Herewith my notes on colonial marriage and naming patterns. Here I have amalgamated various published sources with my own experience, where it is reasonably extensive—the New England subculture, and David Hackett Fischer's backcountry Scotch-Irish "borderers".

SOURCES

David Hackett Fischer, ***Albion's Seed*** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989)
which itself cites (in footnote pp.93-94):

Smith, "Child Naming Practices"
Rutman & Rutman, "A Place in Time, *Explicatus*",

and many ***New England Historical and Grenealogical Register*** studies, including,

John J. Waters, "Naming and Kinship in NE: Guilford Patterns & Usage:1693-1759"

and these other articles,
in Taylor & Crandall, ***Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History*** (1986)

Fischer, "Forenames and the Family in NE: An Exercise in Historical Onomastics"
Rutman & Rutman, "*In Nomine Avi*: Child-Naming Patterns in a Chesapeake County, 1650-1750"
O'Malley, "'Beloved Wife' and 'Inveigled Affections': Marriage Patterns in Early Rowley, Massachusetts"

Mean Ages at Marriage

Generally speaking, in colonial America, men weren't deemed fit subjects for marriage until they had achieved "a competence" to support a family. Outside the handful of seaboard cities, and substantial towns, this meant, practically, ownership of cleared land, and a modicum of capital to work it. Since it was a fond goal of fathers in certain sub-populations, especially New Englanders, to be able to pass on such a competence to each of their sons (and a dowry to their daughters), one typically expects family foundings to be enabled by the father's deeding of part of his land to his sons (and sometimes sons-in-law), and where the father was well-endowed, this would typically happen either as each son came of age, or, all at once for several sons, when the youngest came of age. Alternatively, this might be left to the indefinite future (by more grasping, or simply less provident, fathers) through devise in wills, but wills made in anticipation of imminent death, were often accompanied by a flurry of deeds to children, as a more appropriate instrument of real property distribution.

Young men without successful (and well-disposed) fathers, could be therefore be expected to marry somewhat later than their better favored peers. Most of the marriage age estimates given below are from Fischer's *Albion's Seed*, and are based on cited studies. Except for Fischer's estimates for the "borderer" sub-population, which are, in my opinion, way wide of the mark, the ages of the men didn't vary that much, and on the whole these average out to about age 25. Given the abundance of cheap land available to ambitious young men on the frontier, one might expect the male ages to be somewhat lower. That they are as they are, testifies, I think, to the importance of land transfer within families as a kind of parental blessing, and ratification of full-fledged adulthood.

26/23 New England (Fischer's East Anglian predominating subculture)

O'Malley found, in her Rowley, Massachusetts data that bride's marriage ages rose from 20.5 to 23.5 from the first to the fourth generation, and groom's ages declined from 27.7 to 24.5 for the same span; she attributes this to the changing sex ratio. She also found that in only about 35% of marriages were both parties from Rowley itself, the outlying towns supplying the other marriage partner—usually the groom

24/18 Virginia Tidewater (Fischer's Southwest of England subculture)

According to Virginia law, males under 21 couldn't marry without parental consent, and there were few such marriages, according to Mr. John P. Alcock, who found only 6 out of 1800 in Fauquier County from 1760-1800; for the Scotch-Irish population beyond the Blue Ridge I would expect this proportion to be much higher but certainly not more than a few percent of the whole. A second consideration is that a large segment of the male tidewater population were indentured servants who were generally obligated to serve until age 24. Servants could marry only with permission of the owners of their contract and such permissions are exceedingly rare in the records.

Fischer's *Albion's Seed* which depicts the female population of the tidewater South as notably disempowered, would seem to dovetail with the lower female age at marriage.

20/19 Backcountry (Fischer's Borderers: lowland Scots, N. English, Scotch-Irish etc.)
25/22 [my estimates]

I think Fischer is way off base here. He says his estimates are based on "an ingenious analysis" of the 1800 SC census by Kaplanoff, but most borderers were 3rd generation by 1800 and beginning to intermarry with other indigenous populations, and South Carolina is hardly a typical frontier area anyway, as much of the population even of the western areas, were descendants of English-born tidewater indentured servants, trickling down from Virginia and North Carolina, rather than Scotch-Irish borderers. There would probably have been a tendency for marriage ages to drop as erstwhile frontier areas became more settled, and more females appeared, except that among this population, the constant appetite for more and better land kept propelling them onward to the next frontier, whereas New Englanders were content to settle for decreasing proportions of the original family land in exchange for stability and continued maintenance of extended family connections.

27/24 Delaware Valley/Quaker Area (English Midlands)

Onomastics—Child Naming Patterns

Since these four British (colonial) subcultural groups are Fischer constructs, I have begun each section with a summary of his material.

New England (Puritan) vs. Virginia Tidewater (Anglican) Child-Naming Patterns

from Rutman & Rutman, p90

First Sons named for their...	Father	Paternal GrFather	Both	Neither
HinghamMA (pre 1721)	47%	17%	20%	17%
MiddlesexCoVA (1651-1750)	11	44	16	29

First Daughters named for their...	Mother	Maternal GrMother	Both	Neither
HinghamMA (pre 1721)	56%	18%	15%	11%
MiddlesexCoVA (1651-1750)	15	46	4	34

Fischer says Concord, Massachusetts, produced statistics similar to Hingham, Massachusetts.

