Maine Genealogy Research

History

Indigenous People

The tribes living in the area now called Maine in the 1600's included the Maliseet, the Abenaki, the Penobscot and the Passamaquoddy.
Early European explorers encountered hostility. French, Spanish, and English interests were pitted against the native Eastern Abenaki's' desire to maintain their homelands.
In the 1700's the Maliseet, Abenaki and Penobscot people joined with the Micmac people, who lived north of them, into an alliance called the Wabanaki Confederacy. Micmac people began to move into the area. Wars during the years between the French and English and their Native American allies eventually resulted in British victories. The British then forced the Native Americans to give up their lands.

"*Twelve Thousand Years: American Indians in Maine*," by author Bruce J. Bourque, documents the generations of peoples who moved through and settled along the rocky coast, rivers, lakes, valley, and mountains of what is now Maine. It describes their resistance, endurance and accommodation to European domination as well as current Native American political and cultural revitalization.

Today there are five federally recognized Indian tribes in the state of Maine:

- The Aroostook Band of Micmacs
- The Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians
- The Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indian Township
- The Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point
- The Penobscot Nation

European Exploration and Settlement

French settlements in the early 1600's in Acadia spanned Quebec, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and the northern part of what is now Maine.
England, France and Spain fought each other in wars for power here and abroad throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.
Two short-lived hamlets:

- In 1604, Pierre du Gast Sieur de Monts established the first European settlement at the mouth of the St. Croix River.
- In 1607, pilgrims with the Plymouth Company established Popham Colony on the Kennebec River.

In 1622, Sir Fernando Gorges and John Mason received land grants to the areas that are now Maine and New Hampshire.
In 1630, York, Saco, and Cape Porpoise were established in Gorges' grant in what is now Maine.
In 1652, Massachusetts claimed the area now known as Maine as a district. Kittery and York were incorporated. They are the oldest incorporated towns in Maine. Maine remained in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts until it became a U.S. state in 1820.
From 1686 to 1689, the British consolidated administration of the British colonies under the Dominion of New England. The colonies included Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
From 1689 – 1697, the English and French and their Native American allies fought over Acadia. Falmouth was destroyed and other settlements attacked. Called King William's War, it ended with natives ceding more land to the British. Settlers rebuilt Falmouth.

In 1710, at the end of Queen Anne's War, the British gained control of much of the area. Acadians not willing to live under British rule and others who were later expelled from Canada made their way south, many to Louisiana, which was then a colony of France.
1716-1760: The entire area was called York, a county of Massachusetts. Many of Maine's early residents are listed in Massachusetts records.
1743 – 1763: The population doubled as Massachusetts gave 100-acre lots to anyone who would settle the area.
1760: Lincoln and Cumberland counties were formed. These counties and York were called the Province of Maine of the Massachusetts Bay Colony until 1779.
By 1763 England had gained control. Immigrants from Ireland, England and Scotland settled in southern Aroostook County. Acadians settled along the northern border of Aroostook County.
In 1775, the first naval battle of the Revolutionary War took place in June off the port of Machias. The British Navy attacked Falmouth and, once again, the town was destroyed. Afterwards, the town was again rebuilt.
In 1779, as a part of the new United States of America, the area became known as the District of Maine.
In 1785, Maine's first newspaper, the Falmouth Gazette, was established; it endorsed separation from Massachusetts.
In 1819, Maine officially separated from Massachusetts.

Statehood

On 15 March 1820, Maine became a free state in the U.S. as part of the Missouri Compromise law, which maintained a balance between free and slave states.
1838-1839: Some 10,000 troops from Maine were called into service during the Aroostook War to settle a boundary dispute between Maine and New Brunswick. The dispute was settled by treaty in 1842.

