GENEALOGY (CD)

This CD comprises all six volumes of William Wade Hinshaw's renowned "Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy," originally published between 1936 and 1950.

Containing approximately 500,000 entries from the various colonial Quaker monthly meeting records, Hinshaw's "Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy" is the magnum opus of Quaker genealogy. In its production, thousands of records were located and abstracted into a uniform and intelligible system of notation. The data is arranged by meeting, then alphabetically by family name, and chronologically thereunder.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=7192&NLC-GenPointers1

HOPEWELL FRIENDS HISTORY, 1734-1934, Frederick County, Virginia. Records of Hopewell Monthly Meetings and Meetings Reporting to Hopewell

This compilation is divided into two parts. The historical section is a broad survey of Hopewell Quaker Meeting from its origins nine years before the creation of Frederick County. Of far greater importance to genealogists, the documentary section encompasses 200 years of Quaker records: births, marriages, deaths, removals, disownments, and reinstatements, a good many of which cannot be found in public record offices.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=2860&NLC-GenPointers1

THE MORAVIANS in Georgia, 1735-1740

This book documents the brief history of the Moravian community in Georgia, commencing with an overview of the sect and continuing through the establishment of the Brethren community in Savannah, missionary work among the Creeks, and the departure of the Moravians for England, Pennsylvania, and other locations. Genealogists will find numerous references to transfers of land involving the Moravians, settlement maps, passenger lists of Moravian arrivals, a brief list of Moravian deaths in Georgia, and a name index to the persons mentioned in the text.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=2080&NLC-GenPointers1

PENNSYLVANIA-GERMAN Church Records, 1729-1870 (CD)

This CD contains images of the pages of all three volumes of "Pennsylvania German Church Records," representing a distillation of all the church records ever published in the "Proceedings and Addresses" of the Pennsylvania German Society. The records, which refer to approximately 91,000 individuals, include births, baptisms, marriages, and burials and identify people and their relationships to one another--not only parents and children, husbands and wives, but witnesses and sponsors as well.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=7130&NLC-GenPointers1

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MORE JUNE RELEASES from Clearfield Company

Following are seven stellar June publications that do not appear on the "New Genealogy Books & CDs" page of www.genealogical.com this month. They include the latest volumes in three series of books pertaining to (1) Maryland colonial probate records, (2) Native American wills, and (3) applications for compensation filed by "Cherokees by Blood." The other four Clearfield releases are noteworthy in their own right for researchers who are looking for ancestors in Pennsylvania, Virginia, or North Carolina, or on America's most famous colonial passenger arrival list. Scroll down and learn if one or more of these reputable works could be of help to you.

ABSTRACTS OF THE TESTAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS of the Prerogative Court of Maryland. Volume IX: 1701-1703, Libers: 18B, 19A

The Prerogative Court was the focal point for probate in colonial Maryland. Volume IX of this series by V. L. Skinner consists of abstracts of the records of Maryland's Prerogative Court for the period 1701 to 1703. The abstracts are arranged chronologically by court session. For the most part, the transcriptions state the names of the principals (testators, heirs, witnesses, administrators, and so forth) as well as details of bequests, names of slaves, appraisers, and more. In all, this volume refers to between 6,000 and 7,000 inhabitants of the Province of Maryland at the beginning of the 18th century. http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=9971&NLC-GenPointers1

EASTERN CHEROKEE BY BLOOD, 1906-1910. Volume III. Applications 6,776-10,452 from the U.S. Court of Claims, 1906-1910. Cherokee-Related Records of Special Commissioner Guion Miller

In accordance with Supreme Court rulings in 1905 and 1907, on May 28, 1909, Mr. Guion Miller, representing the Interior Department, rendered his findings with respect to 45,847 separate Native American applications for compensation (encompassing about 90,000 individual claimants). Miller qualified about 30,000 persons inhabiting 19 states to share in the fund. Ninety percent of these individuals were living west of the Mississippi River, but all of them were considered to be Eastern Cherokee by blood, that is, descendants of the Cherokee Nation that had been evicted from Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee in 1835.

