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Genealogy Notes from Emily April 2016

Emily Schroeder

Reader and Information Services, Emily.Schroeder@maine.gov

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Emily A. Schroeder
Staff Genealogist
emily.schroeder@maine.gov



Websites to Remember

- MSL Genealogy –
www.maine.gov/msl/services/genealogy/index.shtml
- Vital Records Researcher Card-
www.maine.gov/dhhs/forms.shtml
- MSL Classes- www.maine.gov/msl/services/classes.shtml
- Maine Genealogical Society-
www.maineroots.org
- Maine State Archives–
www.maine.gov/sos/arc

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64 State House Station
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www.maine.gov/msl

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Adoption in Maine... Challenging Research!

Greetings, and Happy Spring! I'm so sorry for the delay-there is such a thing as being over-committed! This time around I thought it'd be a good idea to tackle adoption records. I was able to gather a bit of information, but not a whole lot.

From general references on adoption in this country, it seems to have grown out of indentured servitude and the state of being an orphan. Many families simply could not afford to house some of their children, and so farmed them out to either learn a trade or help with the endless household tasks of the day. If the children were to stay permanently with their new families, the arrangement was informal up until the 1850's, when adoption was first legally recognized in this country. The first references in Maine law were in 1852, which allowed adopted children to be heirs to their adoptive parents' estates; and, in 1855, where anyone could petition county judges of probate

to adopt, with the consent of only one parent, next of kin or guardian. In 1867, adoption jurisdiction was officially granted to the probate court, and remains to this day.

Orphanages were in the perfect position to provide children to couples, and the formal process removed the stigma from all parties, especially after the first quarter of the 20th century. At this point, sealing of records was begun, ensuring privacy. The 1900 Census of Maine reports that there were 10 orphanages covering Penobscot, Cumberland, Waldo, Kennebec, Aroostook and Sagadahoc counties. Cumberland had 4. My mother, a social worker in the 1950's, maintained that the state would've served these children well if the orphanages had remained; alas, we now have 9 private adoption agencies, along with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. I've confirmed that all adoption records are confidential with the Maine Children's Home for

Little Wanderer's; I did not ask any of the others, but assume that the same holds for all. Under state law, Title 18-A, ss 9-310, all adoptions decreed on or after August 8, 1953 are confidential. The adoptee who has reached the age of 18, and his descendants, adoptive parents or legal guardian, is entitled to any medical or genetic information. In 2007, L.D. 1084 was passed, allowing adult adoptees to have copies of their original birth certificates. Full access to adoption records still requires permission from a judge of probate, however. Going back to the 1953 date, I'm inclined to believe that adoptions in Maine completed through DHHS prior to that date may be considered open, or may be easier to unseal through the court system. The bottom line here is: when in doubt, ask a judge! Good Luck!

Maine Genealogical Society's Spring Workshop!

There's still time to sign up for this very informative day-long event! Blaine Bettinger, attorney and genetic genealogist, will present a number of talks on the use of DNA in exploring ancestry. This is a really hot topic right now! The schedule includes an introductory keynote address,

followed by sessions on y-DNA and mt-DNA. The afternoon session starts with "Using Autosomal DNA for 18th and 19th Century Mysteries". The last talk before the question and answer period will be "Using Free Third-Party Tools to Analyze Your Autosomal

DNA". This will take place on Saturday, April 23rd, at the Augusta Elks Club. Doors open at 8AM. Cost is \$50.00 for non-members, \$40.00 for members, and includes lunch. You can register online at: www.maineroots.org or grab a mail in form at the State Library.