

Searching for Ancestors in Tiverton

A Guide to Library, Town and State Resources with selected Internet web sites.

Prepared February 2008, by Richard Joslin

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Genealogical research in an area where English habitation goes back 370 years can yield rich results, but can also be frustrating. This guide will assist you with your research on Tiverton, Rhode Island and related genealogical questions, using Tiverton's Essex and Union libraries as a base. Other libraries in the state will be mentioned for particular holdings, such as census information. The Tiverton Town Hall is the most complete repository of useful local genealogical information. The State of Rhode Island has departments that can provide useful statistics. There are nonprofit genealogical associations you can contact or visit. There are many genealogical web sites you can consult. Information on Massachusetts sources is included here.

Tiverton Town Hall, 343 Highland Road, Office of the Town Clerk. 401-625-6703. Open Mon-Fri 8:30am-4pm. Official death, marriage and birth records, land transaction records and deeds, land plats, and voter records.

Call ahead. Many of these records are locked in an archive and can only be searched for or viewed by appointment.

<http://www.tiverton.ri.gov> Town officials may be able help you depending upon their workload. They do not perform research for genealogical records. In the case of birth, marriage and death records, they usually require exact names **and dates** to find the record, but can sometimes work with one name or a range of dates. Individuals may not be allowed to search records without a town employee present.

There is a fee for certified copies of death, marriage and birth records. Since Tiverton's records go back centuries, there are many records which are just "not there", with no explanation. Tiverton was part of Massachusetts until 1746. The southern third of what is now Fall River, MA was part of Tiverton RI from 1746 until 1867. Border and sovereignty issues make it possible that some Tiverton records reside in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts State Archives at Columbia Point in Boston, near the JFK Library, may be a source for early Tiverton information.

<http://www.state.ma.us/sec/arc/arcgen/genidx.htm>

The Town Hall has a record of historical cemeteries in Tiverton (most on private land) and their locations.

The Essex Public Library, 238 Highland Road, Tiverton RI 02878, 401-625-6796. Mon-Thurs 10am-8pm, Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-4pm, closed Sunday. <http://www.tivertonlibrary.org> The Library does not have: **official** birth, marriage and death records, land transaction records and deeds, land plats, probate records, census records (with the exception of the 1774. 1777 Military and 1885 State census), and voter records.

The Essex Library has a Rhode Island Reference Collection of about 1500 items, perhaps 20% of the reference collection. The Library does have tax records for a few years: 1876, 1888, 1889, 1896, 1913-1930. We also have address-phone-occupation directories for 1927-1941. We have the Polk Directories for 2001-2012.

We have Arnold's Vital Statistics of the State of Rhode Island, 1636-1850, the 20-volume set, with a 4 vol. Supplement. Arnold lists many, but not all, births, deaths & marriages in Tiverton and other Rhode Island towns up until 1850. Look in Vol 4 (Newport County). It also has church records from several denominations, and obituaries from Providence, Newport and other newspapers.

We have a small collection of family genealogies, including these families: Durfee, Hazard, Hart, Cory, Church, Hambly & Gray.

We have several other sources of biographical or genealogical information pertaining to Rhode Island and New England in general, but not necessarily to Tiverton. See:

The Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island by John Osborne Austin. 1887 (original ed). And reprint.

Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England, (10 vols.) by John Russell Bartlett (pub. 1856-1862).

Atlas of Historical County Boundaries: CT, ME, MA, RI by John H. Long (1994)

Rhode Island History Quarterly: selected vols 1980-present.
Newport History selected issues 1985-present

Rhode Island Roots Quarterly: selected issues 1990-1999.

Rhode Island Passenger Lists by Maureen Taylor A.

We have a handbook, compiled locally, of historical Tiverton cemeteries and their locations. This handbook probably has many inaccuracies, and was done sporadically over the last 50 years. The Town Hall guide might be more accurate. We have a map of Tiverton cemeteries that goes with this listing, although it is hard to read.

We have the local weekly newspaper on microfilm. It is in two complete runs: The Newport County Sentinel from Nov 14 1925 to Nov 30 1950. The Sakonnet Times from Jan 1977 to Dec 1986. This is a good source of obituaries. We do not have a microfilm reader. At our discretion, we may loan the microfilm, as needed, to library patrons with a valid library card to take to other libraries—for example, Roger Williams University Library, to read it there. You may be able to request a microfilm roll from a distance by using OCLC Inter-Library loan through your local public library.

We have, in circulating and reference titles, a few local histories. Multiple copies are usually available:

A Patchwork History of Tiverton (1976)

Historic and Architectural Resources of Tiverton RI, a Preliminary Report, Town of Tiverton (1983)

Rhode Island Tercentenary of Tiverton RI, 1636-1936

Little Compton Families by B.F. Wilbour

Notes on Little Compton

Our small branch library is the **Union Public Library**, at Tiverton Four Corners, 3832 Main Road, Tiverton RI 02878, (401-625-6799), Tues 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-1pm. This library has a small Rhode Island reference

section, perhaps 250 items, with a few books NOT at the Essex Library. It does have the Arnold Vital Statistics of Rhode Island, and many of the titles mentioned above.

The Fall River Public Library

<http://www.sailsinc.org/fallriver/> has microfiche and digital copies of the Fall River Herald and other newspapers going back about 150 years. This is an excellent source of obituaries. Fall River also has older Polk (cross indexed) directories.

New Bedford Public Library

<http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/Library/search.html>

We recommend this library for its extensive genealogical holdings, especially relevant on the Massachusetts border towns- Fall River, Westport, Dartmouth, and on the whaling and sea trade which employed many Tiverton residents. They have a good ship passenger list collection.

