New York City Research

Class 3: 19th-Century Research: Castle Garden to Ellis Island

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History of New York City

New York City grew immensely over the course of the 19th century. From a small city at the southern tip of the island of Manhattan, it first expanded northward on the island. What would become "Greater New York City" by the end of the century was initially independent towns and cities within the counties of Kings, Queens, New York, Richmond, and Westchester.

A master plan and street grid were developed in 1811, and the street grid was built over the next sixty years. Parts of the Bronx (then in Westchester County) were annexed to New York City in the 1870s. In 1898, the consolidated New York City was created, made up of five boroughs in four counties. A separate county for the Bronx (Bronx County) was established in 1914. Some parts of "Greater New York City" remained relatively rural throughout the course of the 19th century.

Immigration was a major factor in the expansion and growth of the city. New York had always been a port city and immigration numbers greatly increased throughout the course of the century. While plenty of new immigrants entered through New York City but settled elsewhere, many immigrants made New York their permanent home. There were three immigration stations in New York City: Castle Garden (1855-1890), the Barge Office (1890-1891), and Ellis Island (1892-1954).

Essential Sources

Many of the essential genealogical records for New York City are the same as for elsewhere in the United States. Vital records, religious records, census records and substitutes, city directories, land records, court records, probate records, newspapers, military records, tax records, passenger lists, naturalization records, and cemetery records are all useful sources.

However, there were some changes to key genealogical records during the 19th century. Some record types were implemented for the first time on a large scale, while others grew in terms of how much information was collected and recorded. The 19th century saw:

- Implementation of vital records
- Expansion of newspapers
- Expansion of city directories
- Passenger lists required by customs
- All members of household named in the census

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- Introduction of the state census
- Special federal censuses: mortality schedules, American Indians, agriculture, slave schedules
- Military pensions for veterans without restrictions
- Formation of the I.R.S. (federal taxes)

While New York State did not record vital events (births, marriages, and deaths) until 1881, New York City began recording these in the mid-19th century. Most New York City vital records (including earlier records for places that joined the city in 1898) are now housed at the New York City Municipal Archives. The Archives recently launched a website with online copies of historical vital records. These can be accessed at https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/. Though the website offers an option to search by name, searching by certificate number is recommended. Certificate numbers can be located using an index to vital records. See the resource list below for more information.

Vital Records at the NYC Municipal Archives			
	Births	**Marriages**	**Deaths**
Manhattan	1855, 1857 to 1861, 1863 to 1865, 1866 to 1909	1866 to 1937	1866 to 1867, 1871 to 1875, 1920 to 1948
Brooklyn (Kings)	1866 to 1909	1866 to 1937	1862 to 1948
Queens	1866, 1876, 1883, 1886, 1888 to 1909	1898 to 1937	1881-1892, 1898 to 1948
The Bronx	1872 to 1873, 1876, 1888 to 1891, 1895 to 1909	1898 to 1937	1898 to 1948
Staten Island	1898 to 1909	1898 to 1937	1898 to 1948

Indexes are available on FamilySearch.org and Ancestry.com. For records from Kings, Queens, and Staten Island from 1881-1897, consult New York State vital records indexes. The Municipal Archives also holds several collections that can be used as substitute death records including Bodies in Transit, 1859-1894; Coroner Reports, 1859-1869; and Police Court Coroner Inquisitions, 1818-1898. FamilySearch holds coroner's inquisitions from 1823-1898.

Vital records indexes can also be found on free websites such as https://www.germangenealogygroup.com/ [GGG] and https://www.italiangen.org/ [IG]. These two sites are run by genealogical societies and there is much overlap between the two collections. In addition to indexes to New York City vital records, there are several other databases included on the sites:

- Vital records from "Early NYC Towns" including towns and villages in Kings, Queens, and Richmond counties, 1880s-1890s [GGG, IG]
- Selected Brooklyn and Queens church baptisms, marriages, and funerals [GGG]
- Fresh Pond Crematory, begins 1884 [GGG, IG]
- Deaths at Seaman's Retreat/Marine Hospital on Staten Island, 1831-1874 [GGG]
- Brooklyn Navy Hospital deaths and burials, 1831-1894 [IG]
- NYC Bodies in Transit, 1859-1894 [GGG, IG]
- Some indexes to Long Island (Nassau and Suffolk county) records are also available.

