

NEW HAMPSHIRE RESEARCH SOURCES

COMPILED BY MAE WILLIAMS, UNLOCKING HISTORY

General Places to Start Researching Your Old House:

Local Records: Town Tax Cards can often provide a starting point when researching an old building by sometimes offering a general construction date (though these often aren't accurate, they can provide a starting point when doing research), and some of the recent changes to the building and owner names with deed references. These are available at local Town Offices and sometimes are also online (depending on the municipality).

Historic Maps: There are several sources for early maps of New Hampshire. Many early maps are available through the Granite State Maps Collection of the Dartmouth College Digital Library Collections (<https://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/digital/collections/maps/index.html>). Other great maps and sources include:

- The ca. 1858-1861 county maps, which include building locations as well as owner/tenant names. High-resolution copies of *most* of the county maps are available through the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov), they are also available on CD Rom at the NH State Library and hang in many local historical societies and town halls throughout the state.
- Hurd, D. H. & Co. *Town and City Atlas of the State of New Hampshire*. Boston: D. H. Hurd & Co., 1892. Available through the David Rumsey Map Collection (www.davidrumsey.com) and the UNH Library Digital Collections at www.library.unh.edu/digital/.
- Early proprietor's maps, showing the original lots of the towns as granted in the 1700s (Available at the NH State Archives and NH Historical Society)
- Older United States Geological Survey Maps, which are highly accurate federal surveys at scales of one inch to a mile (1:62,500) or 2-5/8 inches to a mile (1:24,000). Many of these maps are available through the USGS Store (<https://store.usgs.gov>) They are also collected by the Diamond Library at the University of NH in Durham (www.library.unh.edu/digital) and the New Hampshire Historical Society.
- Bird's Eye views of New Hampshire towns, mostly dating from the 1870s and 1880s, may be consulted at the New Hampshire Historical Society Library or on the Library of Congress Website (www.loc.gov)
- Also, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps were compiled for some villages and urban areas between c. 1875 and the 1940s, and include buildings and utilities in great detail. Some of these maps are available through Dartmouth College Digital Library Collections, others are available at the local library or historical society, and are also available in Concord at the New Hampshire Historical Society Library.

Town & County Histories: Many county histories were published in the 19th century and include genealogical and biographical sketches relating to important town figures as well as often detailed town-specific histories. These are often located at a local library, local historical society, the New Hampshire Historical Society Library, and the New Hampshire State Library. They have also been scanned and are available on the website archive.org. Examples include:

- Child, Hamilton, ed. *Gazetteer of Grafton County, N. H. 1709-1886*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Journal Company, Printers, 1886.
- Hazlett, Charles A., ed. *History of Rockingham County New Hampshire and Representative Citizens*. Chicago: Richmond-Arnold Publishing Co., 1915.
- Hurd, Duane Hamilton, ed. *History of Merrimack and Belknap Counties, New Hampshire*. Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Co., 1885.
- Hurd, D. Hamilton, ed. *History of Cheshire and Sullivan Counties, New Hampshire*. Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1886.

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- Hurd, D. Hamilton, ed. *History of Hillsborough County, New Hampshire*. Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1885.
- Merrill, Georgia Drew, ed. *History of Carroll County, New Hampshire*. Boston: W. A. Fergusson & Co., 1889.
- Merrill, Georgia Drew, ed. *History of Coos County, New Hampshire*. Syracuse, NY: W. A. Fergusson, 1888.
- Scales, John, ed. *History of Strafford County New Hampshire and Representative Citizens*. Chicago: Richmond-Arnold Publishing Co., 1914.

Similarly, town histories were compiled during the late 19th and 20th centuries. These are also often located at the local library, local historical society, New Hampshire Historical Society Library, and the New Hampshire State Library. Earlier histories may be available online at archive.org or through Google Books.

Other very useful tools for researching town histories and planning are the town Master Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan. These two types of plans are updated every five years. If your town has a Master Plan and/or Hazard Mitigation Plan, copies should be available at the Town Offices or through the Regional Planning Commission.

Deeds & Wills: On file at the County Registry of Deeds with records from 1645-1711 found at the NH State Archives in Concord, and some probate records available online through archive.org

- **Belknap County Registry of Deeds** has Belknap Deeds back to 1955 available online through their website. (www.nhdeeds.com/belknap/BeHome.html) Deeds can also be viewed by visiting their office at 64 Court Street, Laconia, NH 03246.
- **Carroll County Registry of Deeds** back to 1962 available online through their website (www.nhdeeds.com/carroll/CarIndex.html). Deeds can also be viewed by visiting their office at 95 Water Village Road (Rte. 171), Ossipee, NH 03864.
- **Cheshire County Registry of Deeds** back to 1970 are available online through their website (www.nhdeeds.com/cheshire/ChIndex.html). Deeds can also be viewed by visiting their office at 33 West Street, Keene, NH 03431.
- **Coos County Registry of Deeds** back to 1978 are available online through their website (www.nhdeeds.com/coos/CoIndex.html). Deeds can also be viewed by visiting their office at 55 School Street, Suite 103, Lancaster, NH 03584.
- **Grafton County Registry of Deeds** are available by visiting their office at 3855 Dartmouth College Highway, North Haverhill, NH 03774.
- **Hillsborough County Registry of Deeds** back to 1966 area available online through their website (www.nhdeeds.com/hillsborough/HiIndex.html). Deeds can also be viewed by visiting their office at 19 Temple Street, Nashua, NH 03061.
- **Merrimack County Registry of Deeds** back to 1823 are available online through their website (<https://merrimackcountydeedsnh.com>). Deeds can also be viewed by visiting their office at 163 N. Main Street, Concord, NH 03301.
- **Rockingham County Registry of Deeds** back to 1629 are available online through their website (www.nhdeeds.com/rockingham/RoIndex.html). Deeds can also be viewed by visiting their office at 10 Route 125, Brentwood, NH 03833.
- **Strafford County Registry of Deeds** back to 1921 are available online through their website (www.nhdeeds.com/strafford/StIndex.html). Deeds can also be viewed by visiting their office at 259 County Farm Road, Suite 202, Dover, NH 03820.

