

COLONIAL RESEARCH: PROVING/DISPROVING AN UNDOCUMENTED FAMILY LINE



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“Records in Colonial America were usually kept by individual colonies and towns. To help identify which record sets to search, it is helpful to know approximately where your ancestors lived,” Janet Maydem, 2015.

Need to Know

- The definition of Colonial America: an era before the American Revolution when land was purchased,” settled, and belonged to a foreign power, AND a time after the American Revolution until it was effectively self-governing.
- The timeline for Colonial Research: **1607-1776 or 1587-1789**. The identification of the Colonial American period seems to be in dispute. Be aware.
- All original colonies were created by a king then administered by (a) wealthy individual before being parted out in smaller sections.
- **Research, utilize and chart the rudiments of your colony’s history from before foundation to modern geographical units.**
- Not all our ancestors owned land. They may have been a servant, a slave, a female, or a ne’er do well. These individuals may still appear in local colonial newspapers or town documents.
- Not all records are available in the United States; some original documents may exist in the founding nation.
- Each colony has unique history and documents. Become educated as to these histories.
- Not all information is online. Become familiar with public and private repositories.
- When looking for a resource book that is not available to borrow nearby, after searching *Internet Archive, Ancestry, FamilySearch, and American Ancestors*, I recommend looking for used purchases at *AbeBooks, Thrift Books, eBay, print-on-demand companies and Amazon* last of all.

Beginning at the Beginning

- Trace ancestry back through to the 1790 census **one generation at a time with documentation**, the earliest United States Federal Census available—remember the secret of this census. **Always note the geographical location.** *Ancestry* will introduce other documents—tread carefully.
- Become familiar with and use original records to substantiate or indicate the existence of each ancestor and/or family in the 19th and 20th centuries. For example: **founding families of the town, land sales or even land grants, tax records, military pension information, and prison records.**
- Use newspapers and local, county, and state histories **as a resource.** Prove everything.
- Identify the place the ancestor lived—did it change names and/or boundaries over time or did the ancestor move?
- DO NOT use Family Trees—even with documentation—unless as a possibility to be proven.