Newspapers and city directories are incredibly useful resources for 19th-century research, especially in a large city like New York. In 1865, there were 54 papers published in New York City alone. In addition to containing news of the day, newspapers often contain articles of genealogical interest: marriage and death announcements, obituaries, real estate and business transactions, notices of estate administration, court case notices, advertisements, and social news. Many digital newspaper archives exist and are included in the resource list below.

City directories also expanded in the 19th century. While Manhattan directories were first published in the late-18th century, those directories tended to be quite small. The 19th-century directories were more comprehensive. These are primarily useful for locating the address of an individual or business, but many also contain information about local institutions and the city government, maps, and advertisements.

Given that such a large portion of New York City's population was foreign-born in the 19th century, passenger lists and naturalization records are also essential sources for genealogical research. Passenger lists were first required by U.S. Customs in 1820 after the Steerage Act was passed in 1819. For most of the 19th century, information recorded on passenger lists (also called passenger manifests) was relatively minimal: name, age, sex, occupation, and country of residence. Towards the end of the 19th century, more information was collected.

Similarly, naturalization records are an important resource but recorded only scanty biographical details for most of the 19th century. Made up of a declaration of intention, petition, and oath of allegiance, these records typically offer the name, age, occupation, place of residence, and country of birth for the applicant. A witness or sponsor would also be named, along with his or her occupation and place of residence. Later naturalization records (20th century) contain more specific details such as a birth date, town or county of foreign birth, and date of arrival in the United States.

In the 19th century, naturalizations could take place at a variety of different courts. The collection *U.S., Naturalization Record Indexes, 1791-1992* contains index cards naming the new citizen and the court at

which the naturalization took place. Some complete naturalization packets are available on Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org.

Unique Record Sets

In addition to the essential genealogical sources, there are several unique record sets that can be used for 19th-century New York City research.

New York State conducted state censuses beginning in 1825 but first recorded the names of all members of the household in 1855. The 1855 Census exists for New York City, while several of the later state censuses are no longer extant. In addition to naming all members of the household, the census asked about age, sex, relation to the head of the household, place of birth, years residing in the present location, occupation, and citizenship status. The 1855 Census is available on FamilySearch.org and Ancestry.com.

Another unique census is the 1890 Police Census. After the 1890 Federal Census was completed, New York City (Manhattan) officials felt it had not been carried out properly and wanted to conduct an additional enumeration of the population. The New York City police force was sent out to complete a new census. This is an incredibly valuable resource as the 1890 Federal Census is no longer extant. Unfortunately, it is not widely available. Transcriptions are available on FamilySearch.org and images can be accessed at Family History Centers. See the resource list below for more information on this census. The locations of Family History Centers are listed at https://www.familysearch.org/en/centers/about.

Large cities tend to have more types of records available, and 19th-century New York City is no exception. In addition to standard genealogical sources (vital, religious, census, tax, land, probate records, etc.), many institutions maintained records that can be used by genealogists today. Examples of this include the Emigrant Savings Bank, the city almshouse, and various orphanages and children's aid societies. Some records, particularly those relating to children, have restricted access.

Resources: History of New York City

Growth & Development of New York City

Throughout the course of the 19th century, New York City grew from a small city at the southern tip of Manhattan to a massive city that encompassed the five boroughs (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, Staten Island).

Bklyn-Genealogy-Info, "Enumerations - Wards," http://bklyn-genealogy-info.stevemorse.org/Ward/index.html

 "Forgotten villages and neighborhoods of Manhattan," *Museum of the City of New York*, https://blog.mcny.org/2014/02/04/forgotten-villages-and-neighborhoods-of-manhattan/

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The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of Manhattan 1811-Now," *Museum of the City of New York,* https://thegreatestgrid.mcny.org/greatest-grid/

NYC Streets: A Guide to Former Street Names in Manhattan, http://www.oldstreets.com/

New York City Maps

Many online map collections such as OldMapsOnline.org and DavidRumsey.com contain New York City maps, in addition to the institutions listed below. Maps can be helpful in visualizing the growth and development of New York City and can also be used to locate specific neighborhoods or street addresses.

Eric Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City: A Visual Celebration of Nearly 400 Years of New York City's History,* (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1994).