Water's data for Guilford, Connecticut, shows that 42% of families retained the traditional system of honoring paternal grandfathers and maternal grandmother's first, that 31% followed the nuclear family pattern (father and mother first), 21% followed their own biblically influenced patterns, and 6% followed their noses, like us moderns.

The Rutmans' study of Middlesex County, Virginia, actually goes beyond the above data (through statistical analysis) in a very important way, by showing that the onomastic pattern varied from the first through the Nth son. They found that 111 first sons of their sample of 197 (56.3%) were named either for their father (F) or their paternal grandfather (FF), while 79 of 152 (40%) of second sons were so named.

Here are the raw figures for these samples of 197 first sons, and 152 second sons:

	Named For their F	FF	both	Not named for either F|FF
1st sons	22	57	32	86
2nd sons	43	14	22	73

Thus, 22 + 57 + 32 = 111 out of 197 first sons were named for either their F or FF, or 56%, with the latter begin preferred some 57 / (22 + 57) = 72% of the time.

Since in 32 of the 152 second son cases, there was no possibility of their being named for either F or FF (since the first son was named for both) the total number of second sons eligible to be named for F|FF (152), and the residual proportion that weren't named for either (73), both have to be reduced by 32, leaving 79 out of 120 (66%) of second sons named either for their F or their FF.

By the same token, just (86 + (73 - 32)) / (197 + 152) = 36% of first **and** second sons were named for neither F|FF, or conversely 64% of the time at least one of the first two sons was named for F|FF.

For additional sons, or in families where this paternal ancestral pattern didn't prevail, the given names of uncles (usually paternal-side uncles) were most often favored, and overall only about 10% of sons weren't named for their F, their FF, or one of their paternal uncles.

Finally, in the Rutmans' study, the homologous naming pattern was found for girls. First and second daughters were named almost as frequently for their mother, and/or their mother's mother.

It is usual for naming patterns to run in families, and the colonial Chesapeake tidewater population was somewhat diverse, so one would expect these same-sex ancestral naming percentages to be much higher across several generations of families in which the pattern can be detected at all. One would probably also expect that where a first son was named for his father's father, that it would be overwhelmingly likely that the second son would be named for his father. The Rutman's statistics would be more useful for purposes of probabalistic genealogical inference if they were analyzed with respect to families, instead of as disaggregate individuals.

I've summarized these findings (and rules of thumb) for this Chesapeake pattern, which became the norm for much of the early south, in my paper, "The Chesapeake Tidewater Onomastic Pattern".

Scotch-Irish and Scottish Child-Naming Patterns

This Chesapeake tidewater child-naming pattern overlaps somewhat, yet differs distinctly from "The Scottish Onomastic Child-naming Pattern", which I've laid out in detail in my eponymous linked paper, and in which the first two sons were named for their paternal and maternal grandparents, and the father himself wasn't honored until the third son, if then.[1] Moreover, the Scotch-Irish pattern continued to guide families in naming virtually all their children, although few families seem to have followed it strictly much beyond the third or fourth child of each sex.

Some Genealogical Implications of Child-Naming Patterns

For genealogical purposes these patterns are of the first importance. For example, one consequence of the marked preference for first honoring the parents' parents, is that all the sons of a family tended to give their first sons the same name—the name of their common father. Moreover, the Standard Scotch-Irish pattern can be differentiated from other standard patterns, and from none, when it is found that the third children of each sex are named for the parents,[2] and from this observation other unknown family names and relationships can be predicted.

---

[1] There was a second, less common version of the Scotch-Irish pattern which skipped the parents altogether and reached back, in an elaborately worked-out way, to the great- and even the great-great-grandparents. In this pattern, the third son is said to have been named, not for his father, but for his father's father's father, and the third daughter for the mother's father's mother. At present, the only source I can find for this variant pattern is here, but once discovered, I have found it to be at work in at least one fairly well-worked out American Scotch-Irish family.

[2] Except, as noted, when the variant Scotch-Irish pattern was followed. Conversely, when (for a Scotch-Irish or Scottish family) the third children are not named for their parents, but the first two children are known to be named for their grandparents, one can at least tentatively infer that the variant pattern is in play, and if the name of the father's father's father is known, and is not the same name as the father, this alternate pattern can reasonably be inferred to be at work in this particular family.

Gleanings from David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed*

New England (East Anglian Puritans)—see *Albion's Seed*, 93-97

First children were predominantly named for their parents (and other members of the nuclear family. When a child died, it's name was typically reused for the next child of the same sex. The naming of children for godparents (common in England) was eschewed especially as a popish practice.

