

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ABOUT RHODE ISLAND GENEALOGY**

*Cherry Fletcher Bamberg FASG
September 2014*

Each state has its own ways of handling the information that genealogists seek, and an expert in Connecticut or New Hampshire, for example, might need help in Rhode Island. What follows is a personal guide down some of the twisting paths of research in Rhode Island, based on the questions that I have been asked over and over again. At the end is a very brief list of books and research facilities that every researcher, no matter how casual, should know about. Beyond the resources mentioned in the following pages stand a wealth of diaries, institutional records, legal records of disputed estates, newspaper stories, town taxes, accounts of doctors, coffin-makers, and undertakers to explore. If you are just starting an investigation, however, try using some of the suggested resources first. Please let me know of additions and corrections at bamberg@tiac.net. — CFB

Q: I think my ancestor was born in Rhode Island, but I don't know the date or place. How do I find out?

A: If he or she was born in 1853 or later, look at the statewide index compiled by the R.I. Dept. of Health from local records: *Index of Births in Rhode Island*. The Rhode Island State Archives and Rhode Island Historical Society have indexes and microfilm of the original material. The Providence vital records are published as a huge and helpful series, *Alphabetical Index of Births, Marriage and Deaths Recorded in Providence*. These volumes can be searched online with a subscription to *NewEnglandAncestors.org*, the website of the New England Historical and Genealogical Society. The original volumes in the City Archives at Providence City Hall have even more to offer.

Census records can be a good place to start. Beginning in 1850, the federal census listed the names of everyone in a household with their relationships and place of birth (usually just the state or country). Images of these census returns are available online at *Ancestry.com* or at *HeritageQuest* or *Footnote.com*. Rhode Island took its own census every ten years, e.g., 1865, 1875, etc. Microfilm of these state censuses is available in Providence at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library and at the Rhode Island State Archives. Not all are indexed. These census records, both federal and state, will show the name, age, and relationship of the child, although sometimes the age, if supplied by a neighbor rather than a family member, is incorrect.

If he or she was born before 1853, look in the town records published in the 21 volumes of James N. Arnold, *Vital Record of Rhode Island 1636-1850*, also available at multiple websites, including *NewEnglandAncestors.org*. The births in Arnold are those that the parents bothered to register. Many families never registered any births, and most registered only some of their children. Since children were not baptized as infants in many Rhode Island churches in the eighteenth century, these records in Arnold are not as much help as for births as for other vital records; Quaker records and Episcopal records are very welcome exceptions. By the nineteenth century church records become a much more useful tool. Newspapers did not list births, although the published age at death can be a clue. *Tip*: remember to check all spellings of a surname, e.g., *Pearce*, *Pierce*, *Peirce*. Your family may care a lot about the spelling now, but your ancestors treated it with cheerful abandon.

Gravestones can be a big help in estimating when a birth occurred, although usually not where. Most gravestones follow the formula for this imaginary woman: “Mary Carder, wife of James, died 27 July 1823, aged 56 years” or “in her 56th year.” Using the age at death, one can estimate a birth date. Don't let a discrepancy of a year or two put you off: often the person who died may not have known his or her precise year of birth. You don't have to tromp through cemeteries looking for this information. Use the R.I. Historical Cemetery Database on computers at various libraries: Rhode Island Historical Society, East Greenwich Free Public Library, Warwick Library, West Warwick Library, Little Compton Library, and the American French Genealogical Society in Woonsocket. A somewhat streamlined version is available online at <http://rihistoriccemeteries.org>. Choose the Search Website option.

