
Genealogy Research: Our Greatest Hits



This guide is intended to give the researcher an introduction to the most popular and useful genealogy items in our library. We added links wherever possible to online sources.

Professional librarians are on duty during library appointments to help you find what you need and suggest sources and strategies. Unfortunately, our staff is unable to find your ancestors for you, fill in blanks in your family tree, or draw genealogical conclusions.



View a Powerpoint slide show about our genealogy resources: www.slideshare.net/BuffaloHistory



This guide is online with links at:
<https://tinyurl.com/TBHM-GenOverview>

Table of Contents

Just to Get it Out of the Way, Some Things We Do NOT Have	2
Here's What We DO Have: Some Good Places to Start	3
General & Miscellaneous	4
Censuses	4
Church Records	5
City Directories	5
Deaths, Obituaries, and Cemetery Records	5
Marriages	8
Military Service	9
Orphan Home Records	10
Social Directories	10
Telephone Directories	11
Voter Registration Lists	11

Just to Get it Out of the Way, Some Things We Do NOT Have

- ✘ **We do NOT have government-issued vital records**

Official birth certificates, marriage licenses, and death certificates are kept in the office of the city or town clerk where the birth, marriage, or death occurred. Copies are also at the [New York State Department of Health](#) in Albany. There are no copies in this museum. Please be aware that New York State did not have a vital records law until 1880. Before 1880, researchers usually turn to [church records](#) to seek proof of births, marriages, and deaths.
 - ✘ **We do NOT have an Ancestry-style database of names in our collection**

We have over 25,000 books, about 3,000 manuscript collections, plus extensive census, church, and cemetery records on microfilm. Most are undigitized. There is no searchable list of all of the names that appear in these or other items in our library.
 - ✘ **We do NOT have any member-only databases**

Every dataset we put online at our [Digital Projects](#) page is free to everyone on the internet.
 - ✘ **We do NOT have passenger lists or naturalization records**

These are available through LDS Family History Centers, Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, and the U.S. National Archives. Some are also in the [Grosvenor Room of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library](#).
 - ✘ **We do NOT have school attendance records**

These are kept by school districts.
 - ✘ **We do NOT have deeds or property transactions**

These are kept at the [Erie County Clerk's Office](#).
 - ✘ **We do NOT have patient records from hospitals**

These are kept by hospitals. We cannot say for sure, but we suspect that non-current records are routinely discarded.
 - ✘ **We do NOT have wills or estate papers**

These are kept by the [Erie County Surrogate Court](#).
-

Here's What We DO Have: Some Good Places to Start

[FRANK \(Find Resources and New Knowledge\)](#)

Our online catalog, called FRANK, lists books, pamphlets, theses, and manuscripts in our collection, including biographies, family histories, and how-to books on genealogy. Manuscripts include personal papers of prominent local families, business and institutional records, and scrapbooks. FRANK lists over 30,000 distinct works and collections in our library and we are regularly adding new records. While FRANK cannot search inside books or other items, we are adding links to online versions where available.

[Early Settlers Index](#)

Online at our website, no print version. Names of over 6,000 men and women who lived here prior to 1850 or so, with sources.

[Newspapers.com](#)

We partnered with Newspapers.com to digitize our Buffalo newspapers. All of our newspapers from 1811-1963, plus the Buffalo News up to the present, are now full-text searchable. You may use Newspapers.com for free in our building. For best results, bring your own laptop. If you live in New York State, you can [access it at home through the New York Public Library](#).

[Here is a list of all of the newspapers we have on microfilm, including the ones not digitized.](#)

General & Miscellaneous

Ref. F118 .L58 1991

Livsey, Karen. **Western New York land transactions, 1804-1824**

Names of the first settlers to buy land from the Holland Land Company.

Ref. F118 .L583 1996

Livsey, Karen. **Western New York land transactions, 1825-1835**

Names of the first settlers to buy land from the Holland Land Company.