Map Collections, *Brooklyn Historical Society/Brooklyn Public Library,* https://mapcollections.brooklynhistory.org/

Maps, *Queens Public Library,* https://queenslibrary.org/research/local-history/maps-atlases

Maps of New York City and the State, *New York Public Library,* https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/maps-of-new-york-city-and-state#/?tab=navigation

Immigration & Immigrants in New York City

Alicia Ault, "Did Ellis Island Officials Really Change the Names of Immigrants?" *Smithsonian Magazine,* https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/ask-smithsonian-did-ellis-island-officials-really-change-names-immigrants-180961544/

Campbell J. Gibson & Emily Lennon, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1850-1990," https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/1999/demo/POP-twps0029.html

Frederick Wertz, "Helpful Facts about Immigration to New York," https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/blog/helpful-facts-about-immigration-new-york

Gjenvick-Gjønvik Archives, "Immigration," https://www.ggarchives.com/Immigration/index.html

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York,* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890). Available online at https://archive.org/details/howotherhalflive00riis_1/

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Richard Haberstroh, "Kleindeutschland: Little Germany in the Lower East Side," https://lespi-nyc.org/kleindeutschland-little-germany-in-the-lower-east-side/

Tenement Museum, https://www.tenement.org/

Resources: Genealogical Records

General Research Guides

Aaron Goodwin, *New York City Municipal Archives: An Authorized Guide for Family Historians,* (New York, NY: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2016).

Carolee R. Inskeep, *The graveyard shift: a family historian's guide to New York City cemeteries*, (Orem, Utah: Ancestry, 2000).

Joseph Buggy, *Finding Your Irish Ancestors in New York City,* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2014).

Laura Murphy DeGrazia, *Research in New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County,* (Arlington, VA: National Genealogical Society, 2013).

Naomi Joshi, ed., *New York Research Guide and Gazetteer,* (New York: New York Genealogical & Biographical Society, 2017).

Rosalie Fellows Bailey, *Guide to genealogical and biographical sources for New York City (Manhattan), 1783-1898*, (Baltimore, MD: Clearfield, 1998).

Vital Records

Frederick Wertz, "New York Vital Records Timeline: Key Dates That Impact Your Research*," New York Genealogical & Biographical Society,* https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/blog/new-york-vital-records-history

"Genealogy," *New York City Municipal Archives*, https://www.nyc.gov/site/records/historical-records/genealogy.page

Historical Vital Records, *New York City Municipal Archives*, https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/ [images and instructions]

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New York City Newspapers

In addition to subscription-based national newspaper archive websites such as Newspapers.com, GenealogyBank.com, NewspaperArchive.com and American's Historical Newspapers, there are several free websites that have strong New York City newspaper collections.

Brooklyn Newsstand, *Brooklyn Public Library,* https://bklyn.newspapers.com/ [database with images]

Chronicling America, *Library of Congress,* https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/ [database with images]

FultonSearch, *Old Fulton NY Post Cards,* https://fultonsearch.org/ [database with images, updated search for FultonHistory.com newspaper archive]

NYS Historic Newspapers, https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/ [database with images]

"Online Historical New York Newspapers," *New York Genealogical & Biographical Society,* https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/subject-guide/online-historical-new-york-newspapers

City Directories

Brooklyn City Directories, *Archive.org,* https://archive.org/details/brooklynpubliclibrary?&sort=date [images]

"Getting Started at The New York Public Library: City directories," *New York Public Library,* https://libguides.nypl.org/genealogy/gettingstarted/citydirectories

"Guide to the Brooklyn City and Telephone Directories," *Brooklyn Public Library*, https://www.bklynlibrary.org/cbh/finding-aid/guide-brooklyn-city-and

New York City Directories, 1786-1933/4, *New York Public Library,* https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/new-york-city-directories#/?tab=about [images]

Philip Sutton, "Direct Me NYC 1786: A History of City Directories in the United States and New York City," *New York Public Library,* https://www.nypl.org/blog/2012/06/08/direct-me-1786-history-city-directories-US-NYC

U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2469/ [database with images]

Passenger Lists & Naturalization Records

"Naturalization Records at the National Archives at New York City," *National Archives and Records Administration,* https://www.archives.gov/nyc/finding-aids/naturalization-holdings

New York City Passenger Lists, 1820-1957, *FindMyPast.com*,
https://www.findmypast.com/articles/world-records/full-list-of-united-states-records/immigration-and-travel/new-york-city-passenger-lists-1820-1957 [database with images]

New York Naturalization Index (Soundex), 1792-1906, *FamilySearch.org,*
https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2043782 [database with images]

New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1891, FamilySearch.org,
https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1849782 [database with images]