In Rhode Island probate records are kept in town halls, with a few exceptions where large towns were divided. Wills abstracted in the *Rhode Island Genealogical Register* are another good source of births; check the index of wills in volume 16. Men always named their children in their wills, even if leaving them only a token inheritance. Commonly they specified those who were under the age of majority (21

for boys, 18 or marriage for girls). Look at the full will either at the town hall or on microfilm for a fuller picture of the family. Typically married women did not make wills, except in unusual circumstances. *Tip:* be alert for clues that a child or grandchild may be from a previous marriage. If a man refers to “my wife’s daughter” or “my wife’s grandson,” you can be sure that he is not the father/grandfather. If he refers to goods that his wife brought him at the time of the marriage, then she is surely a second wife and not necessarily the mother of all the children named.

Another method for estimating birth dates for men is to check whether your ancestor became a freeman. Men had to be at least 21 years old, a useful clue. You can find these records by looking up the name in the indexes of John R. Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England* (10 vols., Providence, R.I.: Alfred Anthony, 1857-1865). This method is a bit sloppy: there were many different men of the same name so you can get misleading hits.

If your ancestor might have been a mariner, look at Maureen A. Taylor’s *Register of Seamen’s Protection Certificates from the Providence, Rhode Island Custom District 1796-1870*. Sailors applied for certificates of citizenship to protect themselves from impressment by foreign ships. The index shows the name, date of certification, age or date of birth, complexion, and place of birth, but the original records at RIHS (United States Custom House Records, Providence, Rhode Island, 1789 – 1940, MSS 28 SG 1, available on mf) are far richer. Supporting oaths, crew lists, shipping manifests, and hospital reports are just a few of the categories. It’s a particularly good source for men of color who are typically under-registered in town VRs. Such records were kept for other custom districts, of course, although they are not so easy to use. Original Newport records are at the National Archives branch in Waltham, with some supporting oaths at Newport Historical Society. John Capron’s *Rhode Island Mariners & Vessels Who Sailed from the Port of East Greenwich & Port of North Kingstown 1791–1850* (2010) presents the crews of individual ships, though without an index.

An ancestor who applied for a Revolutionary War pension, whether or not he received it, had to testify as to his birth date and place in court and offer whatever supporting evidence he could. These depositions include references to town records and family Bibles. What is particularly interesting is that many of the applicants were not sure themselves of all the information. Check Kathryn Gunning’s book *Selected Final Pension Payment Vouchers 1818-1864*, (Westminster, Md.: Willow Bend Books, 1999) for abstracts. The original papers are in the National Archives, but images are easily accessible on Fold3.com.

Family Bibles are a unique source of valuable birth information. Many such records were published in back issues of *Rhode Island Roots* or through the DAR. If you can visit Rhode Island Historical Society Library at 121 Hope St., Providence, check out Josephine Keefer Short’s four volume typescript “Rhode Island Bible Records.” The NEHGS CD, *Bible Records from the manuscript collections of the New England Historic Genealogical Society*, includes a few from Rhode Island.

Q: My ancestor probably got married in Rhode Island, but I don’t know how to find the date or place.

A: If the marriage took place in 1853 or after, you can turn to the statewide index compiled by the R.I. Dept. of Health from local records: *Index of Marriages in Rhode Island* at Rhode Island Historical Society or Rhode Island State Archives. Be sure to check the town record for more details: both the bride and groom had to provide their ages, occupations, place of birth, place of residence, and parents’ names. Providence vital records are published as a multi-volume series, *Alphabetical Index of Births, Marriage and Deaths Recorded in Providence*. In this period state and federal censuses can be very helpful in determining whether a couple had married. Beginning in 1850, the federal census listed the names of everyone in a household but not relationships. Each following census added more questions that provide an increasing amount of information. Census records can be researched online at Ancestry.com or Fold3.com. Microfilms of these censuses are available in Providence at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library and at the State Archives.

Before 1853, one has to depend on town records. Although marriages were more frequently recorded than other life events, many marriages were never registered. A couple had to pay a small fee to enter the marriage, and many simply didn't bother. If the bride and groom were from different towns, the marriage was likely registered in only one place. Check James N. Arnold's *Vital Record of Rhode Island 1636-1850*. Remember to look under the groom's name. Arnold lists the bride's name simply as an index key, without all the information about fathers' names and towns that will be found under the groom. Arnold includes much more than town records: church records and newspapers. Although it takes time to plow through volumes 10-21, online search of Arnold at *NewEnglandAncestors.org* effortlessly provides many marriages in these records that were never recorded in the towns.

