Connecticut Genealogy Research

History

Indigenous Inhabitants

When Europeans came into the area now called Connecticut, many small American Indian tribes lived in the area. They included the Mohegan, Pequot, Niantic, Nipmuc, Mattabesic, Schaghticoke, Paugussett, and others.
Though all of them spoke related languages and shared many cultural similarities, each tribe had its own leadership and its own territory. Some fought over land ownership.

Most tribes were pushed out of the area by Dutch and English colonists.
European epidemics and warfare devastated the Connecticut Indian population, and the survivors had to merge with each other to survive. Today most Native Americans of Connecticut have heritage from more than one of these original tribes, regardless of which tribe they officially belong to.

European Settlement

Dutch explorers arrived in the early 1600's; they claimed land for New Netherlands.
English settlers from Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies moved in soon after.
In the 1630's, Windsor, Wethersfield, Saybrook Colony, Hartford, and New Haven Colony were established by settlers from Massachusetts.
Town Square in New Haven Colony
In 1637, the English colonists fought the Pequot tribe, the Mohegans and the Narragansetts. The victorious colonists captured and enslaved the surviving Indians.
1639 - The New Haven Colony set up a representative form of government called The Fundamental Orders.
1662 - The colonies came together under a charter granted by King Charles II of England.
1675 - In King Phillip's War, Native Americans made a final attempt to drive out the English in Southern New England. The colonists were victorious.
1687 – Sir Edmund Andros demanded the return of the 1662 Charter. A legend sprang up that the charter was hidden in an oak tree. Later the "Charter Oak Tree" became an iconic state symbol.
1689 - William and Mary confirmed the 1662 original charter.
In the 1700's, the whaling industry was important to many Connecticut ports, particularly New London, which at one time was the third largest whaling port in the U.S. The industry peaked in the 1840s.
1701 - Collegiate School was established; it was renamed Yale College in 1718.
1723 - Scottish immigrants settled Voluntown.
By 1760, Scottish immigrants settled Chelsea.
In 1731, a deposit of iron was discovered at Salisbury. Forges were established, and in 1762 a blast furnace opened in Salisbury. This furnace produced most of the cannon for the American Revolution, earning Connecticut the nickname of "Arsenal of the Revolution."
1765 - Passage of the Stamp Act led to protests in Connecticut. The Sons of Liberty unseated the Connecticut governor.
1769 to 1799 - The Pennamite-Yankee War was a series of skirmishes over land along the northern branch of the Susquehanna River in what is now Pennsylvania. King Charles II of England had granted charters to that land to both Connecticut and to William Penn. Resolution came in 1799, when the area became Pennsylvania.

In 1774:

- A law was passed banning the importation of slaves into Connecticut.

- Rev. Sampson Occom, a Presbyterian minister, organized a migration of Native Americans out of Connecticut to Oneida Country near Waterville, New York. In 1830 they sold their land in New York and moved to Wisconsin.

1775 - Connecticut forces secured the arsenal at Fort Ticonderoga, which had recently been captured from the British. From 1775 to 1883, Connecticut provided food, arms, and other provisions to the Continental Army.

Statehood

On July 4, 1776, Connecticut became one of the original 13 states.
Between 1780 and 1840, nearly 750,000 people migrated to the west from Connecticut.
1784 - The state legislature passed a law enacting gradual emancipation. Slaves born after March 1784 were to be emancipated at age 25.

Between 1786 and 1800, Connecticut relinquished its claims to the Wyoming Valley in Pennsylvania and the Western Reserve in Ohio. Connecticut settlers remained in both areas.
1788 - Connecticut became the 5th state to ratify the Constitution.
1795 - Connecticut ceded part of its land to the U.S. in exchange for the state's debt.
1797 - The age for emancipation of slaves was reduced to 21.
1805 - Connecticut and Massachusetts settled a dispute over their boundary.
The 1800's - In addition to iron works in Salisbury, the textile industry was growing throughout New England, and gun manufacturers like Samuel Colt, Smith & Wesson, and Winchester, at times had factories in Connecticut. Thousands of foreign laborers moved into Connecticut to work in the factories.
1812 to 1814 – Although many Connecticut residents did not approve of the War of 1812, the state's factories provided cannons and muskets for the war effort.
1818 - A new state constitution reorganized the government and disestablished the recognized state religion (Congregational).
1848 - Slavery was abolished in the state.
Civil War – 55,000 Connecticut men fought for the Union.
Railroads:

- The Hartford and Wethersfield Railroad was established with horse drawn cars in 1863
- In 1888, electric cars were introduced; by 1894 all cars were electric.