Ref. F127 .E6 B57 2011

Buffalo & Erie County Public Library. **[Births, deaths, and marriages found in select Buffalo and Erie County publications.](#)**

Alphabetical listing of births, deaths and marriages found in the following: Buffalo Female Academy twenty-fifth anniversary, Annual report of the Le Couteulx St. Mary's Institute, Buffalo Evening News almanac and fact book, Buffalo Evening News almanac and yearbook, Annual report of the Commissioners of the Erie County Penitentiary, Annual report of the Board of Police of the City of Buffalo, The Seminaria, Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of Erie County, Annual statement of the Trade and Commerce of Buffalo, Annual report of the Buffalo Merchant's Exchange, and Annual Report of the Chamber of Commerce of Buffalo.

McNallie, Ridgway. **Early settlers of Erie County, New York: Being a complete name index to *History of the city of Buffalo and Erie County* in two volumes by H. Perry Smith, 1884**

[More Buffalo-area genealogy books are listed here.](#)

Censuses

Federal Census Records, 1790-1880, 1900-1930 [microfilm]

We have all surviving Federal censuses for Erie County on microfilm. Families are recorded in the order in which the enumerator (census taker) visited them. Legibility varies from page to page. Beginning in 1840, censuses for the City of Buffalo were divided by ward. We have a set of ward maps to help determine which ward your ancestor lived in during a given census year.

Please note that Erie County was not established until 1821. Buffalo and surrounding towns will be found in Niagara County in the 1800-1820 censuses.

Federal Census Indexes, 1790-1860

We have print indexes for these census years. These help you locate an individual or family in the census.

New York State Census Records, 1855, 1865, 1875, 1892, 1905, 1915, 1925 [microfilm]

We have all surviving State censuses for Erie County on microfilm. Our only print index is for the towns of Erie County, 1855. The state census is not as informative as the federal census.

[We have links to online census records here.](#)

Church Records

We have microfilms of handwritten ledgers from several Buffalo & Erie County churches. These include baptisms, marriages, and deaths. Some also have communion and confirmation dates. Several are in Latin, Polish, or German. Most of these records are on microfilm. Some of the films have been digitized. There is no master index of church records, so we do not know which roll might include your ancestor.

[Here is a list of the church records that we own.](#)

City Directories

We regret that our directories are too fragile to be scanned or photocopied. Instead, you may photograph them.

Buffalo City Directories, 1828-2001

Also called Polk directories. There are some years when no directory was published, most notably during World War II. Information includes name, address, and occupation. The 1828, 1832 & 1841 directories include [Names of Colored People](#). Starting in 1929, wives' names appear in parentheses after husbands. Beginning that same year, a geographic section in the back cross-references by street address.

[Most of Buffalo's 19th century directories are online here.](#)

[Here is a list of the many different directories that we own:](#) business, social, professional, and more. Most are in hard copy only, not online.

Deaths, Obituaries, and Cemetery Records

[Cemetery Records](#) [mostly microfilm]

We have microfilms of handwritten ledgers from various cemeteries in Erie County. Most are small, rural cemeteries. Pages are usually organized by grave location or number and include name of deceased and date of death. Some records may include person's age at death, or mention of bodies removed to another location. Cemeteries are independently owned and operated, so there is no master list of everyone buried in Erie County's 200 cemeteries & burial grounds.

[Obituary index, 1811-2001](#) [card file]

This is our most popular genealogy resource. A card file organized A-Z by surname, with about 99,000 names. Deaths from 1812-1986 are now digitized and online. Modern cards usually include name, age, an occupational note, and a citation to the newspaper where the obituary can be found. If your ancestor is not in this index, a death notice or obituary might still be found by reading newspapers on microfilm for a few weeks after his/her death.

Ref. F127 .E6 E75 1982

Erie County marriage & cemetery records

Records of soldiers and officers in the military service, Brant, N.Y. -- Cemetery records of the Town of Brant, Erie County, New York -- Cemetery record of Farnham Holy Cross Lutheran Cemetery, Farnham, New York, Town of Brant, Erie County -- Huson Cemetery, Brant, Erie County, N.Y. -- Shaw Cemetery, Milestrip Road, Brant, N.Y. -- Record of inscriptions, Main St. and Eggert Road Cemetery, June 20, 1952 -- Abandoned cemetery, Route #5, Farnham, New York -- List of marriages performed in Amherst by Timothy A. Hopkins, 1841-18[84]. Includes several excerpts from Tree Talks, the journal of the Central New York Genealogical Society.