If you are looking for the wife of a man who may have served in the Revolution, *Fold3.com* is the place to start. The depositions, now at the National Archives, may contain the only instance of your ancestor's voice that you will ever find. An ancestor who was a Revolutionary War pensioner and left a widow is a joy to research because of all the bureaucratic paperwork that had to be submitted to receive a pension. The man had to verify his service with dates and sworn testimony of his fellow soldiers and/or townsmen. The widow had to prove she was married and give all the particulars. Check Kathryn Gunning's book *Selected Final Pension Payment Vouchers 1818-1864* for abstracts.

For people who know the town where their ancestor lived, land evidence (real estate) records are another useful tool. The originals are in town halls, but microfilm is available for many towns. Look for the husband's *sales* of land—purchases are little help for this purpose. In Rhode Island the wife was required to sign her consent when her husband sold land. If she did not, the man may not yet have married or his wife may have died. If her father died while she was alive, the woman may be one of the heirs who sold property, and if she was married by then, her husband's name is often mentioned. Again this information, while not proof of a specific marriage date, will provide another piece of evidence that you have identified both partners correctly and give a boundary date.

There is quite a bit of evidence about failed or troubled marriages. Maureen Taylor's *Runaway, Deserters, and Notorious Villains, Vol. 1* (Camden, Me.: Picton Press, 1995) includes a number of advertisements from the *Providence Gazette*, 1762-1800, of husbands whose wives had left their bed and board. The newspaper databases Early American Newspapers, Series 1 1696-1876, and 19th Century U.S. Newspapers, available at most universities and *NewEnglandAncestors.com*, are invaluable in presenting notices of spouses absolving themselves of responsibility for each other's debts. Katherine Bruce and Violet Kettelle's article "Kent County Divorces from Court Records" presents abstracts of a surprising number of divorces for that county between 1759-1825 (*Rhode Island Roots*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (June 1988), pp. 41-50). If you can travel to the Rhode Island Judicial Archives, 5 Hill St., Pawtucket RI, the original cases are a rich if depressing resource.

Q: How do you prove the identity of a wife?

A: Sometimes the issue with a marriage is whether the Mary Brown, wife of John Brown, daughter of Thomas Greene (to take a hypothetical case) is the Mary Greene born in the same town in 1750. You have the marriage date and the relationships but don't know whether the birth in town records is the right Mary Greene. If you are lucky enough to find a gravestone for Mary (Greene) Brown—one that places her next to your John Brown and allows you to estimate her age as the same as the VRs—then you have come a long way toward proving her identity.

Alden G. Beaman's *Rhode Island Vital Records, New Series* includes extrapolated marriages for some towns. Although these extrapolations have some notable errors—life being much more complicated than we genealogists commonly expect—they can often lead you to useful town records. The *RIGR*'s abstracts of wills 1636-1850 in volumes 1-15 of that periodical can give you many clues. When looking for women's marriages, check for will of the bride's father. If she was already married when he made his will, he will call her by her married name and frequently give her husband's name. If the man whom you suppose to have been the father fails to mention his daughter or calls her by her maiden name at time when the woman you seek was already married, then you will have to keep looking for another woman of

that name. It always a good idea to check the original will either at the town hall or on microfilm for fuller details. *Tip:* when you see the words “my present wife” or “what she brought to me at marriage” in a will you can be sure that the woman named was a second or third wife.

Q: I think my ancestor died in Rhode Island, but how can I find out when or where?