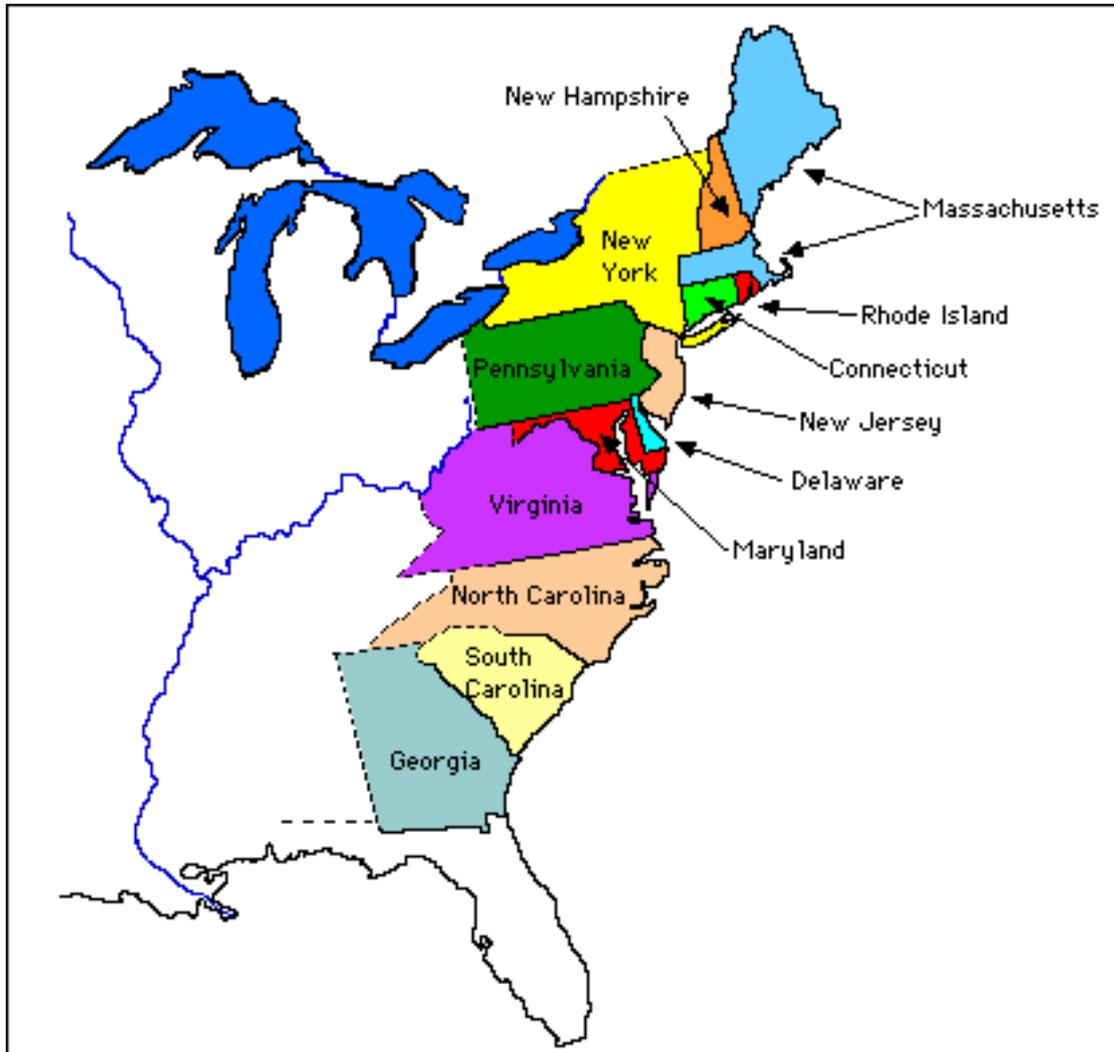
Begin in the Middle

1. Check DNA results. Have you taken a DNA test? YDNA and mtDNA will yield earlier generational results than atDNA.
2. It's time for further education concerning the 16th and 17th century records from websites, webinars, *DAR/SAR*, *American Ancestors*, *Ancestry*, *FamilySearch*, libraries, repositories, maps, books, and PERSI—particularly foundational documents.
3. Colonial courthouse documents—wherever they may be stored: old town meeting records, court records, church membership records, sometimes vital records, warnings out, runaway slaves, runaway servants, wives & husbands, land records, and wills, probates, etc.
4. Repositories: national, state, local, private and public for letters, journals/diaries, and photos.
5. Military records include both awarding and rejection of pensions.
5. Maps—state, county, Sanborn (if available), Physical,
6. Consider using county histories as a resource—they can be potential clues to potential facts.

Begin Again at the End—Let others know it's Possible!

1. Write it up and submit to a journal.
2. Digitize if undigitized documents, photos, etc., on your public tree.
3. Apply for one or many Heritage Societies.
4. Make a t-shirt—you deserve it!
5. Write thumbnail sketches for grandchildren.
6. Scan everything and prepare to leave it somewhere or with someone—with their permission.
7. Begin again—help someone else!

The Thirteen Colonies in 1776



The Timeline of the 13 Colonies

COLONY	YEAR	FOUNDER	ADMITTED
Virginia	1607	London Company	06/25/1788
Massachusetts	1620	Puritans	02/06/1788
New Hampshire	1623	John Wheelwright	06/21/1788
Maryland	1634	Lord Baltimore	04/28/1788
Connecticut	1635	Thomas Hooker	01/09/1788
Rhode Island	1636	Roger Williams	05/29/1790
Delaware	1638	Peter Minuit & New Sweden Company	12/07/1787
North Carolina	1653	Virginians	11/21/1789
South Carolina	1663	Eight Nobles With A Royal Charter From Charles II	05/23/1788
New Jersey	1664	Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret	12/18/1787
New York	1664	Duke of York	07/26/1788
Pennsylvania	1682	William Penn	12/12/1787
Georgia	1732	James Eward Oglethorpe	01/02/1788

David, "The Original 13 Colonies," *davidstuff* (<https://www.davidstuff.com/usa/13colonies.htm>).