



An Early Falmouth Family

Our First Experience with Genealogical Tourism

Betsy Jo Whitcomb & Suzanne Farnham
The Falmouth Historical Society

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Images, unless otherwise attributed, are
from The Falmouth Historical Society



The Request

It began with an email...

We have happily learned that we have ancestors who were founders of Falmouth, Maine. For example, Joshua Brackett (1723-1816) and Esther Cox/Cocks (1727-1816).

We would love to learn more. We found their names on 1775 map outside of the area that was burned by the British. Hopefully, our ancestral search is correct!!

Nevertheless, we look forward to visiting Falmouth in September. Hopefully, we can join a tour and learn more about the history of our ancestors by seeing documents, pictures, buildings or other resources. Thank you for your kind help!

We receive an average of five queries each month.

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Initial Screening

Are we the correct Falmouth?

Our first step?

- No different than on TV
- Searched on Ancestry.com using the names and dates provided
- Result: a tree citing a published genealogy

Answer:

- They came to the correct Falmouth
- Their family extends back to early Falmouth



All results for Esther Cox

Your search: Esther Cox, Born: 1727, Any: Falmouth, Cumbe..., Death: 1816, Spouse(s): Joshua Brackett, Focus: [empty]

Found in Ancestry trees: **Esther Brackett Cox** (Family tree)

Spouse: Lieut Joshua Brackett
Father: John Cox
Mother: Tabitha Cox Davenport
Children: Joshua
Birth: 9 Jan 1725 Dorchester, Suffolk, Massachusetts, USA
Death: 1816 Falmouth, Cumberland, Maine, USA

Esther Brackett Cox
BIRTH 09 JAN 1725 • Dorchester, Suffolk, Massachusetts, United States
DEATH 1816 • Falmouth, Cumberland, Maine, USA

Facts

Age	Event	Location	Source
1725	Birth	09 Jan 1725 • Dorchester, Suffolk, Massachusetts, United States	1 source
1744	Marriage	9 Dec 1744 • Falmouth, Maine, USA	1 source
1744	Marriage	9 December 1744 • Falmouth, Cumberland, Maine	Pages 65-68 Family information

Sources

- Brackett genealogy: descendants of Anthony Brackett of Portsmouth and Captain Richard Brackett of Braintree
- Maine, Marriage Index, 1670-1921
- Maine, Marriage Records, 1713-1922
- Massachusetts, [unclear]

Family

- John Cox II (1688-1747)
- Tabitha Cox Davenport (1688-1747)
- Lieut Joshua Brackett (1723-1817)
- Joshua Brackett II (1762-1849)

Image: Ancestry

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Digging Deeper

For Colonial Falmouth:

- Begin with the authoritative history: Willis' *The History of Portland from 1632-1864*
- Information about prominent families can often be found in century-old published genealogies
 - Brackett genealogy (1907)
 - Cox genealogy (1912)

No, we do not spend our days haunting libraries

- We're not that "old school"



William Willis
(1794-1870)



NEHGS Boston



MHS Portland

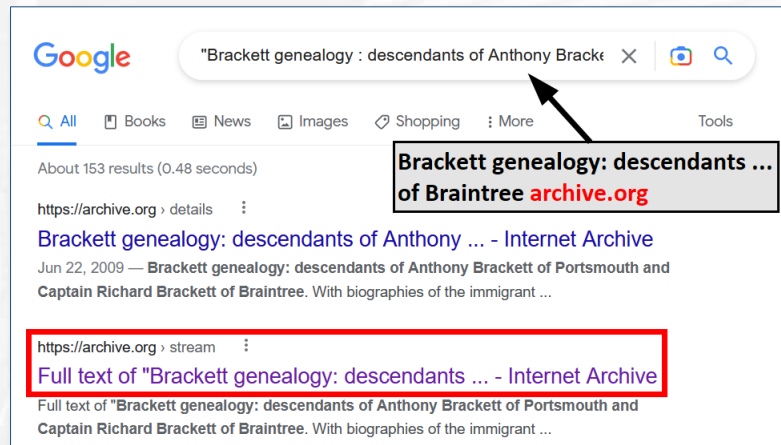
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The Researcher's Friend

Many of those old tomes have been digitized

- Archive.org, Google.com, FamilySearch.org, etc.
- Search for the title and append “archive.org”