A: If your ancestor died in 1853 or later, you should have good luck looking at official records that were kept in each town. These records were compiled by the state into statewide listings so you do not need to know in which town he or she died. They show name, marital status, parents’ names, place of birth, date, place, and cause of death. The Rhode Island Dept. of Vital Statistics printed these in the many volumes of the *Index of Deaths in Rhode Island* at Rhode Island Historical Society and Rhode Island State Archives. *Tip:* once you locate the references, check the town record book, either in person or on microfilm, for further information and errors in the index. The City of Providence published its own records in many separate volumes for births, deaths, and marriages. These alphabetical and chronological records are very easy to use.

If your ancestor died before 1853, the process is a little harder. It helps to narrow down the date and place of death by checking the 1774 and 1782 R.I. censuses, the 1777 R.I. military census, and then the federal census for 1790 and each succeeding ten years. Until the 1850 census these records only name men and women who were heads of household, but they are a start. Remember that someone could disappear from the census for reasons other than death: by accident (being missed by the census taker or having his or her surname badly misspelled), by moving in with an adult child, or by moving to another colony/state.

One of the major sources for Rhode Island deaths is the R.I. Historical Cemetery Database on computers at various libraries. The statewide index screen will lead you to the individual town screen to find gravestone and cemetery information. A work in progress, the database includes material from old transcriptions, some of which have been checked and others not. It includes virtual burial grounds that no longer exist, either in their original location or at all, reconstructed from early sources. The index makes no distinction between names. On the computers in Rhode Island libraries one can start with the statewide index screen and then go to the individual town screen to find gravestone and cemetery information. Books of gravestone transcriptions for Warwick, East Greenwich, Exeter, Coventry, Hopkinton, North Kingstown (2), South Kingstown, East Greenwich, Charlestown, the old section of Providence’s North Burial Ground, and Newport are available at libraries or for purchase. A book on Richmond is in the process of preparation. Transcriptions of cemeteries in other towns appeared in Alden G. Beaman’s *Rhode Island Genealogical Register* and *Rhode Island Vital Records: New Series*. *Tip:* although the great majority of gravestones do not specify where the person was born, those of Irish immigrants are often give the county and sometimes the town in Ireland. A number of information-packed books are available for individual towns. Remember that the chances of finding a gravestone decline as you go back in history. There are few from the seventeenth century, more from the eighteenth, and lots from the nineteenth, but at no time—including the present—did everyone have a gravestone.

Providence is a special case for death records, since that town began collecting data about ten years earlier than the state. They lack the names of parents but include name, street address, date and cause of death. See *Returns of Interments of the Dead*, volume 8, at the Providence City Archives in Providence City Hall for records from the 1840s. This information is available on microfilm of Providence city vital records.

Q: Are there any other resources for figuring out deaths before mandatory registration?

A: If you know where the person lived, check probate records in the town hall. If not, check Alden G. Beaman’s *Rhode Island Genealogical Register*, Vol. 16, for a will. This method will work for men and widows. Married women usually did not leave wills. The abstracts include references to original records. Go to the town hall or to a microfilm of the record to get the full details, sometimes even a room-by-room

inventory of the deceased person's estate. Remember it was only the personal estate (not real estate) that was inventoried in Rhode Island. See the next section for specific information on dealing with wills. *Tip:* look for will of the *father* of the person you're looking for. If a child had died leaving issue, the grandfather usually mentioned those children in his will as children of his deceased son or daughter. *Tip:* if a wife is not mentioned in her husband's will, she had died before it was made.

If you are trying to pin down a wife's death date, look at records of her husband's sales of land. In Rhode Island the wife was required to sign her consent when her husband sold land. If she did not, it is highly probable that she had already died. When pinning down the husband's date of death, look for the widow's sale of her "dower rights," the one-third of the real estate to which she was entitled by law. When she sells dower rights, her husband was dead.