Ref. F127 .E6 J49

Some deaths in Erie County, 1863

Names in alphabetical order compiled by Joyce S. Jewitt in 1984.

Ref. F127 .E6 W47

Western New York Genealogical Society. **Erie County N.Y. Surrogate Index.**

Index of wills & estate papers from Erie County Surrogates Court. Library has 1861-1880; for 1881-1900, we have only surnames A-R.

Ref. Oversize F127. E6 W47

[Early Erie County Vital Records: Deaths, 1847-1848.](#)

Published by the Western New York Genealogical Society, 1983-1986, based on originals in our collection. Deaths recorded in Alden, Amherst, Aurora, Boston, Clarence, Colden, Eden, Evans, Hamburg, Lancaster, Newstead, and Wales. Now online as an index.

Ref. F127 .E6 W471

Western New York Genealogical Society. **Erie County, N.Y. Medical Examiner Records.**

Originally published in installments in the Western New York Genealogical Society Journal starting in September 2007. Library presently has names from 1878-1920.

Ref. F129 .B8 B65 1974

Records, First Presbyterian Church of Buffalo, New York, 1812-1961.

Included here because unlike most of our church records, this volume is in book form. Death dates are provided for many but not all members. See also our [Church Records list.](#)

Ref. F129 .B8 G88 2007

Guthrie, Glenice. [Summary of known deaths from 1832, 1849 and 1854 cholera epidemics, Buffalo New York.](#)

Ref. F129 .B8 R63 2018

Robinson, Edwin P. **Reverend Edwin P. Robinson record of marriages, baptisms, and funerals, 1886-1903**

Ref. F129. B853 S44 1997

Seegel, Steven J. [A necrology excerpted and organized from the Buffalo City Directories, 1882-1892.](#)

For ten years, and only these ten years, Buffalo city directories included a list of all residents over age 16 who died in the previous year. This is a complete A-Z list of those names.

Ref. HV6535 .B84 M35 2013

McLaughlin, Vance. [Buffalo homicides, 1902-1936.](#)

Names drawn from annual reports of the Buffalo Police Commissioner.

Ref. F 129 .B86 M5 2015

Miller, Amy. [An index to undertaker records in Buffalo, New York, 1883-1899.](#)

Includes the name, death date, date of entry, place of internment, source, and page number of two undertakers in Buffalo. The names were indexed from the Henry D. Farwell Records of Burials and the Theophilus Speyser Undertaker Records. These are the only funeral home records that we have.

Mss. A2016-37

Mason, A.C. **Wills and letters administration notebook.**

Contains lists of Erie County residents with month and year of their deaths (ca. 1809-1896). Arranged alphabetically by surname; includes will number from county clerk's office, and will/letters of administration numbers from surrogate's court office. A [Scholar Pass](#) is needed to use this collection.

Mss. W-32

Farnham, Thomas. [Death Record of Old Buffalo Settlers, 1833-1883.](#)

Register of death dates and ages at death of early citizens of Buffalo, N.Y., kept by Farnham from 1833 until shortly before his death in 1883. The volume also contains short biographical sketches of some of these old settlers. The necrologies were published in the Buffalo Commercial Advertiser in 1869 and 1878.

Mss. W-38

Eaton, Sylvester. **Record of baptisms, marriages, and deaths.**

Notes kept by Rev. Eaton on baptisms, marriages, and deaths, 1827-1842, mainly in Buffalo, but also in Paterson, N.J. and Poughkeepsie, N.Y. The volume also serves as an account book, 1823-1843, and includes marriage fees charged by Rev. Eaton. A [Scholar Pass](#) is needed to use this collection.