- Can be downloaded as PDFs

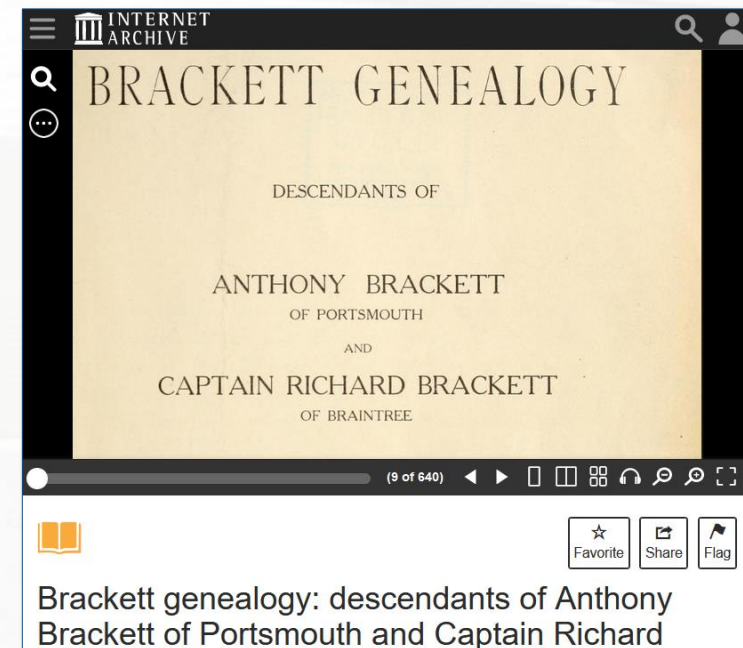


Image: Google, Internet Archive



More Screening

Are we the correct historical society?

- Most activity took place in Portland
- Brackett family arrived by 1662; Cox family in 1729

Falmouth was originally incorporated in 1658

- Eight-mile square encompassing today's Falmouth, Cape Elizabeth, Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook
- Portland peninsula didn't split off until 1786
- The rest of Portland followed in 1814

Answer:

- They came to the correct historical society
(FHS responds to queries for Ancient Falmouth)



*Colonial Massachusetts
(1761)*



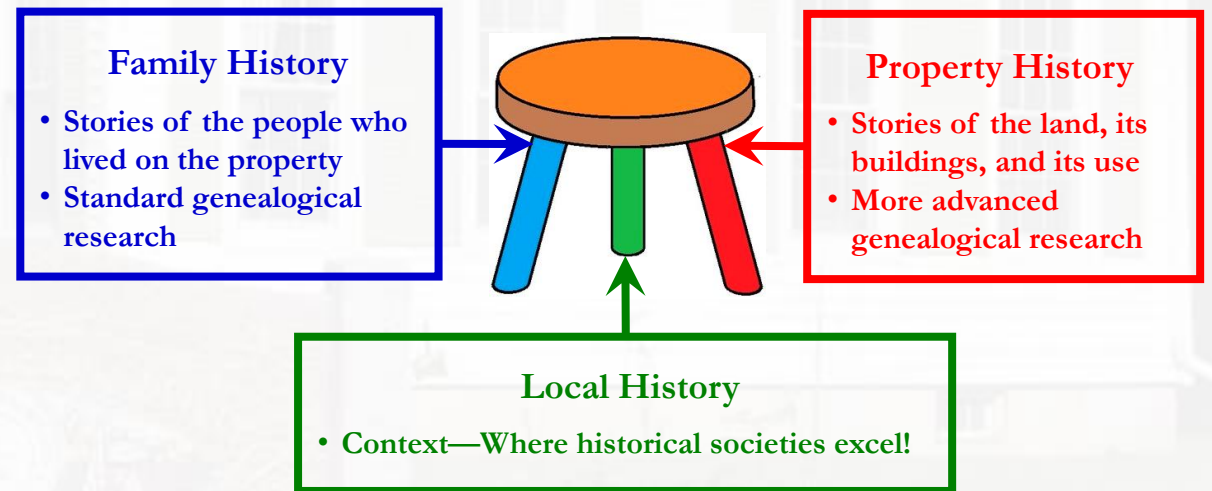
Approach—The Three-legged Stool

Most queries fall into one of three categories:

- Family history, property history, local history
- Responses focus on one area, draw upon all three

This request sought a narrative blending all three

- Assembling a self-guided tour seemed like a good idea
- Lots of material at hand
- Should be easy