1878 - The first commercial telephone exchange opened in New Haven.

Connecticut Vital Records

Online Indexes and Records

FamilySearch.org – Connecticut Births and Christenings, 1649 – 1906
FamilySearch.org/Catalog - digitizations of books of early births, marriages and deaths
Ancestry.com – Connecticut Town Birth Records Pre-1870 (from the Barbour Collection)

Book or Microfilm Collections

Connecticut State Library and Family History Library, Salt Lake City – microfilm of Connecticut vital records up to 1900.
NOTE: As FamilySearch digitizes the microfilms, the online records can be viewed at the State Library and on *familysearch.org/catalog*.
Connecticut State Library – Barbour Collection of Connecticut vital records to 1870

Vital Records

The state of Connecticut is divided into 169 towns. Town boundaries include cities, towns and rural areas. Towns are responsible for all governmental activities and records.
Each Town Clerk began recording vital records when the town was established. The records are kept till the present.

- Marriages were recorded in Connecticut as early as 1640.
- 1650 to 1870 – Town clerks were required to record all vital records beginning in 1650. Some towns have more thorough records than others.
- Following the Revolutionary War to about 1870, births, marriages and deaths were not always recorded by the town clerks.
- 1870 to 1897 - Town record keeping improved. In 1870, the State Board of Health was established
- After 1 July 1897, copies of vital records from every town were sent to the Department of Public Health, Vital Records Section, in Hartford, CT.

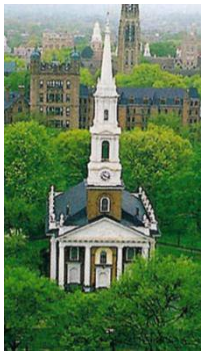
Obtain a certified copy of a vital record from the **Town Clerk** in the town where the event occurred.
Obtain a certified copy of a vital record dated 1897 to the present from the **State Vital Records Office.**

NOTE:

- Birth records must be older than 100 years.
- Marriage and death records are available for all years.
- Town Clerks process requests more quickly than the State office.

Genealogical Research and Copies

- Members of approved genealogical societies can make appointments to search vital records at a Town Clerk's office or at the State Vital Records office.
- The Barbour Collection of pre-1897 town vital records is available to the public at many libraries.
- The online records and indexes listed above are more public sources of vital records.



Connecticut Church Records

The Congregational church was predominant in Colonial Connecticut and into the early 1800's. Other historical churches in the state included the Methodist, Episcopal, Universalist and Baptist churches.

Over 600 churches have deposited their records with the Connecticut State Library. Some of them have been indexed by the library.
Most of these records are on microfilm at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. An index of many Connecticut church records from 1630 to 1920 can be searched on Ancestry.com.

Connecticut Genealogy Repositories/Societies

Connecticut State Library - Connecticut Historical Society - Connecticut Society of Genealogists - New England Historic Genealogical Society - Godfrey Memorial Library - Museum of Connecticut History

Connecticut Land Records

- In 1639, The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut were adopted. The Connecticut General Assembly established town proprietors to dispose of land in their control.

- Land was divided and sold in lots; deed transactions were recorded by the town clerk.
- In 1662, the British royal charter affirmed the settlements' legal right to land. New Haven Colony and Connecticut Colony formed a united commonwealth of Connecticut.

