

Finding Your Way to Reading Local History Resources in the Bishop -Barclay Room at the Reading Public Library

I. The Basics

Vital Records (Births, Deaths and Marriages)

- 1644-1850 Vital Records of the Town of Reading, MA to the year 1850.
- 1848-1937 Reading Births, Reading Deaths, Reading Marriages
Accompanying indexes are in loose alphabetical order by first letter of last name.
- 1938-1969 Located in individual Town Reports; no index
- 1970-75 Reading, Mass Births, Deaths and Marriages 1970-75
- 1975- Go to Town Clerk's Office at Town Hall

Town Reports

- 1847-current 1847-65 Volume - Contains abstracts of valuation of real and personal property
and taxes assessed for the years 1840, 1850, and 1860.
- 1850-1880 Volume - (Bound in one volume)
Valuation of property covers 1850-1860.
- 1880-1889 Volume - Includes a List of the Polls & Estates in The Town of
Reading, May 1st, 1890 (in back of volume)
- Look for more poll and real estate valuation lists on microfilm.
See index to microfilm in Reading, MA vertical file under "Assessors"
Visit Assessors' Office at Town Hall for others.

Street Lists

- 1907-current Persons listed by name and address and occupation - Years 1908, 1910, and 1912
are not included. No women listed until 1924. House numbers changed after
1936.

Maps

- 1647 - Historical maps for the years 1765, 1795, 1830, 1854, 1875, 1889 are hanging on
the walls of the Local History Room. Houses and owners are pinpointed on the
maps. No names attached on 1830 map.
- Xeroxed map sections are located in the "Reading, MA" vertical file.

II. Additional Sources for Houses

Historic Resources of the Town of Reading, Massachusetts (partial inventory, historic and architectural)

Nomination forms submitted in 1981 to National Register of Historic Places. Describes 88 individual structures in the Town of Reading and two cohesive historic districts. Address index.

Reading's Colonial Rooftrees by Eleanor and E. Nelson Bishop
Houses built before 1800.

Early Homesteads at Washington-High-Grove Streets by Loea Parker Howard

The Parker Tavern by Loea Parker Howard

At Wood End by the 350th Celebration Book Committee. Chapter on Houses

Reading Dept. of Public Works, Water Division. You can ask when water was installed (after 1890).

III. Additional Sources for People

Genealogical History of the Town of Reading by Lilley Eaton
Earliest times to 1872.

Use separate name index (page numbers sometimes imprecise). Covers a wide variety of subjects, though its main focus is people and families

Middlesex County and Its People (5 volumes)

For prominent people in late 19th C. through about 1927

End of Vol. 4 has biographical index to Vol. 3 & 4

End of Vol. 5 has biographical index to Vol. 5

History of Middlesex County (3 volumes)

Arranged by town. The chapter on Reading surveys the social, business, cultural and political life of the late 19th century. People and place and institution index.

Historic Sketches of Ancient Redding

For very early settlers.

Name index at end of Vol. 1; grantor/grantee index to property transactions at beginning of Vol. 2
Chapters IV (sketches of early settlers) and V (wills) are not indexed but are in alphabetical arrangement by proper name within chapters.

Reading Men in Early Colonial Wars by Loea Parker Howard

Military Record of Reading Men in the War for Independence by Loea Parker Howard.
Alphabetical.

People file in the Reading, MA Vertical File
Important names have a single folder Others are filed by first letter of last name.

Index to Reading Chronicle 1974-

Pioneer

Yearbooks of RMHS 1892 to present time
Gaps 1893-1895; 1897-1899; 1902; 1910-1911; 1914-1925; 1936-1937; 1970

Persons buried in present day Reading cemeteries.

Print-out provided by Cemetery Department. Alphabetical. Some omissions.

Readings Old Burial Ground Now in Wakefield.

Alphabetical. Only good to 1890s

IV. Other General Sources of Reading History

Proceedings of the 250th Anniversary of the Ancient Town of Redding, Massachusetts

Includes the history of churches, schools, industries, and the military, as well as many portraits, photos, and biographical sketches

At Wood End: Reading, Massachusetts 1644-1994

A pictorial history compiled by 350th Celebration Book Committee

Concerning the Past

A collection of articles by Horace Wadlin, half history, half memoir, published in the Reading Chronicle during the early 1920's. Accounts of Reading's social, economic, and political history during the late 1800's and early 20th Century. Indexed.

Vignettes of Reading History by Eleanor Bishop, C. Nelson Bishop, Victor E. Pitkin

A summary of the growth of the Town with emphasis on the period 1870-1944. Tends to focus on religious and cultural affairs. Indexed.

Story of Reading Government Through 1975 by Victor E. Pitkin and Reading league of Women Voters

2 volumes in one. The first volume concerns the historical development of Reading government as well as synopses of many aspects of early life in Reading. A 2nd volume within the same binding brings social and governmental developments up to 1975.

Reading Reflections

A collection of Historical Sketches written by several members of the Reading Antiquarian Society and published in the Reading Chronicle in 1955-1958. Not indexed.

Additional Loea Parker Howard Books. Pamphlet size.

The Beginnings of Reading and Lynnfield, Mass
Ancient Reading in Massachusetts Bay Colony

City Directories of Reading, Wakefield, Stoneham. 1910s and 1920s.

Business listings included. Several in poor condition, in storage.

Wakefield as 26 vols. in their Local History Collection ranging from 1869 to 1941.

V. Important Dates in Reading History

- 1639** Colony Court granted the petition of persons in Lynn for a tract of land that could be settled and used for farming. It was called "Lynn Village" although it was never part of Lynn itself.
- 1644** A sufficient number of families had settled to warrant a town. The Colony Court named it "Reading". This action constituted the incorporation of the town of Reading and the establishment of the Parish of Reading.
The original settlement was in present day Wakefield.
- 1664** Henry Merrow is reputed to have built the first home in present day Reading, then called Wood End.
- 1713** North Reading was set off as a separate parish, called the Second or North Parish.
- 1769** The present day Reading was set off as the West or Third Parish.
First meeting house/church built on Reading Common, then a stretch of green fields.
See *Parish Records 1639-1722, 1722-1812, 1813-1853.* and *First Congregational Church in Reading 1770-1945* for good coverage of the role of the church.
- 1812** The First Parish separated from Reading being incorporated as the town of South Reading. Name was changed to Wakefield in 1872.
- 1853** North Reading was set apart as a separate town.