

Books and Genealogy

Robert Cameron Weir (October 1, 2024)

Note: Titles with an *asterisk are available at Dover Public Library.

Bibliographies

The first thing I like to check is for relevant bibliographies, books about books. There are some standard ones for genealogy worth knowing about:

- *The Genealogist's Companion & Sourcebook* (Croom, 1994)
- **Genealogical Research Methods and Sources* (Rubicam, 1980)
- **Printed Sources* (Meyerink, 1998)
- *American County Histories* (Filby, 1987)
- *The Source*, 3rd Ed. (Szucs and Luebking, 2006)
- **The Handybook for Genealogists*, 10th Ed. (2002)

And here are some specific to New Hampshire:

- *Hammond's Check List of New Hampshire History* (Hanrahan, 1971)
- **Index to Genealogies in New Hampshire Town Histories* (Copeley)
- *New Hampshire, a Bibliography of its History* (Armstrong, 1979)
- **New Hampshire Maps to 1900* (Cobb, 1981)
- **Bibliography of Dover, N.H* (Ham, 1892)

A good strategy is to search Google for your topic of interest and bibliography, e.g. “19th century German immigration to America bibliography.”

A final trick is to take a recent scholarly book related to the topic and flip to the back where there is often a “selected bibliography” or even a “biographical essay” that discusses books and other sources relevant to the field.

Out of Copyright (through 1928)

All books published in the U.S. before January 1, 1929 are out of copyright. This date advances year to year. Many of these books have been scanned and are available online to view or even download as PDF files. My favorite three sites are:

- <https://archive.org/>
- <https://books.google.com/>
- <https://www.hathitrust.org/>

Copyrighted (1929-Present)

Finding Online

More recent books are copyrighted and generally are not freely found online. But there are some exceptions.

Some privately published genealogies with limited private distributions never had profit in mind. In some cases, the author or their heirs gave explicit permission to the FamilySearch Library in Salt Lake City to scan the book and make it available online:

- <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/>

Also, some copyrighted books are available to borrow, for a limited amount of time, on the Internet Archive and Hathi Trust (links above). It works similar to borrowing an e-book from a public library. It never hurts to check those sites for a title to see if it is available for borrowing.

Finally, Google Books has indexed many copyrighted books and will sometimes show you the page which matches your search. This is often enough to tell you whether the book is relevant to your research, in which case you can try some of the steps mentioned below to track down a copy of it:

- <https://books.google.com/>

Finding at a Library

I like to start by searching relevant specialized libraries. They tend to have well-organized online catalogs that are tailored to researchers in that field. Two I especially recommend are the NEHGS Library and the NH State Library:

- <https://library.nehgs.org/>
- <https://nhsl.nhais.bywatersolutions.com/>

If you know the titles of the book already and are just looking for what libraries have it, try WorldCat, but do note that not all libraries are part of its union catalog:

- <https://search.worldcat.org/>

Another good approach is to look to see if a title is available via the interlibrary loan program. Just note that it is typical for reference books tend to be non-circulating. But it never hurts to give it a try. Patrons of Dover Public Library can get started with an interlibrary loan request here:

- <https://www.dover.nh.gov/government/city-operations/library/borrow/InterlibraryLoan/>

And then, for genealogical and local historical journal articles there is a specialized index called PERSI, maintained by the Genealogy Center at Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana. You can search by surname or location. And, as a bonus, they operate a reasonably-priced copy service, so if you find an relevant article from their index you can order a photocopy of it:

- <https://www.genealogycenter.info/persi/>

Finding for Purchase

Finally, sometimes you just want your own copy of the book, for your personal library. Obviously, for in-print titles there is Amazon.com. But for out-of-print titles, I recommend BookFinder, which aggregates the catalogs of many used book sellers into one search interface:

- <https://www.bookfinder.com/>

Another one I use a lot is AbeBooks. A nice feature here is the ability to define a want list of titles and/or authors that you are interested in. They automatically send you an email when a title on your want list shows up in their catalog:

- <https://www.abebooks.com/>

Note: these services are not just for out-of-print books. Do not underestimate the cost savings of buying a gently used copy of an in-print book.