Mss. W-106

Newman, James M. **[Cholera Record, 1854 June 21-Oct.27.](#)**

An online index. A [Scholar Pass](#) is needed to use the original ledgers.

Microfilm M2013-01

Erie County Medical Examiner's Office. **Bound Death Record Books, 1878-1902.**

Handwritten autopsy reports for deaths that occurred in Erie County, on 6 rolls of microfilm.

[We have links to additional online death and cemetery records here.](#)

Marriages

Ref. F118 .M37 M4 1983

Metzler, Ruth Horton. **The marriage record book of Mr. George W. Taylor, 1875-1896.**

Heavy concentration of Collins & North Collins weddings.

Ref. F127 .E6 B83 2017

Wood, Lynda Zaky. **Marriages performed by Rev. William D. Buck, Western New York Methodist Circuit Preacher: 1849-1893**

Ref. Oversize F127. E6 W47

[Early Erie County Vital Records: Marriages, 1847-1848.](#)

First published by the Western New York Genealogical Society in 1983-1985, based on originals in our collection. Marriages recorded in Alden, Amherst, Aurora, Boston, Clarence, Colden, Eden, Evans, Hamburg, Lancaster, Newstead, and Wales.

Ref. F129 .A46 H67 1935

Hopkins, Timothy A. **[Record of marriages performed by Timothy A. Hopkins, Esq., between 1841 and 1884 in Amherst, New York](#)**

Ref. F129 .B8 A183

Social Register, Buffalo, 1903-1937, 1940-1946, 1948-1972, 1974

Each edition includes a page listing society weddings that year.

Ref. F129 .B8 B65 1974

Records, First Presbyterian Church of Buffalo, New York, 1812-1961.

Included here because this volume is in book form, not microfilm, and has A-Z indexes of grooms, pp. 355-421, and brides, pp. 422-428. Wedding dates from 1829-1834, 1861-1880, and 1921-1961. See also our [Church Records list.](#)

Ref. F129 .B8 R63 2018

Robinson, Edwin P. **Reverend Edwin P. Robinson record of marriages, baptisms, and funerals, 1886-1903**

Ref. F129 .B8 Z4 1999

Zintz, June. **Index of marriages from Buffalo newspapers, 1811-1884.**

A book based on newspaper microfilms in our collection. Has bride & groom names in A-Z order.

Ref. F 129 .B8 Z45 2004

Zintz, June. **Marriages from Buffalo church records 1825-1900.**

Nearly 7000 marriages from Protestant church records in Buffalo. Alphabetized by the name of the groom with an added index of the bride's name & all other surnames found in the marriage records.

Ref. F129 .B853 A26 1984

Jewitt, Alan. **Early Justice of the Peace marriages performed in Buffalo...from 1840-1880.**

3 vols. plus index.

Ref. F129 .C65 S6 2018

Smith, Humphrey. **Record of marriages, Justice of Peace Humphrey Smith, 1838-1845.**

Index of record of marriages performed by Smith in the towns of Collins, Concord, and Eden.

Mss. W-38

Eaton, Sylvester. **Record of baptisms, marriages, and deaths.**

Notes kept by Rev. Eaton of baptisms, marriages, and deaths, 1827-1842, mainly in Buffalo, but also in Paterson, N.J. and Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Death listings sometimes include cause of death. A [Scholar Pass](#) is needed to use this collection.

[We have links to additional online marriage records here.](#)

Military Service

[Revolutionary War Veterans in Western NY](#)

An online list of about 150 names transcribed from a small, handwritten card file giving places of burial, plus a checkmark indicating if we have a photocopy of the veteran's pension file.

Williamsville Hospital Records, 1812 [card file]

Organized by regiment, then A-Z by surname, of War of 1812 soldiers who received treatment at the Williamsville Hospital. Includes Connecticut, Kentucky, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Virginia regiments, with a separate section for the men who died there.