At least 90% of forenames were biblical, and "a remarkably small number of biblical names accounted for a large proportion of choices. In the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a whole during the 17th century, more than 50% of all girls were named Mary, Elizabeth or Sarah... carefully selected for the moral qualities they personified." Biblical names associated with the godhead popular in many Christian areas (Jesus, Emmanuel, even Chirstopher) were "taboo". "With equal care, Puritan parents also chose scriptural names which seemed suitable to their social rank. On New England muster rolls, the name of Hezekiah the king of Judah, appeared ten times as often for officers as enlisted men. Amos, the name of a simple herdsman, was generally more common among the rank and file" (citing Steward, "American Given Names").

The predominance of East Anglian Puritan naming customs in NE over that of other English Puritans is striking. In Sussex (which supplied only 1% of NE emigrants), hortatory names ("Be-Courteous", "Mortify" etc.) were favored, but they represent only 4% of NE names.

Tidewater (South[west] English Anglicans)—*Albion's Seed*, 306-10

"Distressed Cavaliers & Indentured Servants"

Lineal naming pattern as indicated in chart above; either the paternal or maternal line was favored, depending on which had the highest social standing. About 50% of given names were biblical—the same proportion as in contemporary Colyton, Devon, and otherwise, forenames were representative of pre-Puritan England, as a whole. In Virginia (as in S England) surnames were often used as forenames "to reinforce connections between families and strengthen the solidarity of the elite... Complex patterns of cousin naming also appeared in Virginia, as they also did among the gentry in the south of England... Godparents were closely involved in the choice of names both in Virginia and the south and west of England." "The naming of children was not entirely determined by this calculus of social rank and material interest... Astrologers were consulted in an attempt to find a fortunate name... This search for a lucky name tempered the use of necronyms in this culture. The Virginians, like NEnglanders, tended to repeat forenames whenever children died. But they did so with some reluctance. for when children died young, fathers feared to use names which had seemed unlucky."

A study quoted in Rutman & Rutman for the period Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1699 showed the same name preferences for Virginia-born natives and recent immigrants:

Virginia-Born
M: John,William,Thomas,Richard,George,Robert,James,Henry,Charles,Edward
F: Elizabeth,Mary,Ann,Sarah,Catherine,Margaret,Frances,Alice,Jane,Rebecca

Virginia Immigrants
M: John,Thomas,William,Richard,Robert,James,George,Edward,Henry,Samuel
F: Mary,Elizabeth,Ann,Sarah,Margaret,Jane,Catherine,Frances,Alice,Dorothy

Delaware Valley (North Midland Quakers)—*Albion's Seed*, 502-7

The lineal naming pattern, like all but the Puritan, favored the grandparents, but in respect to the moral and intellectual equality recognized between the sexes, a unique crossover pattern was typically followed (for boys, MF, FF, F, and for girls FM, MM, M).

Only 50% of names were Biblical (compared to 90% for Puritans), the balance being made up by traditionally popular English names. Especially popular girls names were Anne/Anna/Hannah, and Est[h]er/Hester commemorating biblical women of strong character, with Deborah also popular. An even better marker for this cultural group is the also indigenously popular Phebe, " which rarely appeared in Puritan and Anglican families."

A name tabulation from three Quaker genealogies covering 1675-1750 produces the following hit parade:

Boys: John, Thomas, William, Joseph, George, James, Samuel, Jacob, Robert
Daniel, Benjamin, Nathan, Joshua, Richard, Caleb, Henry, Amos, Ezra
Edward and Adam (Fischer says Adam was rare in NE)

Girls: Mary, Sarah, Ann, Jane, Hannah, Elizabeth, Lydia, Esther, Martha,
Rebecca, Rachel, Margaret, Grace, Phebe, Susanna, Abigail, Alice,
Edith, Patience, Mercy and Deborah

Backcountry (Borderers)—*Albion's Seed*, 683-6
(loosely, the "Scotch-Irish", or what the British call, the "Ulster Scots", whose roots were mostly in the Scottish lowlands and border region)
Fischer says of this group:
Followed the Virginia Tidewater in lineal naming patterns.
Popular names, by type:
Universal: John
Teutonic: Robert, Richard
Scandinavian: Archibald, Ronald
Border Places: Ross, Clyde, Carlisle, Tyne, Cumberland, Derry
Border Warriors: Wallace, Bruce, Percy, Howard
Border Saints: Andrew, David and Patrick

The latter two saint's names, used by Protestants as well as Catholics, serve as markers for this population as "Davids were few and far between in New England and the Delaware Valley; Puritans and Quakers were not amused by King David's biblical antics. Patricks were uncommon in Anglican Virginia and nearly unknown in Puritan New England".

I think much of the above is wrong. For one thing, the set of most frequent names Fischer came up with is very wide of the mark. I've made a study of the IGI for Scotland for the 19th century and before and compiled the top 20 names for both boys and girls across have a dozen different surname, providing relative percentages for each. The results are published in ah appendix to my paper, "The Scottish Onomastic Child-naming Pattern". Although the Scotch-Irish were typically serious, if not particularly pious, Presbyterians, they did not go in much for biblical names (with the notable exceptions of Samuel and Joseph), but stuck mostly to the good auld Scottish forenames.