State House in 1836

Industry and Tourism in the 1800s:
Maine's abundant forests and maritime heritage put the state at the forefront of the shipbuilding industry. This continued until steel became a major component of ships.
Maine's expansive coastline gave rise to a lucrative fishing industry that supplied cod, herring, and shellfish, especially lobster.
Textile, lumber, and other industries drew immigrants.
A rail link to Montreal provided a shipping route for Canadian goods to Europe that was viable even in the winter when the St. Lawrence River was frozen and impassable, helping to make Portland, Maine, a major shipping port.
After the Civil War, academics, businessmen, and wealthy vacationers from Boston, Philadelphia, New York and the Midwest began building themselves summer homes in Maine.
Tourism became an important source of income for the state.
In 1868, the first wood pulp was produced in a Topsham sawmill, sparking the paper industry in Maine.
In 1899 Walter Wyman found a way to interconnect the hydro-electric plants throughout the state.

Maine Vital Records

Online Indexes

Ancestry.com - FamilySearch.org - FindmyPast.com
Maine Genealogy – marriages reported to the state from 1892 to 1966, and from 1977 to 2009 - http://www.mainegenealogy.net/marriage_search.asp

Pre - 1892 Vital Records

Many of Maine's early residents, especially from 1652 till 1779, are listed in Massachusetts records.

Vital records were kept by Town Clerks beginning in the 1650s; most vital records date from about 1700. Some towns sent copies of their vital records -dated 1670 – 1891 - to the Maine State Archives.
Obtain a copy of a pre-1892 Vital Record from the **Town Clerk** of the area where the event occurred.

Vital Records 1892 to the Present:

In 1892, a new law required state registration of all births, marriages, and deaths in Maine.
Town Clerks registered the events; copies were sent to the Maine State Office of Vital Statistics.
The Maine State Archives has vital records dated 1892 – 1922.

- Open records – vital records are "open" after the required number of years has passed since the date of the occurrence.
- Closed records – vital records are "closed" until the required number of years has passed since the date of occurrence.
- Required number of years: births 75 yrs. - marriages 50 yrs. - deaths 25 yrs. - fetal deaths 50 yrs.
- Proof of ID and of lineage or legitimate legal interest must be submitted with an application for a Certified Copy of a Closed vital record.

Obtain a copy of a Post-1891 vital record with any required ID and documentation from the **Town Clerk** or from the **Maine CDC Office of Vital Statistics**.

NOTE: Vital records in Maine currently include records of fetal deaths, abortions and miscarriages in addition to births, marriages, divorces and deaths.

Maine Land Records

Land grants from England or France to early settlers:

- These may be recorded in the "York Deeds" collection of transcribed pre-1737 deeds. View "York Deeds" at most of Maine's state and university libraries, at the Maine Historical Society, and at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, UT.

Titles or Deeds of land that was given, sold, or auctioned to settlers by the Massachusetts Colony:

- View these in the Massachusetts State Archives, at the Family History Library in UT, and some are in the Maine State Archives.

