

## **Searching for Ancestors in Tiverton :**

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

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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 (3 blocks south of the library), 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. **Town Hall officials stress that many of these records are locked in an archive and can only be searched for or viewed by appointment. Call ahead!** <http://www.tiverton.ri.gov> The extent to which town officials can help you depends upon their workload. If they are very busy they may not be able to assist you. They also say that 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. In the past, clerks have allowed some individuals to search the records themselves, but usually only if they know the person. Due to concerns about theft, they may no longer allow this.

Death, marriage and birth records cost \$15 for a certified copy. 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> First, these are the things 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, 1913-1930. We also have address-phone-occupation directories for 1927-1941. We have the Polk Directories for 2001-2004. We have some telephone directories from the mid-1980's-present.

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 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. We loan the microfilm, as needed, to people who take it 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—mostly multiple copies are 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.

**Other libraries. The Fall River Public Library**

<http://www.sailsinc.org/fallriver/main.htm> has microfiche 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. 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. We recommend the **New Bedford Public Library** <http://www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us/SERVICES/LIBRARY/library2.htm> 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.

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. (Recorded message containing detailed information on obtaining Birth, Marriage and Death records, and Adoption and Paternity information, phone 401-222-2812.) Call Monday-Friday 8:30am-4:30pm to speak to a customer representative. 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.healthri.org/chic/vital/index.php>

## **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. 401-331-8575. <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 one of 5 computers in the state with the updated version of RI Cemetery transcription project, expanded to include links to marriages and parents. A \$5 a day admission fee is charged. Mail inquiries are answered, but limited to one every three months. Staff can provide help for visitors for free. Research assistance from a distance is only available on a fee-per-hour basis, usually \$20-\$30 per hour. Costs are lower for RIHS members. Hours: Labor Day- Memorial Day- Weds-Sat 9am-5:45pm. Closed Sats before Monday holidays. Memorial Day to Labor Day – Tues noon- 8pm, Weds-Fri 9-5:45pm, Closed Friday before Mon holidays.

**Family History Center**, Church of Latter Day Saints, 1000 Narragansett Parkway, Warwick RI 02888. (401) 463-9350.

Family History Center, Franklin MA. Largest of the central & southern New England centers.

There is a Portuguese American Genealogy Society which has space in the Taunton MA Public Library

**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.

**RI Black Heritage Society**. 46 Aborn Street, Providence RI 02903. (401)

651-3490.

**Tiverton Historical Society.** 3908 Main Road, Tiverton RI 02878, 401-625-5174. No regular open hours. Archives may be accessible, but only by appointment. Archives in Chace-Cory House at Tiverton Four Corners, but house is only officially open Sunday afternoons in the summer.

**Little Compton Historical Society.** PO Box 577, Little Compton, RI 02837 (401) 635-4035 <http://users.ids.net/~ricon/lchs/>

**New England Historic Genealogical Society.** 101 Newbury Street, Boston MA 02116-3007, (617) 536-5740 Hours: Tues, Fri, Sat, 9am-5pm; Weds & Thurs 9am-9pm. (Dec-Mar, 9-9 on Weds only). Sunday Noon-5pm, (except December). Closed Mondays. The largest repository of New England genealogical information. Largest collection of individual family genealogies in book form. Good for pre-1947 Tiverton or Little Compton info. <http://www.nehgs.org>

**NARA- National Archives & Records Administration – New England Region-** 380 Trapelo Road, Waltham MA 02154 617-647-8100. US Military records. Census data. <http://www.nara.gov>

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

National/International Web Sites –most are free or partly free  
[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)  
(Soc Security Death Index here – and at other sites)

[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) great free Mormon site

[www.ellisland.org](http://www.ellisland.org) free

[www.rootsweb.com](http://www.rootsweb.com) free

[www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com) free guide to other sites

Federal Census access for free at [www.askri.com](http://www.askri.com) – 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 at RI Historical Society, RI State Archives and large public  
libraries like Providence, Warwick.

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