Although town vital records were weak on deaths before 1853, you will find some in James N. Arnold's *Vital Record of Rhode Island 1636-1850*. The town records in the first six volumes include only a scattering of deaths; church records and newspaper notices in later volumes offer more. If you belong to the New England Historic Genealogical Society, check the Early American Newspaper Database, Series 1, to see whether the death was reported out of state or in a paper not covered by Arnold. This database covers the earliest U.S. newspapers to 1876, but it is weak in Rhode Island material after the 1840s. You won't find local papers from small towns during this period covered by Arnold. Providence and Newport papers reported deaths across the state. They also reported the deaths of former Rhode Islanders in other states or countries, often an invaluable clue to migration to another place. *Tip:* look at the marriages of the man's children. If the father was dead when his child married, then that will be specified in the marriage record, e.g. "Sarah Arnold, dau. of Stephen, dec. [deceased]."

Men who were Revolutionary War pensioners and their wives/widows were, as a condition of the pension, poor. They were therefore less likely to own property or have a gravestone, but their involvement with the pension board meant that their deaths are documented. Check *Fold3.com* and also Kathryn M. Gunning's *Selected Final Pension Payment Vouchers 1818-1864* for summaries of sworn depositions concerning the date and place of death.

Q: Where are Rhode Island wills?

A: In town halls. What you will find in most cases is not the original will signed by your ancestor, but a copy made by the town clerk at the time in a large volume of probate records. Original wills belonged to the family and occasionally can be found in manuscript collections at historical societies or in private hands. Although all towns kept excellent records of wills, those of North Kingstown were damaged in a fire and those of Newport were taken by the British during the Revolution and sunk in New York harbor. While both still exist, the damage makes them hard to use. Early Smithfield records are kept in Central Falls town hall. *Tip:* It doesn't hurt to call the town hall in advance to ask about hours and restrictions. Do not expect to use the photocopier at the town hall on the old probate books. Most offices do not allow such copying of the old books, and others charge the princely sum of \$1.50 per page. Take your phone or digital camera.

When you first look at the town records, it may seem that all the early probate volumes must be missing. Where did they go? While some poor people did not have any probate records, in most cases the material is right there—in the town council records. Most towns did not begin to keep separate books for probate until the beginning of the nineteenth century. If you know the town and approximate date, then these town council records can be helpful, although they require some patience with old handwriting. If your ancestor left a will, the executor presented the will to the town council for probate, and, after giving bond, was given a letter of administration. If your ancestor died intestate (without a will), the town council still had to appoint an administrator to settle the estate. Each town had its own way of doing things, so keep poking around and opening volumes to check for yourself. Don't expect that the present town clerk, who is principally concerned with day-to-day operations of the office, will have much time to help. Sometimes you will find a division of property among heirs; other times there will be a list of creditors of the estate. All of these items can yield important genealogical clues for men and widows. If

your ancestor was poor enough, there may be records of payment to caretakers, coffin-makers, and gravediggers in town council records.

Q: So how do I understand this old will when I find it?

A: The pages of tight handwriting with plenty of legalese can look pretty daunting. Where to start? Well, simple as it may sound, start by writing down the volume and page numbers as well as the dates the will was made (probably in the last couple of lines) and then proved (when the will was accepted by the probate court). It's easy to get excited by the content and forget these critical details. Then at the beginning look at the name of the testator (person making the will) to check his town and to see if by any chance he has included a profession. The first few lines will explain why he or she is making the will, usually in fairly formulaic terms, e.g., "being mindful that it is given to all men to die" or "being sick and weak in body." Sometimes you will come across a man who made his will before he left for war or a long voyage.

After this paragraph you will usually find convenient indents. The word "item" will be written on the left, followed by text in a hanging indent. The first item is a direction to bury the body in a decent manner and to pay all just debts. The second will typically be bequests to the "dearly beloved wife," although some people put this one last. The wife was often given a great deal of the estate as long as she should remain a widow, but when she remarried or died, that legacy reverted to the other heirs. If there is no mention of a wife, then she had already died. After the wife, the testator will list his sons and then his daughters, set within their gender in order of birth. Married daughters are called by their married names, often with the given name of their spouses. After the children, grandchildren of deceased children will be listed, then other relatives and friends. The last item will typically be the designation of the executor and the revocation of all previous wills. On the left next to the testator's signature will be the names of the witnesses. Even if these names mean nothing to you now, write them down—next month or next year you may uncover the connection.