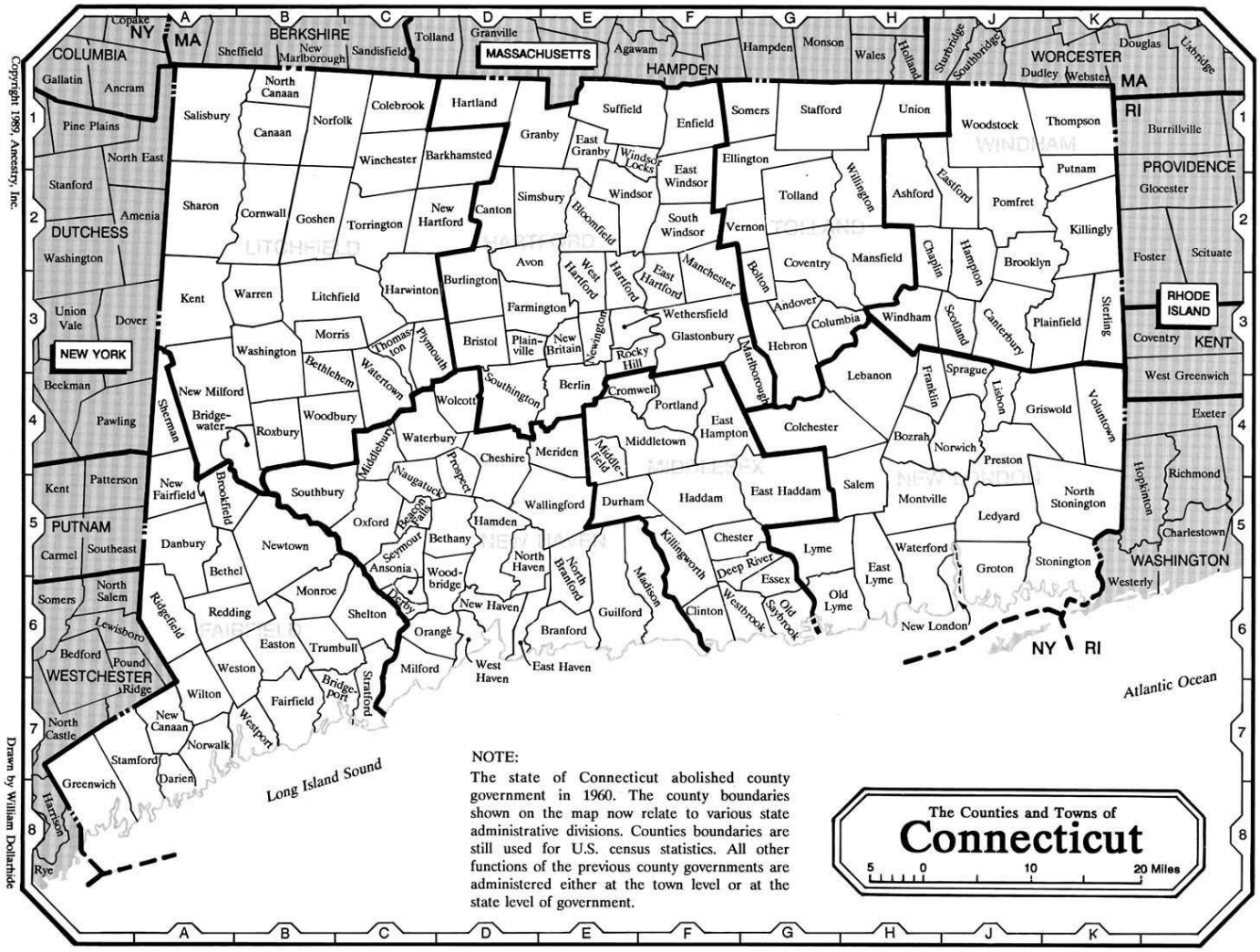
Town Clerks usually have comprehensive indexes to grantor and grantee deeds beginning at the time the towns were formed.

Microfilms of land records from Colonial times to 1900 are available at the Connecticut State Library and the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, UT.

Books publishing Colonial Land Records

- Volume 14 of *"Collections of The Connecticut Historical Society"* (Hartford: the society, 1912) includes all the Hartford land records from 1639 to the 1680s.
- *"General Index of the Land Records of the Town of Hartford, 1639–1879"* (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1873–83).

Connecticut Counties and Towns



NOTE:

- Connecticut counties are only geographical areas. They contain Towns with distinct geographical boundaries. Each of these towns may contain incorporated cities or boroughs, as well as villages and rural areas.
- Government organization is at the Town level. Land records are kept by the Town Clerks.

The Atlas of Historical County Boundaries – Interactive maps and text covering the historical boundaries, names, organization, and attachments of every county, extinct county and unsuccessful county proposal from the creation of the first county through December 31, 2000. - http://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/index.html

Connecticut Migration Routes
Atlantic Coast Ports - Boston Post Road or King's Highway - Connecticut River Valley - Farmington River Valley - Housatonic Valley - Catskill Road - Connecticut Turnpike - Greenwood Road - King's Highway or Boston Post Road - Long Island Sound - New Haven and Milford Turnpike - New London and Lyme Turnpike - Old Connecticut Path - Pequot Path - Philipstown Turnpike

Connecticut Genealogy Research Websites

Note: Check online for the *GenWeb* and *Genealogy Trails* of the county in which your ancestor lived.

