A SELECTION OF RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS USEFUL IN GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

VITAL RECORDS
Original Responsibility in New England is with Cities and Towns
Birth Certificates
Marriage Certificates (Most reliable of vital records)
Death Certificates

FEDERAL CENSUS RECORDS
Federal Census responsibility rests with the federal government
72 year hiatus between census date and release of records
Can be unreliable
State and local governments may collect their own census information

CITY AND TOWN DIRECTORIES
Contain a wealth of local information plus list heads of households

DEATH INFORMATION
Probate Records (Wills are usually Court Records)
Cemetery Records
Obituaries
Social Security Death Index

COURT RECORDS
Divorce Records (usually in Court Records)
Adoption Records (usually in Court Records)
Litigation Records (Court Records)

RELIGIOUS RECORDS
Church Records
Synagogue Records

SCHOOL RECORDS
Teachers' Records
School Registration
School Yearbooks
IMMIGRATION RECORDS
Ships' Passenger Lists
Naturalization Records

NEWSPAPERS
Local Events
Birth Announcements
Engagement/Marriage Announcements
Obituaries/Death Notices

MAPS
Including:
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
F. W. Beers Atlas (Massachusetts counties and cities and towns)

OTHER SELECTED RECORDS TO CONSIDER
City or Town Licenses
Tax Lists and Records
Voter Lists
Land Records
Military Records
World War I and World War II Draft Cards
Business Records
Employment Records
Institutional Records

Remember, no matter what the record, nothing is perfect. You build your evidence by consulting various records, not just one type.

For more information see The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy and Ancestry’s Red Book: American State, County and Town Sources.

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