Rhode Island and Federal census data is on microfilm at several larger libraries: including Newport, Barrington, Providence, and Warwick. Rhode Island census data is also at the LDS Family Search Center in Warwick and the RI Genealogical and Historical Society in Providence.

The libraries in Little Compton and Portsmouth have good local history collections.

Rhode Island State Archives & Public Records Administration, 337 Westminster Street, Providence RI 02903 401-222-2353. RI State Census records from 1774, 1777, 1782, 1865, 1875, 1885, 1905, 1915, 1925, and 1935 are here on microfiche. Hours are Monday-Saturday 8:30am-4:30pm. Copies are .15 cents a page. The Archives also has **RI State Military Records**. <http://www.state.ri.us/archives/>

Office of Vital Records, RI Dept. of Health. 3 Capitol Hill Room 101, Providence RI 02878, 401-222-2811. The office is open to public 12:30 PM to 4:00 PM Monday to Friday. It is possible that Tiverton vital records will be here if not at Tiverton Town Hall. However, the State Office only has Birth & Marriage records in the last 100 years and Death records in the last 50 years. Earlier records must come from the town. Privacy: There is a restriction on receiving these more “recent records” that are at the Dept of Vital Statistics. Records can be provided ONLY to immediate family

members, to attorneys-at-law, members of genealogical societies, or by court order.

<http://www.health.ri.gov/records/>

Nonprofit organizations:

RI Genealogical Society, PO Box 433, Greenville, RI 02828.

<http://www.rigensoc.org/>

RI Historical Society, 110 Benevolent Street, Providence, RI 02906 <http://www.rihs.org>

RI Historical Society Library, 121 Hope Street, Providence RI 02906. 401-273-8107. <http://www.rihs.org/libraryhome.htm> The third largest collection of genealogical information in New England. Full state depository, 150,000 volumes of printed material on RI genealogy and history, including a large collection of family genealogies. More than 13,000 reels of microfilm of RI newspapers, and the largest collection of pre-1800 RI imprints in the country. Also city directories, tax records & phone books. Also available is the Federal Census from 1790-1920 with indexes. The RIHS library has access to the updated RI Cemetery transcription project, expanded to include links to marriages and parents. An \$8 admission fee is charged to out of state residents. (\$5 for students.) Admission is free to RI residents with proper identification and a registration form needs to be filled out before you can use the reading room. Staff can provide help for visitors for the first 15 minutes free. Beyond that you will be referred to an independent researcher (for a fee) or to other sources. Hours: Wednesday-Friday: 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. 2nd Saturday of the Month: 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

Family History Center, Church of Latter Day Saints, 1000 Narragansett Parkway, Warwick RI 02888. (401) 463-8150.

Family History Center, Franklin MA. 91 Jordon Road, Franklin, Massachusetts 02038. 508-553-0977. **E-mail:** franklinmafhc@gmail.com
Open Hours: Tuesday & Thursday: 9:30am-2:30pm, 7pm-8:30pm; 2nd, 4th and 5th Saturday of the Month: 9am-12:30pm. 1st and 3rd Saturday of the Month - Closed

Portuguese American archives can be found at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, Ferreira-Mendes Portuguese-American Archives, Claire T. Carney Library, 285 Old Westport Road, N. Dartmouth, MA 02747. Telephone: 508-999-8684.

American French Genealogical Society, 78 Earle Street, Woonsocket RI 02895. Phone/Fax (401)-765-6141 <http://www.afgs.org>

RI Jewish Historical Assoc., 130 Sessions Street, Providence RI 02906. (401) 331-1360

RI Black Heritage Society. 123 North Main St., Providence RI 02903. (401) 421-0606. riblackheritagesociety@gmail.com

Tiverton Historical Society. 3908 Main Road, Tiverton RI 02878. No regular open hours. Archives may be accessible, but only by appointment. They also have a Facebook page. Archives in Chace-Cory House at Tiverton Four Corners OPEN: May-Sep, Sun, 2:00-4:30 p.m., and by appt. 624-4013, 624-8881.

Little Compton Historical Society. PO Box 577, Little Compton, RI 02837 (401) 635-4035 <http://www.littlecompton.org/index.htm>

New England Historic Genealogical Society. 99-101 Newbury Street, Boston 02116-3007, (617) 536-5740 Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Wednesday 9 a.m. - 9 p.m., Sunday and Monday Closed. The largest repository of New England genealogical information. Good for pre-1947 Tiverton or Little Compton info. <http://www.nehgs.org>

NARA- The National Archives at Boston. (covers all New England) 380 Trapelo Road, Waltham MA 02154 (866) 406-2379. (781) 663-0144. U.S. Military records. Census data. <http://www.nara.gov>

Newport Historical Society, 82 Touro Street, Newport RI 02840 (401) 846-0813. <http://www.newporthistorical.org/>

National/International Web Sites –most are free or partly free:

Ancestry: www.ancestry.com
(includes Soc Security Death Index)

Family Search: <https://familysearch.org/>

Ellis Island: <http://www.ellisland.org/>

Rootsweb: www.rootsweb.com

Cyndi's List: www.cyndislist.com free guide to other sites

Heritage Quest <http://www.askri.org/> – click on HeritageQuest & use your RI Public Library pin number. Federal Census records from 1790-1930

RI conducts a census every ten years on the “5” year: (1855, 1905, etc.)
Census records are available at RI Historical Society, RI State Archives and large public libraries like Providence & Warwick.

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