The volume at hand is the third in a series by Mr. Jeff Bowen based on the Guion Miller applications. It contains every shred of genealogical value from 3,775 additional applications beyond the first two volumes. In every instance, Mr. Bowen has culled from the applications the application number, the applicant's name and city of residence, the

number of other persons in the applicant's family, references to family members found in other applications, and the disposition of the application.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=9900&NLC-GenPointers1

INDIAN WILLS, 1911-1921. Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs: Book Five

In accordance with federal statutes enacted in 1910 and 1913, Native Americans ultimately submitted more than 2,500 pages of wills and probate records to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. These records span the period 1911 to 1921 and, with a few exceptions, pertain to Indian families living in the Plains and several western states.

Jeff Bowen, who has been transcribing the aforesaid wills for publication, has now added the fifth volume. As a rule, the documents identify the names of the testator, residence, heirs, a description of any real estate transferred in the will, names of executors and witnesses, and other particulars commonly found in probate records. The majority of the wills are of western origin, and the following tribes predominate: Apache, Chippewa, Comanche, Kiowa, Klamath, Omaha, Osage, and Winnebago.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=9988&NLC-GenPointers1

GENEALOGICAL ABSTRACTS from 18th-Century Virginia Newspapers

This work contains genealogical abstracts from more than 7,000 issues of 80 newspapers printed in Virginia in the 18th century! In addition, where there were gaps in the Virginia papers, newspapers from nearby colonies were scanned for Virginia material. In selecting items to abstract, Dr. Headley looked especially for those that gave at least two pieces of genealogical data: age and place of residence, for example, date of death and names of executors, or name of spouse and place of residence. This work draws together all genealogical data in 18th-century Virginia newspapers--in itself a stupendous achievement.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=2653&NLC-GenPointers1

THE ORIGINAL LISTS OF PERSONS OF QUALITY Who Went from Great Britain to the American Plantations, 1600-1700. Localities Where They Formerly Lived in the Mother Country, the Names of the Ships in Which They Embarked, and Other Interesting Particulars

This is the most famous of all ships' passenger lists and, historically, the most important single-volume list of English-speaking immigrants of the colonial period ever published. Transcribed from the records of the British State Paper Office, it contains the names of more than 11,000 immigrants with their ages, former places of residence, and the names

of ships in which they embarked. The use of the book is greatly enhanced by a 66-page index, which contains the given as well as the family names of all immigrants cited in various lists throughout the work.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=2870&NLC-GenPointers1

VIRGINIA COURT RECORDS in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Records of the District of West Augusta and Ohio and Yohogania Counties, Virginia 1775-1780

The minute books of the old Virginia courts herein transcribed cover the District of West Augusta and Yohogania and Ohio counties during the period when Virginia claimed and exercised jurisdiction over what are now the Pennsylvania counties of Washington, Greene, Fayette, Westmoreland, and Allegheny. The minute books contain, in addition to land titles, transcripts of legal instruments of immense genealogical value, such as deeds, mortgages, conveyances, probate records, administrations, contracts, suits, judgments, and oaths of allegiance--through which are identified thousands upon thousands of the early settlers of the Monongahela Valley.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=1260&NLC-GenPointers1

ROSTER OF SOLDIERS from North Carolina in the American Revolution

The most complete military roster for the state, this monumental work contains the names of approximately 36,000 soldiers from North Carolina who served during the Revolution. Service records include such information as rank, company, date of enlistment or commission, period of service, combat experience, and whether captured, wounded, or killed.

http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=4150&NLC-GenPointers1

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DICK EASTMAN GIVES A THUMBS UP to "The Ricker Compilation of Vital Records of Early Connecticut"

Esteemed genealogy columnist Dick Eastman reviewed our new CD-ROM publication, **THE RICKER COMPILATION OF VITAL RECORDS OF EARLY CONNECTICUT**, in the September 20, 2006, issue of his weekly newsletter. Dick's assessment of **THE RICKER COMPILATION** can be summed up in the following comment, "If you have Connecticut ancestry, you want this disc!"