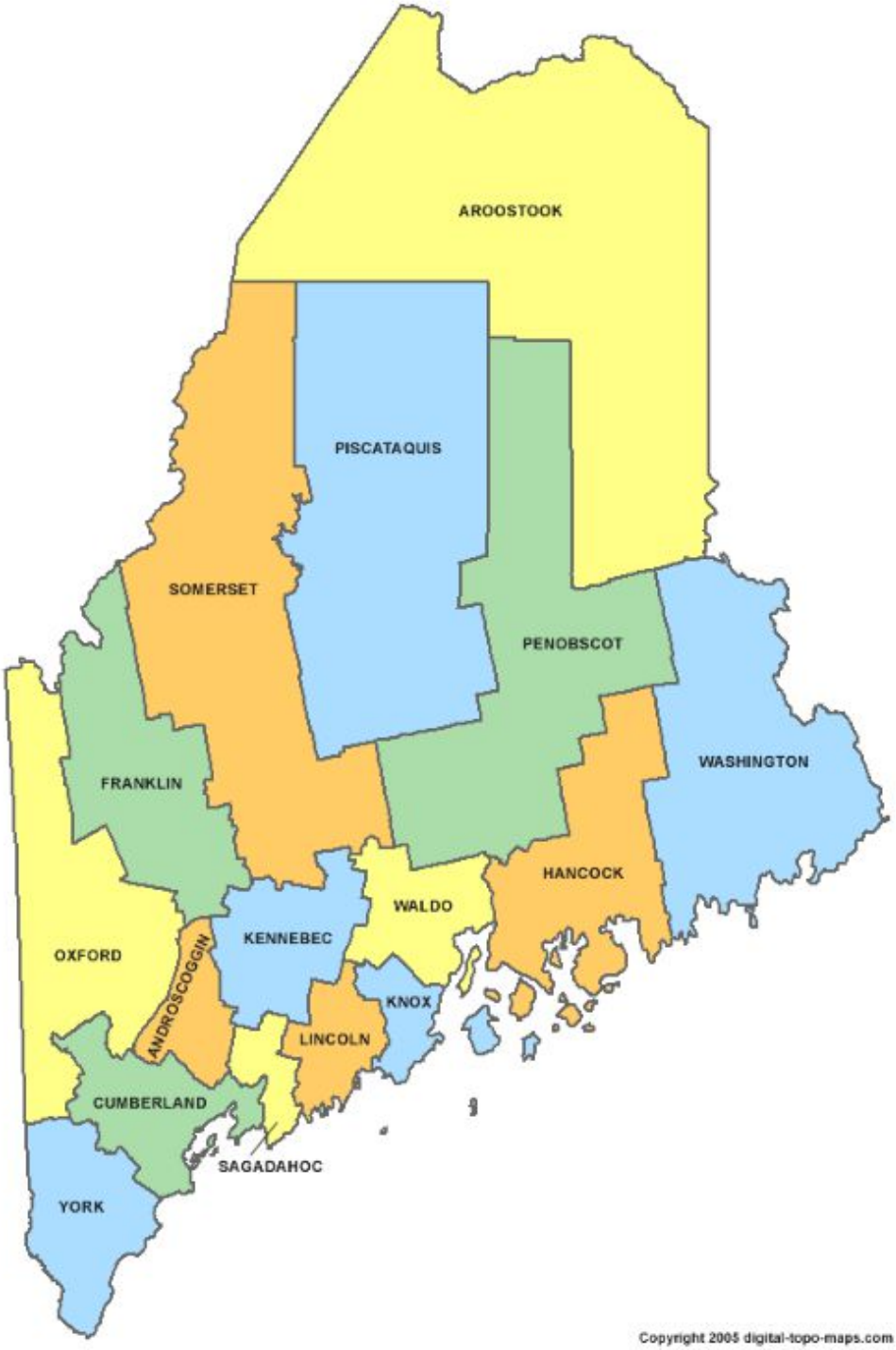
Bounty Land granted to veterans of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812:

- Bounty-land records are stored at the Maine State Archives and at the National Archives in Washington, D. C.
- Staff of the Maine State Archives will mail out copies of bounty-land applications for a fee
- Online indexes and images - *FamilySearch.org*
- Online indexes – *Ancestry.com* and *Archives.com*
- Free downloadable indexes – www.maine.gov/sos/arc/research/military.html
- View microfilm of bounty-land applications at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City or at NARA in Washington D.C.

Private Land Sales between citizens:

- Office of the County Clerk where the sale happened.
- Online images of deed books of Aroostook County and Piscaquis County – *FamilySearch.org*

Maine Counties



Currently, Maine has 16 counties and the state capitol is Augusta.

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

Maine Military Records

Online Indexes of Federal Service Records, Pension Claims, or Bounty Land Warrants
Ancestry.com
FamilySearch.org
Fold3.com

Records:
State Militia Records are located at the Maine State Archives.
Federal Service Records and Pension Records are kept by the National Archives.