Q: How can I find out about military records?

A: *Fold3.com* is the easiest and most comprehensive source. The standard published source for Rhode Island officers and civil officials before 1850 is Joseph J. Smith, *Civil and Military List of Rhode Island*. This set of three volumes (1647-1800, 1800-1850, index) includes military duty of officers only as well as such civil appointments as justice of the peace, deputy to the general assembly, prison inspectors, etc. Howard M. Chapin's book *Rhode Island in the Colonial Wars* combines two earlier volumes of eighteenth-century records. The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations has published numerous muster rolls and other original documents, but most are unindexed.

Beyond *Fold3.com*, which provides access to originals in the National Archives, both the Rhode Island State Archives and Rhode Island Historical Society have massive collections of original documents, more than any one researcher could ever get through, for the French and Indian and Revolutionary Wars. For soldiers of color see *Forgotten Patriots, African American and American Indian Patriots in the Revolutionary War*, ed. Eric G. Grundset, a wonderful sourcebook. Kathryn M. Gunning's *Selected Final Pension Payment Vouchers 1818-1864* is a useful guide to those Rhode Islanders who met the stringent requirements for a pension.

Excellent Civil War records, including many enlistment papers, can be found at Rhode Island Archives. Reference Archivist Kenneth S. Carlson answers inquiries in person, by phone (401) 277-2353, or by e-mail at reference@sec.state.ri.us. Brig. Gen. Elisha Dyer's *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations for the Year 1865* is a flawed but still useful source. Although most federal records for World War I were destroyed in a warehouse fire in St. Louis, the State Archives can frequently provide proof of service.

Q: What about legal records?

A: Legal records are kept at the Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, 5 Hill St., Pawtucket. Two books by Jane Fletcher Fiske, *Gleanings from Newport Court Files 1659-1783* and *Rhode Island General Court of Trials 1671-1704* are an invaluable resource. Some scattered original records can be found in the manuscript collection of Rhode Island Historical Society. Original prison records for the Providence County Gaol are at Rhode Island State Archives, but the lack of index makes them useful only when you know when the person was incarcerated or released. Over the last few years George Branigan of Stonehill College oversaw a project on the original nineteenth-century records of the Providence Reform School at Providence City Archives and Rhode Island Historical Society, generating several articles in *Rhode Island Roots* and a database at RIHS.

Q: Where can I find early guardianships and adoptions?

A: Before the early nineteenth century guardianships in Rhode Island were decided by the local town council. When a man died leaving children under the age of 14, the council would appoint a guardian. The mother was considered the “natural guardian” but frequently lacked the means to care for her family. Boys 14-21 and girls 14-18 appeared before the council and asked for the right, always granted, to choose their own guardian. The process was far from complete, however, at that point: the guardian chosen had to agree to accept the position and post bond to complete it faithfully. When the ward came of age, the guardian had to render a complete accounting of his or her management. Generally speaking, it is hard to winkle the guardianship appointments out of unindexed, largely unpublished, difficult-to-read council records even when you have the date of the father’s death and the town in which the family lived.

I am unaware of official adoptions in the colonial period. Maureen Taylor’s booklet *Name Changes in Rhode Island 1800-1880* (Boston, Mass.: NEHGS, 1995) offers many clues about adoptions in that era.

Q: Where are the apprenticeship records?