Early History of Falmouth

Provides context for family narratives

- Turbulent period
- Events had a profound impact on Brackett and Cox families

1632	English Settlement of Falmouth.
1658	Incorporation of Falmouth. The town was formed from the villages of Casco and Spurwink after Massachusetts Bay Colony annexed the Province of Maine.
1675-1678	King Philip's War. This was an uprising of Native People who had been treated badly by English settlers. Many residents of Falmouth skedaddled south for safety. Quite a few took refuge at Salem.
1688-1697	King William's War. This was the North American theater of the European Nine Years War between France and England (plus others). The French, with their Native allies, attacked and destroyed Falmouth including Fort Loyal where many settlers had sought refuge. Many who hadn't fled were massacred.
1702-1713	Queen Anne's War. This was the North American theater of the European War of Spanish Succession between France and England (plus others). The French, with their Native allies, attacked and destroyed Falmouth. Fort New Casco, where many settlers had sought refuge, barely withstood (barely) the assault. After the settlers were evacuated to safety, only the garrison at the fort remained as an English outpost during the conflict.
1718	Falmouth Reincorporated.

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People

Validated the family trees

- Corrected errors
- Identified ancestors for narrative
- Less precision needed than for a complete family history

1. Anthony BRACKETT (-1691).
 2. Anthony BRACKETT (-1689); m. bef. 1668 (1) Ann MITTON (-1677); m. 1678 (2) Susannah DRAKE (1652-1719).
 3. Zachariah BRACKETT (1682-1751); m. (1) Hannah ROLFE (1682-1736); m. 1741 (2) Mary ROSS.
 4. Joshua BRACKETT (1723-1817); m. Esther COX (1727-1817).
 5. Daniel BRACKETT Sr (1745-); m. Sarah GOULD (1749-1830).
 6. Daniel BRACKETT Jr (1792-1876); m. Mary CONNELL (1807-1809)
-
3. John COX Jr (bef. 1688-1747), m. 1712 Tabitha DAVENPORT (1688-), parents of Esther.



Brackett Family

Anthony Brackett of Portsmouth

- Arrived before 1640
- Killed at Portsmouth in 1691

Capt. Anthony Brackett of Falmouth

- Captured and escaped in 1676
- Killed at Falmouth in 1689
- Farm destroyed 1690
- Brother Thomas killed in 1676
- Son Seth killed while son Anthony captured and escaped in 1690

Zachariah Brackett

- Returned to Falmouth in 1715 and took possession of farm
- Sold farm and moved to Ipswich

Lt. Joshua Brackett

- Served during King George's War, the French and Indian War, and the Revolution

Sources: Willis, "History of Portland"
Brackett, "Bracket Genealogy"

Image: ?



Cox Family

William Cox of Pemaquid

- Ties to Bristol, England
- Arrived by 1625
- Family fled to Salem and Dorchester in 1677

Capt. John Cox Jr

- Grandson of William
- Mariner
- Arrived at Falmouth in 1729
- Killed at Pemaquid in 1747



Shallop in Casco Bay

Sources: Willis, "History of Portland"
Cox, "Cox Family in America"