American Ancestors - $ - over 450 record collections, most about New England residents, also Native American and records of other states - https://www.americanancestors.org/index.aspx
Colonial Era Congregational Church Records – scans, transcriptions of records of: church meetings and votes; births, deaths, baptisms, and marriages; church discipline; personal conversion narratives of men, women, children, Native Americans, slaves, and indentured servants; diaries of ministers - http://www.congregationallibrary.org/nehh/main
Connecticut Digital Archive - genealogies, diaries, family Bibles from libraries, historical societies and museums - https://ctdigitalarchive.org/
Connecticut Index – indexes of church and cemetery records – http://dunhamwilcox.net/0_ct-index.htm
Connecticut State Library – search digitized books, diaries, photos, court records, witchcraft trial records, newspapers, vital records indexes, etc. - http://cslib.cdmhost.com/
Connecticut Town Clerks Portal – free search of index of Land records for 70 of the 169 cities and towns in Connecticut – subscribe to see images of the records or to see detailed descriptions of the property/transaction records - *records may go back only 40 or 50 years* - https://connecticut-townclerks-records.com/User/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fIndex.aspx
Fairfield County, CT: **Stamford Obituaries, Mayors, Photos, Postcards, and Pamphlets** – search an index of obituaries in Stamford newspapers 1830 to the present, list of Stamford mayors, photos, postcards, and pamphlets - http://www.fergusonlibrary.org/information-research/stamford-history-genealogy
The writings of individual members
Litchfield County, CT: **Sharon Historical Society & Museum** - index of former Sharon residents - military records American Revolution through the Civil War – original town lot owners – diary – cemeteries - http://sharonhist.org/
Middlesex County, CT: **East Hampton Digital Archive** – search issues of *Hampton News* from 1887 to 1952 and of the *Oracle*, the high school yearbook, from 1940 to 1999 - http://easthampton.advantage-preservation.com/

Connecticut African American Research

AfricaMap – track the slave trade with historical overlays and geographical data - http://worldmap.harvard.edu/africamap/

AfriGeneas – slave records, death and marriage records, censuses, surnames – chat or send messages to other researchers - http://afrigeneas.com/

International African American Museum – digitized African American funeral programs, obituaries, marriage records, photos, historical documents and family histories – https://cfh.iaamuseum.org/records/

Slave Voyages - the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* documents vessels along the Atlantic slave routes from 1514 to 1866; *Intra-American Slave Trade Database* documents vessels traveling between the Atlantic and Pacific ports ranging from the United States to Brazil; the *African Names Database* gives names, ages, possible origins of slaves liberated from captured slave ships between 1808 and 1862 - https://www.slavevoyages.org/

Connecticut Cemetery Research

Hartford, CT: **Cedar Hill Cemetery** – search an index of over 32,000 burials, download cemetery map - https://www.cemeteryfind.com/Cemetery/CedarHill

Hartford County, CT: **Wethersfield Burying Ground***:* history, timeline, map and burial index, photo, GPS coordinates & transcription of gravestones, biographies of Wethersfield residents - http://wethersfieldhistory.org/burying-ground/

Hale Collection of Connecticut Cemetery Records – transcriptions of headstone inscriptions in over 2,000 Connecticut cemeteries - recorded 1932 – 1935 in a W.P.A. project - http://www.hale-collection.com/index.html

Litchfield County, CT: **New Hartford Burials** - burial and transit permits, deaths/burials, cremation records - http://newhartfordcthistory.org/researcharchives/burial-records/

New London County, CT: **Norwich City Cemeteries –** burials in local cemeteries, date of interment, where and when died, age, section/lot, veteran status – click on City Cemetery Plot Listings - http://www.otislibrarynorwich.org/new-page-3/

Connecticut Military Research

Grand Army of the Republic Records Project – developing database - histories of posts, reports of officers and members if available, search by state - http://suvcw.org/garrecords/

Connecticut Native American Research

First People - Links to State Recognized Tribes, sorted by state - http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Links/state-recognized-tribes-in-usa-by-state.html

Native Languages of the Americas: Native American Cultures: search by state for information about indigenous peoples living in that area – http://www.native-languages.org/home.htm

Connecticut Newspaper Research

Connecticut State Library Digital Collection – newspapers various years - http://cslib.cdmhost.com/

Information in this guide is taken from:

- *Native American Tribes of Connecticut* - http://www.native-languages.org/connecticut.htm

- *FamilySearch* Wiki - *Ancestry.com* Wiki
- *Connecticut State Department of Public Health* website
- "International Vital Records Handbook", author Thomas Jay Kemp
- *The Weekly Genealogist, NEHGS; Dick Eastman Genealogy Newsletter; Genealogy Gems*
- Family Tree Magazine