

Project Parameters for Hatfield Tercentenary Genealogy Reports

Scanned and compiled by Amanda Tewes, UMASS PhD student, Summer 2013

In honor of **Hatfield's 300th birthday in 1970**, the town's Tercentenary Committee created a family genealogy questionnaire to add personal touches to a book celebrating the event. The document's text claims these family histories will be "a great help to the present Historical Committee as well as future historians."

While there are no dates on the individual questionnaires, the document's wording does encourage participants to return questionnaires to schoolteachers "or the Hatfield Library" before January 1, 1969. Additionally, a numbered list with only 41 of the 57 total participants suggests that these 41 documents were collected and recorded before the original deadline; therefore, the dates of completion likely range from 1968 to 1970.

These documents seem to have been distributed mainly at local schools, but also at the Hatfield Public Library for families with "no children in school." By extending the genealogy questionnaires to families of all ages, the Tercentenary Committee hoped to capture as much of Hatfield's individual histories as possible, while drawing larger conclusions about local immigration and migration patterns. Yet despite the intentions of the Tercentenary Committee, multiple members of the same family often submitted questionnaires with the same basic information. While some appear to be exact copies, other "duplicates" offer insight into a family's uncertainty about spelling, dates and so on.

Though the questionnaire's wording only allows space for names, dates and locations of birth, and names of siblings, it also encouraged participants to research their families beyond the allotted four generations: "If you can trace your family record back further than this, it would be a valuable record. Church records, birth, baptism and marriage certificates are very helpful..." However, the Tercentenary Committee knew that despite the best intentions of participants, not all the information they provided in the questionnaires would be correct. Some members of the same family offered different spellings, dates of birth, and even locations of birth for the same ancestor. In order to allow for these differences, the document states, "If you are not sure of exact dates, make a close guess and place a question mark next to it, for example: 1894?"

In order to make these valuable familial and local histories available to the public, the Hatfield Historical Museum decided to both scan the original questionnaire documents, as well as transcribe the information into easily accessible spreadsheets—one with a full transcription of all information and one with names only. Both spreadsheets retain the original spellings, dates, and locations found in the questionnaires. Where modern researchers have added words or had to guess, this information appears in brackets.

--Amanda Tewes