

A Partial Listing of Historical & Genealogical Resources for Western Massachusetts

(Compiled by Barbara Pelissier for the Pioneer Valley History Network)



Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield MA (located at the Pittsfield Public Library)

“With the help of the BFHA (see below), the Berkshire Athenaeum has built one of the finest collections of genealogical research materials available on New England forebears. Our greatest strength is in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont and early Rhode Island resources, and we are working hard to strengthen our collections of Maine and New Hampshire materials while updating and filling in as many gaps as possible. In addition, we have materials on adjacent New York counties east of the Hudson River, Quebec, and other areas from which New Englanders came and to which they moved on.”

Address: The Athenaeum is located within the Pittsfield Public Library located at:
1 Wendell Avenue, Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201

Phone: (413) 499-9480

Email pittsref@cwmars.org

Website: <http://www.berkshire.net/PittsfieldLibrary/lhg/>

Berkshire Family History Association (BFHA) publishes Berkshire Genealogist, a compilation of censuses, indices, reports, cemetery and church records, etc. pertaining to the Berkshire area of Massachusetts. Past issues (from 1978) of the publication have been indexed. See a listing at: <http://www.berkshire.net/~bfha/berkshiregenealogist.html>. The BFHA has a very close relationship with the Local History and Genealogy Department of the [Berkshire Athenaeum](#) (see above), and the majority of the BFHA records and documents can be found there.

Address: BFHA, P.O. Box 1437, Pittsfield, MA 01202

Email: BFHA President Donald Lutes at: lutes@Berkshire.net

Website: <http://www.berkshire.net/~bfha/>

Clerks of Cities and Towns can provide you with birth, death, tax information, selectmen's/city council minutes, maps, and a variety of other records depending on the town. For a listing of clerks in Mass.: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleclk/clkidx.htm>

Connecticut Valley Historical Museum The museum's Genealogy and Local History Library include the Ellis Island records, the Loiselle Index, over 30,000 genealogy books, 36,500 microforms, 40,000 photos and 2.5 million documents, including diaries, deeds, account books, and land transfer documents. There is a small admission fee.

Address: If driving, the CVHM is located at the "Quadrangle Museums"
Mailing Address: CVHM, 220 State Street, Springfield, MA 01103
Phone: (413) 263-6800, x 308 (archives) x 483 (genealogy and/or local history)
Web Site: <http://www.springfieldmuseums.org/museums/history/>

Conte Federal Archives (see listing for *Silvio Conte Federal Archives*, below)

County Registry of Deeds house land purchases and sales, bank mortgages, plans of land and other (often historic) maps. Most offices make copies for you, for a price. For a listing of the location and contact for all registries, by county, see: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/rod/rodidx.htm> to determine the county you want, see: <http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=mg2homepage&L=1&L0=Home&sid=massgov2>

County Probate Court Offices house records of everything that's gone through probate, from divorce records, wills, appointments of executors (often contain lists of next of kin), estate/personal inventories ("treasure troves"), legal guardianships, etc. Old documents may not be placed on copy machines because of their fragile condition, but may be photographed if you seek advance permission from the Registrar and her/his clearance thru building security. In your research, remember that you have a right to view and copy these public records. For a listing of the location and contact information for all courts, by county, see: <http://www.mass.gov/courts/courtsandjudges/courts/courtsalphah-n.html> to determine the county you want, see: <http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=mg2homepage&L=1&L0=Home&sid=massgov2>

Five Colleges Archives and Manuscript Collections for Smith College, Hampshire College, Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College and the Univ. of Massachusetts at Amherst: *Primary Resource Guide* at: <http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/help/intro.html>

Forbes Library & Hampshire Room Archive The library is the archive for the *Hampshire Gazette/Daily Hampshire Gazette* and has a complete set of that publication on microfilm. 4 microfilm readers are available for public use (no library card required).

The Hampshire Room is a repository of books, manuscripts, maps, diaries, account books, letters, papers, and broadsides which chronicle the history of **Northampton** and the neighboring towns of Hampshire County. Of special interest to colonial historians are the Hampshire Room's account book collection (the earliest dating from 1636); its map collections; and the Jonathan Judd diaries, Daniel Stebbins diaries, and Caleb Strong letters, which detail particulars of Shays's Rebellion. Among religious collections are a small but significant gathering of Jonathan Edwards and Solomon Stoddard manuscripts, and sermons of their contemporaries. The jewel of the **Forbes Library** collection is the fifty-six volume Judd Manuscript. Compiled by Sylvester Judd (1789–1860), antiquarian and editor of the *Hampshire Gazette*, the Manuscript consists of handwritten copies of original documents including town records and papers, portions of diaries, genealogical materials, military papers, account book excerpts, religious records, Native American materials, and other significant records of the period from roughly 1630 to 1800. The Judd Manuscript details the history of towns of the Connecticut River Valley from northern Connecticut to the Vermont border. Its most important volumes are indexed, and it is a major source of primary records, unique in its depth and breadth.

