

American Church Records



Why study American Church records?

- **Covers pre-U.S. Census period (before 1850)**
- **May fill gap between decennial census dates**
- **May have more exact information**
- **May have more useful information**
- **Many states did not mandate vital record keeping until early 20th century**

The Good news is...

- We do not have a state religion!!!

The Bad news is...

- We do not have a state religion!!!

The Scope of Religion in America

- [Anglican / Episcopal](#)
- [Baptist](#)
- [Buddhist](#)
- [Church of Christ, Scientist](#)
- [Church of the Brethren](#)
- [Congregational](#)
- [Disciples of Christ](#)
- [Dutch Reformed](#)
- [German Reformed](#)
- [Great Awakenings](#)
- [Greek Orthodox](#)
- [Huguenot](#)
- [Jehovah's Witnesses](#)
- [Jewish](#)
- [Latter-day Saints \(Mormon\)](#)
- [Lutheran](#)
- [Methodist](#)
- [Mennonite / Amish](#)
- [Moravian](#)
- [Muslim](#)
- [Nazarene](#)
- [Pentecostal](#)
- [Presbyterian](#)
- [Roman Catholic](#)
- [Russian Orthodox](#)
- [Seventh-Day Adventist](#)
- [Society of Friends \(Quakers\)](#)
- [Unitarian](#)
- [United Church of Christ](#)

History of Religion in America

- **The U.S. was the first western nation to be founded predominately by Protestants rather than Roman Catholics**
- **Europeans came to America to escape religious oppression and forced beliefs by state-affiliated Christian churches**
- **Not having a state religion has opened the door to a multitude of utopian religions, religious fanaticism, and Eastern religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Taoism**

General resources for religions in America

- **FamilySearch.org/wiki**
 - Topic: Religion in America
- **www.cyndislist.com/**
 - Category: Religion and churches
- **Ancestry.com**
 - Collections: Church Histories & Records

Great Awakenings

- Without the political and social power available to the ministers in England, colonists were apathetic about religion
- Moral standards in America declined to shocking levels
- “The colonists were typically inattentive, uninterested, and bored during church services, according to the ministers, who complained that the people were sleeping, whispering, ogling the fashionably dressed women, walking about and coming and going, or at best looking out the windows or staring blankly into space”

Great Awakenings

- Began in Connecticut & New Hampshire
- Revivalism attracted seminary students
- Provoked emotional response over intellectual
- Middle-class responded enthusiastically
- Spread with westward migration

Great Awakenings

- Pit minister against minister
- Hellfire-and-damnation preaching
- Burned-over district in New York
 - “the area had been so heavily evangelized as to have no "fuel" (unconverted population) left over to "burn" (convert).
- Spawned many new denominations
- Beginnings of temperance, abolition, and women's suffrage

Great Awakenings



from The
Routledge
Historical Atlas of
Religion in
America

Permission
requested

First Great Awakening – 1730-1750

- **Changed the way people thought about their relationship with the divine, with themselves and with other people.**
- **Engaged the mind, but the Great Awakening engaged the heart.**
- **It respected each individual's feelings and emotions. In stark contrast to Puritanism, which emphasized outward actions as proof of salvation, the Great Awakening focused on inward changes in the Christian's heart**

Second Great Awakening – 1820-1840

- **The idea of social equality that came about with the advent of the new nation trickled down to religion.**
- **Prominent religions began an effort to democratize religion.**
- **Unlike the Episcopalian religion, ministers in these sects were typically uneducated.**
- **Unlike the Calvinists, they believed and preached in salvation for all.**





METHODIST' CAMP MEETING.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the Year 1840, by H. R. Robinson, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the U. States of the Southern District of New York.

Revival and Camp Meeting Songs

All Aboard The Gospel Train
All The Way to Calvary
Army of the Skies
Beyond the Shadows
Gather in the Golden Grain
Gather in the Sheaves
Going Home
Go Tell it to Jesus
Go Work Today
Hark! The Voice of Jesus
He Is Knocking
He Ransomed Me
He Tenderly Looked at Me
I Am Coming To The Cross
I Have Called Thee
I Know That Jesus Saves Me
I'm Laying My Treasure Up There
I'm the Child of the King
I Need Jesus
In The Shadow of the Rock
I Shall Be Satisfied Then
I Shall See The King
Is He Yours?
Jesus Has Full Control
Jesus Has Taken Them All
Jesus Is A Friend Indeed
Jesus Is Coming Again
Let Us Sing Again
Let Us Stand For Jesus
My Mother's Bible
Onward, Christian!

Oft in danger, oft in woe, Onward, Christian, onward go!
Fight the fight, maintain the strife, Strengthened with the
bread of life.

Onward, Christian, onward go! Join the war, and face the foe;
Will you flee in danger's hour? Know ye not your Captain's
power?

Let your drooping hearts be glad; March, in heavenly armor
clad;

Fight, nor think the battle long, Vict'ry soon shall tune your
song.

Onward, then, to battle move! More than conq'rors you shall
prove;

Though opposed by many a foe, Christian soldiers, onward
go!