

VOLUMES OF FAMILY HISTORY

By Patricia Kelleher Bartram

This series focuses on the collections of the Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc. (BHSM). This week, we look at the wealth of family history information available from BHSM.

A 2022 survey by Ancestry®, a leader in family history research, reported that 53 percent of Americans cannot name all four grandparents. Yet, 66 percent of respondents said they want to learn more about their family history and over half (51%) expressed interest in stories about when their ancestors were young and what life was like at that time in history.



More and more information continues to be digitized and released via online genealogical resources like Ancestry.com (requires paid subscription), FamilySearch.org (free subscription) and the New England Historic Genealogical Society's database AmericanAncestors.org (requires paid membership). Federal and state censuses are excellent sources of information and are among the various documents available on these sites.

BHSM Online Archives

The BHSM is also a great resource for those individuals who are seeking information about their family history relating to Boylston, Shrewsbury's North Parish, Lancaster and West Boylston – as what we know today as Boylston was geographically comprised of these towns before its incorporation in 1786. Through the BHSM website (boylstonhistory.org) one can access information about Boylston's Graveyards, Military Records and Boylston Vital Records (Births, Marriages and Deaths up to 1850), as well as information about other collections, exhibits, and more.

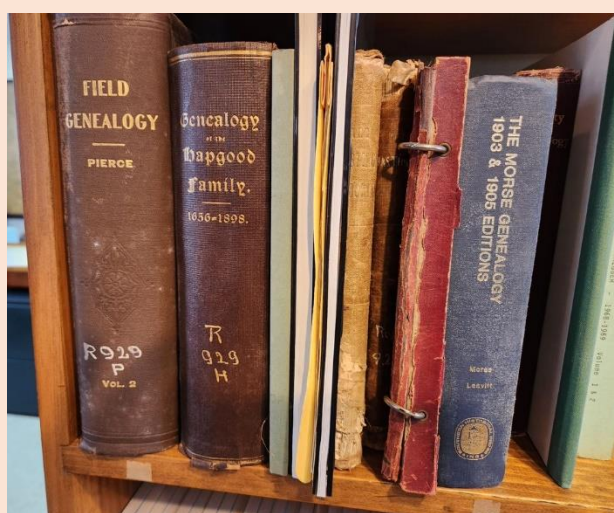


BHSM's Library

Onsite, the BHSM Library, located at the Historic Town Hall on Boylston Common, has a wealth of valuable information and artifacts including post-1850 Vital Records, family papers, photographs, assorted objects and other information. One particularly good resource is its collection of books of family histories. While not an exhaustive list of our holdings, the volumes of family history at BHSM include those of the families with the surnames of Ball (descending from John Ball of Watertown), Bigelow, Bradford, Brigham, Clark/Clarke, Cotton, Dunsmoore, Eliot (descendants of John Eliot), Field, Halliwell, Harlow Family of Shrewsbury, Hastings, Hinds, Houghton, Kendall, Keyes, Morse, Parker, Pierce/Goddard/Gifford/Shirk, Prouty, Roper, Sawyer, Stark (family of General John Stark), Stockwell-Dodge, Temple and Tuttle/Tuthill.

Although Vital Records are the preferred definitive source for family history research, these family histories contain information that might otherwise not be found – and/or provides hints or potentially corroborates data found in other records (along with interesting descriptions in some cases!).

The 1883 book by Amory Carter on the Sawyer family history, for example, chronicles the arrival in the mid-1600s of the earliest Sawyers in what was then called Lancaster. It also discusses in some detail the complicated relationship these earliest settlers had with the local Indian tribes. It then proceeds over some 100 pages to follow the Sawyers through various branches, both in Boylston and other area communities. Fun reading whether you are a Sawyer or not!



Whether an experienced genealogical researcher or a novice just beginning family history research, it is worth your time to access the resources of the BHSM – online or in person – and find some great information about your Boylston ancestors and perhaps some hidden gems!

The BHSM is open for research:

Sundays, 2:00-4:00pm; Tuesdays, 9:00am-2:00pm; and Saturdays, 9:00am-12:00pm, as well as by appointment by calling (508) 869-2720 or email info@boylstonhistory.org.

Assistance with genealogical research is also available by appointment.

Acknowledgements

AmericanAncestors.org
Ancestry.com – <https://www.ancestry.com/corporate/newsroom/press-releases/new-survey-ancestry-shows-more-half-americans-cant-name-all-four>
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FamilySearch.org
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