

Do You Have Springfield, Massachusetts Ancestors?

If you do, be sure to plan to fit in a visit to the Local History & Genealogy Library at the Lyman & Merrie Wood Museum of Springfield History while in the area for our 2018 reunion. The Library is located at 21 Edwards Street in Springfield and is open Tuesday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free with a ticket to the five-museum complex (\$25). To just visit the Archives, the cost is \$9 for a day pass.

One of the Library's two reference staff members, Clifford A. McCarthy, described the unique holdings of the Library at the Massachusetts Genealogical Society Seminar in Marlborough, Massachusetts on April 7, 2018. While some of the material, including information about people, places, events and organizations in Springfield and surrounding towns, is available online, much is not. Of particular interest to researchers is the vast unindexed collection of original handwritten documents in its Early Springfield Manuscripts Collection. Access to these documents is dependent upon their condition, but they are made available whenever possible. A Finding Aid for this collection may be found at <https://pvfindingaids.wordpress.com>) Also of interest are the vertical files containing news clippings and photographs. There is a file for every street in the city, so if you locate your ancestor's address in a city directory or census, there just may be a photograph of their house or neighborhood. A Photograph Index will help locate images. Frequently you will be able to find a death date in the city directories as well. While the Library does hold bound copies of most local newspapers going back into the 1700s, their use is restricted due to the fragility of the paper. They have been microfilmed, with those up to 1900 being located at the History Library and those from 1900 onward at the Springfield City Library.

Mr. McCarthy has offered to make Towne family information readily available during the days of our reunion. If you are looking for information on a specific ancestor, he suggests the following tips:

Plan ahead. See what books and periodicals may be available by using www.masscat.org. You may be able to have them set aside for your visit. Since they do have a very limited staff, they would appreciate a call ahead of time so as to best be able to help. Contact them at wmshlibrary@springfieldmuseums.org or 413-314-6450. Don't hesitate to just stop by, though, if you find yourself with a bit of free time while in Springfield. The staff is extremely knowledgeable about their holdings and will be happy to direct your search.

Sign in when you first arrive. If the staff finds related information after you have left, they will contact you to tell you about it.

Although there are both general and local history card catalogs, next stop at the reference desk and make use of the research staff to help you quickly pinpoint relevant information and make the best use of your time there. They have access to a database of material which is not in the card catalogs.