A: Although apprenticeship may have been an important fact in your ancestor’s life, it is rare to be able to prove it in Rhode Island. Inventories of early town records show that files of apprenticeships were kept in the towns, but I know of none that has survived. Apprenticeships appear in town council records only when the arrangement was made by the town as a way of caring for and educating poor children. Most apprenticeships were private arrangements for vocational training, often unrecorded in any surviving official sources. A few original indentures may be found in manuscript collections or private hands. Sometimes apprenticeships did not work out: many advertisements for runaway apprentices appeared in Rhode Island newspapers, often with vivid descriptions of their personal appearance and dress. Details of apprenticeships can sometimes be found in residency examinations.

✓ ✓ ✓ CHECKLIST OF SOURCES ✓ ✓ ✓

Following is a guide to basic sources, extracted from hundreds of deserving candidates.

GENERAL

- Genealogies of Rhode Island Families from The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, ed. Gary Boyd Roberts, two vols. (Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1989).
- James N. Arnold's *Vital Record of Rhode Island 1636-1850* (21 vols., Providence, R.I.: Narragansett Historical Publishing Company, 1891-1912); also available on *NewEnglandAncestors.org*, the website of the New England Historic Genealogical Society.
- John O. Austin, *Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island* [1887] (repr., Baltimore Md.: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1969). The classic source.
- John R. Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England*, (10 vols., Providence, R.I.: Alfred Anthony, 1857-1865). Also on CD. Limited taste of original General Assembly records at the Rhode Island State Archives. The index is weak.
- Alden G. Beaman, *Rhode Island Genealogical Register* and *Rhode Island Vital Records: New Series*. *Rhode Island Roots*, issues up to five years ago are online at *AmericanAncestors.org*, free to NEHGS members and guest users. Back issues are available as pdfs at *RIGenSoc.org*. for \$3.50 each.

MILITARY

- Forgotten Patriots, African American and American Indian Patriots in the Revolutionary War*, ed. Eric G. Grundset (Washington, D.C.: National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, 2008).
- Howard M. Chapin, *Rhode Island in the Colonial Wars* (repr., Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1994).
- Elisha Dyer's *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations for the Year 1865* (2 vols., Providence.: E.L. Freeman & Sons, 1893-1895).
- Kathryn M. Gunning, *Selected Final Pension Payment Vouchers 1818-1864* (Westminster, Md.: Willow Bend Books, 1999).
- Joseph J. Smith, *Civil and Military List of Rhode Island* (Providence: Preston and Rounds Co., 1900). Officers only.

LEGAL

- Diane Rappaport, *New England Court Records: A Research Guide for Genealogists and Historians* (Burlington, Massachusetts: Quill Pen Press, 2006). General overview. Chapter 10 covers R.I.
- Jane Fletcher Fiske, *Gleanings from Newport Court Files 1659-1783* (Boxford, Mass.: The Author, 1998).
- Jane Fletcher Fiske *Rhode Island General Court of Trials 1671-1704* (Boxford, Mass.: The Author, 1998).

CEMETERIES

- The full version of the R.I. Historical Cemetery Database is on computers at Rhode Island Historical Society, East Greenwich Free Public Library, Warwick Library, West Warwick Library, Little Compton Library, and the American French Genealogical Society in Woonsocket. A streamlined version is available at <http://rihistoriccemeteries.org>
- Books on Charlestown, Coventry, East Greenwich, Exeter, Hopkinton, Newport, North Kingstown (2), South Kingstown, North Burial Ground in Providence, and Warwick have been published. All are available in the reading room at Rhode Island Historical Society.

✓ ✓ ORGANIZATIONS ✓ ✓

In addition to town halls, here are just a few of the many places a researcher should visit in person or by computer. See the website of Rhode Island Historical Records Advisory Board (sos.ri.gov/rihrab/histsoc.html) for more information.

RHODE ISLAND STATE ARCHIVES

337 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Telephone: (401) 222-2353

Email: reference@sec.state.ri.us

Website: www.state.ri.us/archives/

Monday-Friday 8:30-4:30

Vital records, military records, state/colony government records. Expert archivist.