We have reprinted excerpts from Dick Eastman's review below. To read the review in its entirety, please access the following:

http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2006/09/the_ricker_comp.html

This week I had a chance to use a brand-new CD-ROM disk with a long title: THE RICKER COMPILATION OF VITAL RECORDS OF EARLY CONNECTICUT Based on the Barbour Collection of Connecticut Town Vital Records and Other Statistical Sources, compiled and edited by Jacquelyn Ladd Ricker. The disk was just released within the past week or two by Genealogical Publishing Company. After using this Windows and Macintosh disc for a couple of hours, I am very impressed.

If you have Connecticut ancestry, you will be pleasantly surprised by the resources on this disk. It contains more than 1.5 million records of Connecticut residents prior to 1850. The records include:

From the Barbour Collection:

- 1.2 million records of births, marriages, and deaths from over 135 Connecticut towns
- 300,000 records from cemeteries, probate records, tax records, and family Bibles

In addition to the Barbour Collection, this disk also contains:

- Vital statistics from several Connecticut towns not included by Barbour
- Information gleaned from lists of source records, Bibles, and church records held in the Connecticut State Library at Hartford
- Tombstone transcriptions from over 400 cemeteries which were originally published in "The Connecticut Nutmegger," a publication of the Connecticut Society of Genealogists formerly edited by Jacquelyn Ricker

THE RICKER COMPILATION contains records of most individuals in Connecticut from approximately 1633 through 1850 or so, when the state started recording statistics. Most of the records came from town clerks or registrars, although there are other records written by justices of the peace, doctors, clergymen, acquaintances and family members. Still more records were extracted from baptism, burial, probate, court, and tax records. Finally, this compilation also contains entries from private diaries, family Bibles, church records, personal letters, and more.

I found that I could "page down" through the records, one page at a time, looking for information. However, the disk's built-in search engine is the best method of finding information quickly. You can type in any name or phrase and the search engine will search the entire disk for all occurrences of your search terms.

For instance, I did a search of my own surname. I already knew that many people of that name lived in colonial Connecticut, although none of them were my ancestors. I have never spent much time investigating these families in the outer twigs of my family tree. Yet I simply entered my surname and clicked on SEARCH, and about five seconds later I was reading a list of 196 references to people of that name; each reference listed where the information came from. Not bad for a five-second effort!

Unlike many genealogy CD-ROM disks, I found that it is easy to copy information from THE RICKER COMPILATION on CD-ROM. You can then paste that information into almost any genealogy program or word processor.

Likewise, printing information from this disk was also simple: select FILE, then select PRINT and then select the pages to be printed. One selection is "current page," which probably will be a common chore. Beware of one thing: the default setting is to print all 14,465 pages on this disk. I suspect you will want to change that before clicking on OK!

All in all, THE RICKER COMPILATION is an excellent example of the use of technology for researching your ancestry. It contains the equivalent of 14,465 printed pages of very high-quality and well-researched genealogy information. If printed on paper, this information would cost more than \$1,000.00 because of the printing expenses of all the volumes plus another couple of hundred dollars just for a bookcase to hold all this. THE RICKER COMPILATION CD-ROM disk gives you exactly the same information on a half-ounce plastic disk, plus it provides a better method of finding information quickly. All of this is available for \$59.99, much less than the cost of just the required bookcase for printed books. If you have Connecticut ancestry, you want this disk!

THE RICKER COMPILATION CD-ROM will operate on Windows or Macintosh computers of modest computing power. It sells for \$59.99 and is available directly from Genealogical Publishing Company's safe and secure online shopping cart system. http://www.genealogical.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&item_number=7535&NLC-GenPointers1

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2. Fax your order to 1-410-752-8492
3. Call toll-free to our sales department at 1-800-296-6687