Address: 20 West Street, Northampton, MA 01060

Phone: Reference Desk: (413) 587-1012 Curator: (413) 587-1014

Website: <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/research/index.php?n=Main.HomePage>

Jones Library Special Collections, Amherst, MA (located at the Amherst Public Library) The collections at the Jones Library are an excellent source for researching local history, particularly for the town of Amherst. It houses an excellent collection of materials for genealogical research. Much of this material is secondary sources, like town histories, but there is some printed primary source material as well, including 19th-century vital statistics for many Massachusetts towns. The Jones Library holds very significant collections relating to the literary work of Emily Dickinson, Robert Francis, and Robert Frost, including original manuscripts. These collections are not included in this guide, but *full finding aids are available in the library.*

Address: 43 Amity Street, Amherst, MA 01002

Phone: (413) 256-4090

Website: <http://www.joneslibrary.org/specialcollections/>

Massachusetts Archives A web listing of the Archive's holdings may be found at: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcpdf/sumhold.pdf>. Visitors are welcome, and a reading room and duplication services are available on site. Requests for information may be directed to the telephone and e-mail addresses listed below:

Address: 220 Morrissey Blvd., Boston MA 02125

Phone: (617) 727-2816

E-Mail: archives@sec.state.ma.us

Website: www.sec.state.ma.us./arc

New England Historic Genealogical Society has extensive databases, manuscripts and publications available, as well as an on-site research library with genealogists available to assist patrons. Online library searches can be done at: <http://library.nehgs.org/> See library hours of operation listed online or call for information.

Address: 101 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116
Phone: (888) 296-3447 Mon-Fri 9-5
E-Mail (For Member Services) pcusson@nehgs.org
Website: <http://www.newenglandancestors.org>

Silvio Conte Federal Archives, in Pittsfield MA is the western Massachusetts region of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Its holdings include microfilm census for all states from 1790-1930, Soundex indexes to the 1880, 1900 and 1920 censuses and partial Soundex indexes to the 1910 and 1930 censuses; military service, pension and bounty land warrant records of the Revolutionary War and Regular Army registers of enlistment from 1798-1914 and pension indexes for service from 1815-1861 and regulars and volunteers in the War of 1812, etc.; naturalization petitions from New England from 1791-1906, index to petitions and records of the U.S. District Court, 1906-1966, and U.S. Circuit Court 1906-1911 for Massachusetts, etc.; manifests of passengers into various east coast ports, some Atlantic and Gulf Coast ports (1820-1874) and St. Albans, VT through Canadian Pacific and Atlantic ports 1895-1954; African American genealogical records relating to slaves, 1820-1863, useful genealogical research materials pertaining to Native Americans; appointments of postmasters from 1832-1950, post office reports, Russian consulate records in the U.S. 1861-1922, etc. See: <http://www.archives.gov/northeast/> for the Pittsfield, Boston, MA, and New York City, NY Federal Archive webpages or e-mail the Silvio Conte Federal Archives directly (below) for more information.

Address: 10 Conte Drive, Pittsfield, MA 01201-8230
Phone: (413) 236-3600
E-Mail: Pittsfield.archives@nara.gov
Website: <http://www.archives.gov/northeast/pittsfield/>

University of Massachusetts W.E.B. DuBois Library – The library's holdings on Massachusetts and western New England are extensive, with an emphasis on the lost towns of Quabbin. See: <http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/collections/regional.htm>

Address: 154 Hicks Way, Amherst, MA 01003-9275
Phone: (413) 545-2780
Website: <http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/>

Additional Online Resources for Massachusetts include:

The New England Historic Genealogical Society, at:

<http://www.newenglandancestors.org/> offers free access to their archive from the following locations which have subscriptions: The Connecticut Valley Historical Museum in Springfield, Forbes Library in Northampton and Jones Library in Amherst (all listed, above)

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~magenweb/> (click on a Massachusetts county to locate individual town records, cemetery listings (often catalogued), and other vital records.

Additional Massachusetts weblinks, including links to some Massachusetts Historical Societies, can be found at: <http://www.rootsweb.com/roots-1/USA/ma.html>

<http://capecodhistory.us/Mass1890/MassachusettsGazetteer.htm>, Nason's Gazetteer of Massachusetts – searchable online

Last Revised: Nov. 26, 2007

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