Directions

From I-95 (north or south), take Exit 22 (the “Downtown” exit). At the end of the exit ramp, proceed straight across the intersection onto Memorial Boulevard. Turn right at the 4th traffic light onto Westminster Street. The State Archives is on the right, after the third traffic light. Look for the green awning above the first floor storefront windows. Two-hour validated parking is available in the “In-Town Parking” lot located just beyond the Archives (separated by a side street).

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY (presently closed for renovation)

121 Hope Street, Providence, RI, 02906

Telephone: (401) 273 - 8107

Website: www.rihs.org/libraryhome.htm.

Wednesday – Friday, second Saturday of the month 10:00 -5:00.

Largest collection of RI genealogical and historical material, including books, manuscripts, graphics, and microfilm. Many items in a closed stack area must be paged and brought to the Reading Room by the library staff. Materials brought from the stacks on Wednesdays and Fridays at 10:30, 11:30, 2:00, 3:00 and books only at 4:00; Thursdays at 12:30, 2:00, 4:00, 5:00, 6:00 and books only at 7:00. Donation for out-of-state researchers. On-street parking is limited. The website offers rich resources for Rhode Island research. Searching the online catalog first will make any visit more productive.

RHODE ISLAND SUPREME COURT JUDICIAL RECORDS CENTER

5 Hill St., Pawtucket, RI 02860

Telephone: (401) 721- 2640

E-mail: archives@courts.state.ri.us.

Monday-Friday 8:30 – 4:30

Statewide legal records. Ask for the archivist Andrew Smith at the front desk. Materials, including all indexes, are brought out by the staff. Free parking across the street. As computerization of records is just beginning, allow several hours for a visit. This resource can provide critical information for researcher, but it is very much underused in Rhode Island genealogy.

NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY

82 Touro St., Newport 02840

Telephone: (401)846-0813

Website: www.newporthistorical.org/index

Open 9:30-4:30 Tues. Fri., 9:30-noon on Sat. You MUST call for an appointment, as the library will be closed if the Librarian is out for the day or the heat is extreme (no AC). On-street parking can be difficult in the summer.

Very rich collection of manuscript and printed materials. The librarian Bert Lippincott, III, is knowledgeable and extremely helpful.

PETTAQUAMSCUTT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2636 Kingstown Road (Old Washington County Jail)

Kingston, RI 02881

(401) 783-1328

E-mail: pettaquamscutt@yahoo.com

Website: www.pettaquamscutt.org

Limited hours. Usually Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., but it's a good idea to check. Good place to visit for West Bay families.

AMERICAN-FRENCH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Mailing address: A.F.G.S., P.O. Box 830, Woonsocket, RI 02895-0870

Library: 8 Earle Street, Woonsocket, RI 02895

(401)-765-6141

Website: www.afgs.org

Open Monday 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Tuesday 1:00pm to 9:00 p.m. Open Saturdays (except June, July, August) 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Parking lot.

RHODE ISLAND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Mailing address: RIGS, P.O. Box 211, Hope RI 02831

Website: www.RIGenSoc.org

Check website for membership and publications information, research suggestions, and meeting notices. Publications: *Rhode Island Roots* (quarterly journal), Special Bonus Issue "Gleanings from Rhode Island Town Records." For a list of publications (diaries, cemetery books, compiled genealogies) and ordering information, visit <http://www.rigensoc.org/publications.htm>.

FURTHER NOTES

- The Rhode Island Families Association, which published the valuable series *Rhode Island Genealogical Register* and *Vital Records of Rhode Island: New Series*, appears to be inactive at present.

- Other repositories that an experienced researcher might check are the John Hay Library at Brown University in Providence, the John Carter Brown Library, an independent library on the Brown campus, Redwood Library in Newport, University of Rhode Island Special Collections and Archives in Kingston, the Knight Memorial Library in Providence, and the Providence Public Library. For Providence people, a trip to the Providence City Archives on the fifth floor of Providence City Hall is a treat. All have websites with much information for visitors.