



FINDING FAMILY INFORMATION IN SCHOOL RECORDS

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Are you looking for a new way to break through a brick wall? School records may provide information not found in other extant records as well as insight into the educational lives of our ancestors. This lecture examines types of information found in 19th – early 20th century school records and how to locate them.

1. INTRODUCTION

- What might be considered a school record
 - School census records
 - School district account and minute books
 - Alumni files
 - Yearbooks
 - School related ephemera
- History of Education & Geographical Differences
 - First schools were either church or private schools
 - Massachusetts: primarily settled for religious purposes
 - : 1642 first school act of Mass.- parents and masters required to teach children reading, citizenship & religion
 - : Mass. Bay Colony Law of 1647 established public schools
 - : 1789 Mass. law establishing the school district system
 - : Life developed around towns & cities
 - Virginia: primarily settled for economic purposes
 - : Life developed around isolated plantations, few towns or village centers
 - : The county was local form of government.
 - : Prosperous people sent their children to private schools or employed private tutors. If a family was to maintain its dignity, they felt they had to pay for the education of its children
 - : Thomas Jefferson saw the State as responsible for the education of its citizens.
 - : 1810 Literary Fund established to support education of the indigent
 - : 1869 Underwood Constitution established free public school system for all Virginia students. Desegregation of schools began in 1959.
 - New states created philosophies of education reflecting areas from where their settlers migrated
 - Variations in school age
 - Get to know your research locale

2. EXAMPLES FROM SCHOOL DISTRICT RECORDS

- New England – Clinton Me., Barre Mass., Westminster Vt., New Haven Conn.
- Mid-Atlantic - Chester and Fayette Counties Penn.
- South - Monroe County [W] Va., Ashe County N.C., Kemper County Miss.
- Midwest - Portage County Ohio, Livingston & Montgomery Counties Mo., Pottawatomie and Westmoreland Counties, Kans.
- Southwest -- Madison, Walker & Gonzales Counties, Texas
- Northwest -- Kootenai County, Idaho, Klamath Agency Indian Reservation, Ore.

3. OTHER SCHOOL RECORDS

- Academic Archives – colleges, military academies, private secondary schools
- Parochial school records
- Adult schools/institutions

4. HOW SCHOOL RECORDS HAVE HELPED IN GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

- Added historical context - Minn., Mich., Penn., and Calif.
- Gave information to help in building a proof argument - N.J.
- Provided the link to connect a son to a father – Okla.
- Offered the reason for a name change – Mass.
- Provided name of village where an ancestor came from – Ill.
- Filled in gaps in a person's life - Penn.

5. HOW TO LOCATE SCHOOL RECORDS

- Books published by local historical societies – print or e-books
- www.usgenweb.com
- Google searches
- NUCMC searches
- Repositories: state archives, historical societies, museums
- Library catalogs - ex. FHL catalog

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