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- **Sullivan County Registry of Deeds** back to 1827 are available online through their website (www.nhdeeds.com/sullivan/SuIndex.html). Deeds can also be viewed by visiting their office at 14 Main Street, 2nd Floor, Newport, NH 03773.

Census Records/Birth, Marriage, Death Registers/Cemetery Records: The US Federal Population Census has been conducted every ten years since 1790. Records from 1790-1940 are available through www.ancestry.com (often available at the local Public Library) and through www.familysearch.org (free). The early census records list the heads of families only with additional information on other household members added by about 1850.

Similarly, both Ancestry and Family Search have many of the vital records for the State of New Hampshire and cross-reference with databases such as www.FindAGrave.com, a crowd-sourced online database of cemetery records. Alternatively, NH Vital Records (Births, Marriages, Deaths) are available through town clerks, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services in Concord and NH State Archives at 71 South Fruit Street, Concord.

Historic Photographs: Historic photographs/postcards are often extremely helpful in researching an old house. Collections of images may be found at your local historical society or library, as well as:

- **New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources**, 19 Pillsbury Street, Concord, NH 03301 (www.nh.gov/nhdhr) (by appointment)
- **New Hampshire State Library**, 20 Park Street, Concord, NH 03301 (www.nh.gov/nhsl)
- **New Hampshire Historical Society**, 30 Park Street, Concord, NH 03301 (www.nhhistory.org)
- And through online auction sites like www.ebay.com or www.cardcow.com.

Other Primary Source Materials: There are a host of other types of primary and secondary source materials including (but not limited to) the following:

- *Family Genealogies.* Check the local Public Library, NH Historical Society Library, NH State Library and www.archive.org for further information regarding specific families.
- *Architectural Monographs.* The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources has a collection of some monographs on architects that were active in New Hampshire.
- *Cemetery Records.* NH cemetery records are located at the NH Historical Society Library. Some are also available through the free online database, www.findagrave.com.
- *Local newspapers, magazines, town reports,* and previous *master plans* are also excellent sources of information relating to town history, especially history relating to municipal buildings and infrastructure. Often local newspapers are available at the local library or historical society. They may also be available on microfiche at the New Hampshire State Library in Concord. Many town records and town reports will be available at the town office, NH State Library and local historical society. The University of New Hampshire (UNH) Library Digital Collections had digitized and made available a wide selection of town reports on their website at www/library.unh.edu/digital others are available on archive.org.
- Some previous *building studies* (such as NH state Register Nominations, Section 106 Studies, and National Register Nominations) and some town history information are available through the **New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources**, 19 Pillsbury Street, Concord, NH 03301 (www.nh.gov/nhdhr)

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Useful Sources Researching Towns and geographical locals:

- Charlton, Edwin A. *New Hampshire As it Is...* Claremont, NH: Tracy and Sanford, 1855. ([archive.org](#))
- Cobb, David A. *New Hampshire Maps to 1900: An Annotated Checklist*. Concord: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1981.
- Committee for a New England Bibliography. *New Hampshire: A Bibliography of its History*. Ed. John D. Haskell, Jr. and T. D. Seymour Bassett. Boston: GK Hall & Co., 1979.
- Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1983.
- Hayward, John. *A Gazetteer of New Hampshire, Containing Descriptions of All the Counties, Towns, and Districts in the State...* Boston: John P. Jewett, 1849.
- Merrill, Eliphalet & Phinehas. *A Gazetteer of the State of New Hampshire in Three Parts*. Exeter, NH: C. Norris & Co, 1817. ([archive.org](#))
- New Hampshire, State of. *New Hampshire Provincial and State Papers*, 40 vols. Concord: State of New Hampshire, 1867-1943.
- Russell, Howard S. *A Long, Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1982.
- Wilson, Harold Fisher. *The Hill Country of Northern New England: Its Social and Economic History, 1790-1830*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1936.

Some Additional Useful Sources for researching buildings:

- Garvin, James L. *A Building History of Northern New England*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001. Great source of information on the evolution of various aspects of architecture (from changes in hardware through time to evolutions in framing) that give clues to help date architectural features.
- Gottfried, Herbert and Jan Jennings. *American Vernacular Buildings and Interiors: 1870-1960*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009. Overview of the evolution of American buildings with very detailed drawings and photographs of interior building features and approximate dates.
- Light, Sally. *House Histories: A Guide to Tracing the Genealogy of Your Home*. Spencertown, NY: Golden Hill Press, Inc., 1989. Though somewhat older, this guide is excellent in steering you toward the many different ways to date your home and learn about its evolution.
- McAlester, Virginia & Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984. A great overall history of the evolution of the American home across the US, with tips as to how to date your home based on architectural style.