New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Immigration Lists, 1820-1850, *Ancestry.com,*
https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7485/ [database with images]

New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957, *Ancestry.com,* https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7488/ [database with images]

New York, U.S., State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1794-1943, *Ancestry.com,*
https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2280/ [database with images]

"Passenger Arrival Lists," *National Archives and Records Administration,*
https://www.archives.gov/nyc/finding-aids/passenger-lists.html

Passenger Search, Port of New York, 1820-1957, *The Statue of Liberty—Ellis Island Foundation*,
https://heritage.statueofliberty.org/passenger [database with images]

Anne C. Sibert, *Tracing immigrants through the Port of New York: early national period to 1924*, (New York: New York Genealogical & Biographical Society, 2020).

U.S., Naturalization Record Indexes, 1791-1992 (Indexed in World Archives Project), *Ancestry.com*,
https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1629/ [database with images]

1855 State Census & 1890 Police Census

Andy McCarthy, "1890 New York City Police Census: A Research Guide," *New York Public Library,*
https://libguides.nypl.org/nycpolicecensus/researchguide

Frederick Wertz, "A new look at the demographics of a 19th century Lower East Side neighborhood," *New York Genealogical & Biographical Society*, https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/blog/new-look-demographics-19th-century-lower-east-side-neighborhood

New York State Census, 1855, *FamilySearch.org*, https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1937366 [database with images]

"New York, State Census, 1855 – FamilySearch Historical Records," *FamilySearch Wiki,*
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/New_York,_State_Census,_1855_-
_FamilySearch_Historical_Records

"New York State Census Records Online," *New York Genealogical & Biographical Society,*
https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/subject-guide/new-york-state-census-records-online

New York, U.S., State Census, 1855, *Ancestry.com,*
https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7181/ [database with images]

Police Census, 1890, *FamilySearch.org,* https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/203070
[database, no images]

Institutional Records

American Female Guardian Society Records, 1849-1917, *FamilySearch.org,*
https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1952885 [images]

Association for the Benefit of Colored Orphans records, 1836-1972 (bulk 1850-1936), *New-York Historical Society,* https://digitalcollections.nyhistory.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A160258 [images]

Carolee R. Inskeep, *The Children's Aid Society of New York: an index to the federal, state, and local census records of its lodging houses, 1855-1925*, (Baltimore, MD: Clearfield Co., 2005).

Carolee R. Inskeep, *The New York Foundling Hospital: an index to its federal, state, and local census records (1870-1925)*, (Baltimore, MD: Clearfield Co., 1995).

Guide to the Records of the Children's Aid Society, 1836-2006, *New-York Historical Society,*
http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/nyhs/childrensaidsociety/dscref11.html

Guide to the Records of the New York Foundling Hospital, 1869-2009, *New-York Historical Society,*
http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/nyhs/foundling/

New York City Almshouse Ledger Collection, *New York City Municipal Archives,*
https://nycma.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/NYCMA~2~2

New York City Almshouse Ledger Collection Guide, *New York City Municipal Archives,* https://a860-collectionguides.nyc.gov/repositories/2/resources/24

New York, New York, U.S., Almshouse Ledgers, 1758-1952, *Ancestry.com,*
https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/62048/ [database, no images]

New York Orphan Records, *Olive Tree Genealogy*, https://sites.rootsweb.com/~ote/orphans/

New York, U.S., Census of Inmates in Almshouses and Poorhouses, 1830-1920, *Ancestry.com,* https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1083/ [database with images]

New York, U.S., Emigrant Savings Bank Records, 1850-1883, *Ancestry.com,* *https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8760/* [database with images]. Includes records from Hemsptead (Queens County), Kings County, New York City, Queens County, and Richmond County.

New York, U.S., Brooklyn Hebrew Orphan Asylum Records, 1878-1969, Ancestry.com, https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1612/ [database with images]

New York, U.S., Hebrew Orphan Asylum Records, 1860-1934, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1611/ [database with images]

New York, U.S., Orphans Placed in the New York Foundling Hospital and Children's Aid Society, 1855-1925, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61639/ [database with images]

Orphan Finder: New York, https://orphanfinder.com/state-search/new-york/

Records of New York Juvenile Asylums, https://newyorkjuvenileasylum.com/

Rikki Schlott-Gibeaux, "Orphan Trains: A Brief History and Research How-To," *New York Genealogical & Biographical Society,* https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/blog/orphan-trains-brief-history-and-research-how