Maine Historical/Genealogical Repositories and Societies

Bowdoin College Special Collections and Archives
Kennebec Historical Society
Maine Franco-American Genealogical Society
Maine Historical Society Library - immigration and naturalization papers, historical newspapers, city directories, and business, town and church records
Maine State Archives
Maine State Library – genealogies; town histories, city directories and published vital records for towns in Maine and a good deal of New England; materials on the Maritime Provinces of Canada
Massachusetts State Archives
National Archives at Boston

Maine Genealogy Websites

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

1771 Massachusetts (and Maine) Tax Inventory - names and descriptions of taxable property of nearly 38,000 individuals who resided in 152 Massachusetts towns in 1771; this area included what is now the state of Maine – descriptions of real estate, buildings, livestock, and farm commodities - http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~hsb41/masstax/masstax.cgi
Biddeford, Maine Genealogy Resources – digitized newspapers, index of obituaries, link to search of burials in St. Joseph's and St. Mary's Cemeteries, cemetery maps, historical information and photos - https://biddefordhistory.com/newsgenealogy/
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
Digital Maine Library - Maine residents can access thousands of magazine and newspaper pages, reference sources and learning materials from their home computers – view *ancestry.com* on any public library computer - www.library.digitalmaine.org
Digital Maine Repository - digitized books, newspapers, church records, maps and manuscripts - www.digitalmaine.com
Maine Genealogy - free databases and genealogical resources for researchers with Maine roots - http://www.mainegenealogy.net/
Maine Genealogy Trails - collection of transcribed data for the state of Maine - http://genealogytrails.com/maine/
Maine Memory Network – digital images of letters, photos, maps, clothing, audio and video files – from libraries and historical societies - https://www.mainememory.net/

Maine State Archives - search marriage and death databases; – get non-certified copies of vital records prior to 1892 – Military section of *Services for Researchers* has a searchable index of Revolutionary War land grants, pension applications and Civil War records - https://www.maine.gov/sos/arc/research/
Obituary Search – request a search for an obituary in newspapers in Portland, Lewiston, Augusta, Waterville and Bangor - $5 fee for each obituary found - https://www.maine.gov/msl/services/obituary.htm
Old Canada Road Historical Society – historical and genealogical records of Maine's Upper Kennebec Valley; genealogical records include images or indexes of some obituaries, marriages, school and military records
Upper Saint John River Valley (Northern Maine and Northwestern New Brunswick) – Censuses - Church Records - Land Grants - Early visitors -Maps - Histories of the region - Family histories - Township histories
Waldo County Vital Records – births, marriages, and deaths from 1854 to 2011, taken from town annual reports, more types of records to follow – http://www.belfastlibrary.org/

Maine African American Research

Access Genealogy – links by state to websites of African American genealogy, cemeteries, and censuses
International African American Museum - African American funeral programs, obituaries, marriage records, photos, historical documents and family histories – military records of the U.S. Colored Troops are currently being digitized - https://cfh.iaamuseum.org/records/

Maine Cemetery Research

Diocese of Portland Cemeteries – search indexes of burials in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery (Bangor), Notre Dame Cemetery (Springvale), St. Francis Cemetery (Waterville), Calvary Cemetery (South Portland), St. Ignatius Cemetery (Sanford), St. Peter's Cemetery (Lewiston), and St. Joseph's and St. Mary's Cemeteries (Biddeford)
York Burial Records – indexes to burials in First Parish Church Cemetery, in Old York Burial Ground, in South Side Cemetery, and in area private cemeteries - http://www.fpyork.info/

Maine 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/

Maine Newspaper Research

Digital Maine Repository - links to free digitized newspapers organized by county - https://digitalmaine.com/newspapers/
Maine News Index Online – browse abstracts of articles from 15 Portland, Maine, newspapers - https://digitalcommons.portlandlibrary.com/

The above information is courtesy of:
Ancestry Wiki - *FamilySearch* Wiki - Family Tree Magazine
Penobscot Bay History Online – http://www.penobscotmarinemuseum.org/pbho-1/working-the-bay/changes-industries-and-rise-tourism
Family Tree Magazine