Civil War Enlistees Card Index, Erie County [card file]

The cards are in A-Z order by surname, and include age at enlistment; place of enlistment; rank, unit, date and term of service; and muster-out details (rank, date and location). Cards may also note if the soldier was transferred to another unit, wounded, captured or killed-in-action. Names were drawn from the Annual Reports of the Adjutant-General of the State of New York, 1893-1903.

World War II [card file]

List of Buffalo and Erie County wounded and prisoners of war, and those killed and missing in action

Korean War [card file]

Men from Western New York who served and were missing, wounded, prisoners, or perished.

Ref. F127 .E6 M42 1989

Morrow, Leta S. **A list of Revolutionary War soldiers' graves located in Erie County, New York**

Ref. E354 .B54 2011

Bilow, Jack. **A War of 1812 death register.**

K.I.A., M.I.A., P.O.W.'s, wounded & deaths in Vermont, New York & along the Canadian border during the War of 1812. Soldiers from Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia & Washington DC.

Ref. E359.4 .W45 1992

White, Virgil D. **Index to War of 1812 pension files**, 2 vols.

If your ancestor served and survived the war, his name might show up here.

E359.5. N6 P79 2017

Przepiora, David. **Burials of War of 1812 U.S. soldiers.**

Names from the War of 1812 cemetery in Williamsville

E494 .J4 1984

Jewitt, Allen E. **Civil War military discharges & pensions.**

Taken from miscellaneous records books located in Erie County Hall, Buffalo, New York.

Ref. E523.3 .W55 1999

Wilt, Richard. **New York Soldiers in the Civil War**, 2 vols.

An A-Z index of names of all NY soldiers, giving their regiment or unit.

Ref. D570.85 .N5 B8

Sweeney, Daniel J., comp. **[History of Buffalo and Erie County, 1914-1919.](#)**

Comprehensive history of local involvement in World War I, with appendices of those killed and service rolls of men from Buffalo and Erie County.

F127 .E6 K28 2015

Kavanagh, Patrick B. **In Remembrance of.**

A scrapbook of obituaries of every man and woman from Western New York who lost their lives in Vietnam. [Here is a list of names from the scrapbook.](#)

Orphan Home Records

[Here is our guide to the few orphan home records in our collection.](#)

Social Directories

These directories focused on upper-income families and omitted working-class households and immigrant neighborhoods.

Ref. F 129 .B8 A182

Buffalo Address Book and Family Directory, 1883-1916 [also on microfilm]

Listing by street address and cross-referenced alphabetically by surname. Memberships of clubs, societies; list of public school teachers and principals.

Ref. F129 .B8 A183

Social Register, Buffalo, 1903-1937, 1940-1946, 1948-1972, 1974

Notes wife's first and maiden name in parentheses after husband's name, and children's names. Includes lists of marriages and deaths. Alphabetical cross-referencing of women's maiden names to married names.

Ref. F129 .B8 A19

Dau's Official Society Blue Book, 1898, 1900, 1903-1910, 1914, 1916, 1918, 1920, 1922, 1923, 1926, 1928, 1931, 1934, 1937, 1940

Street and alphabetical name indexes. Includes some suburban listings, club memberships, and women's maiden names.

F129 .B8 A192

Buffalo Elite Directory, 1882-1883

Alphabetical list of names, cross-referenced by street address. List of clubs and societies. No other editions published.

Telephone Directories

Buffalo Telephone Directory, 1880-present, except 1926, 1935, and 1968. Most are brittle and in poor condition. Photocopying is not permitted. You may photograph them. Let us help you reach them.

Voter Registration Lists

These aren't exactly directories but can be used like them. Names of registered voters and their addresses are published in book form, in order by ward or town. Most volumes are very brittle. Photocopying is not permitted. You may photograph them.

Ref. F127 .E6 A12

Erie County Registered Voters, 1954-1956

Volumes are arranged by town, then by election district within each town, then by street. To find a name, it doesn't take long to read the entire town.

Ref. F129 .B8 V68

Buffalo Registered Voters, 1897-1956

Volumes are arranged by ward, then by election district within each ward, then by street. To find a name, you need to know the family's address and consult our ward maps to identify the right ward.