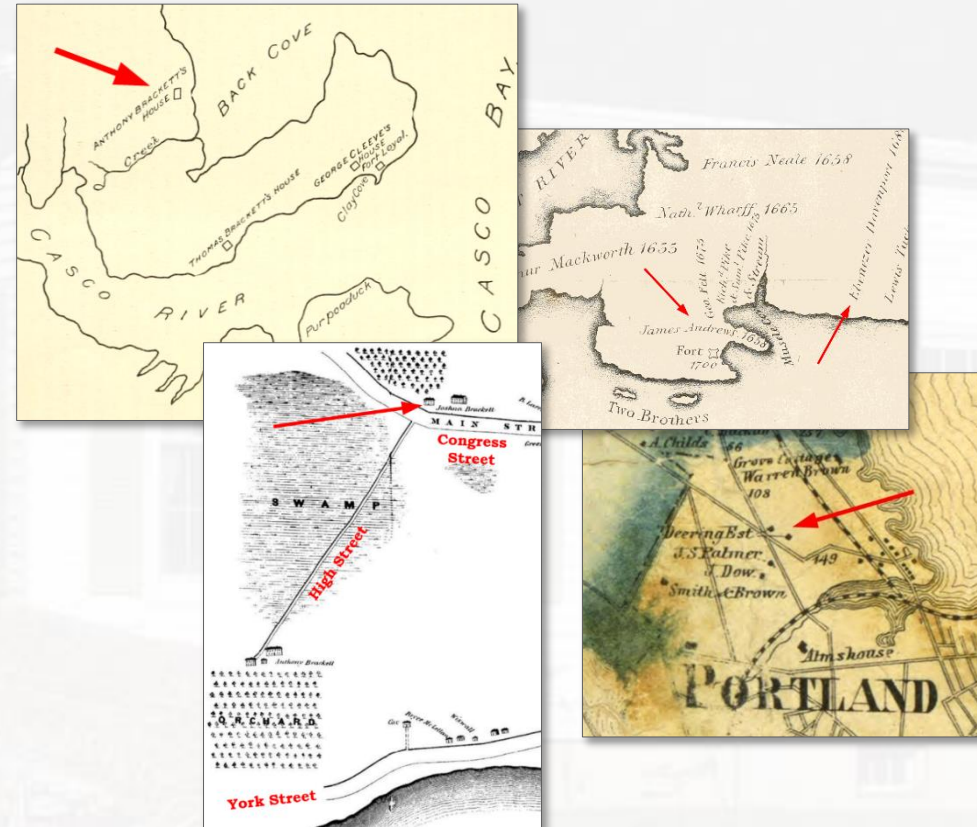
Image: Portland in the Past



Places

Geolocation was a challenge

- Relied on reconstructed maps to identify colonial locations
- Relied on atlases to identify present-day locations
 - Landmarks gone or moved
- Some deed tracing confirmed ownership

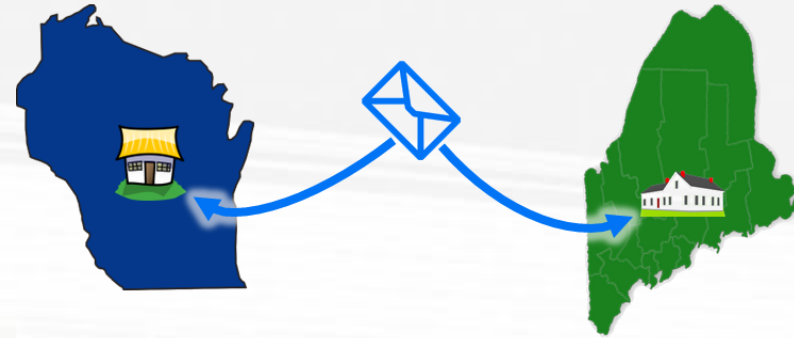




Information Exchange

This project was more interactive than most

As the planned visit approached, the emails flew

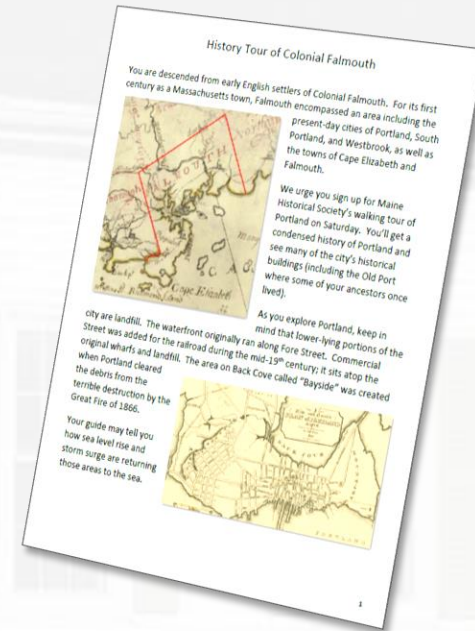


From “The Tourists”	From Falmouth Historical
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their family tree• Itinerary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information about Colonial Falmouth<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Towns splitting off— Timeline including conflicts• Results of research• Links and references to published genealogies



Deliverables

1. Self-guided tour
2. Scheduled a visit to our Museum
3. Suggestions
 - Sign up in advance with Maine Historical for their guided walking tour
 - Local sightseeing
 - Local dining



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Lessons Learned

We reconstructed a narrative of people, events, and locations for an early Falmouth family

This was a “best case” scenario

- Well-documented genealogies with colorful stories
- Prominent families who figured in historical accounts

Took more work than expected to assemble everything

- Geolocation can be surprisingly difficult

It was fun to do

It brought events long ago back to life



Image: Clipartmax

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