

New York Vital Record Substitutes

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- Vital Records Prior to 1880
- Church Records
- Newspapers
- Cemeteries
- Family Records
- Private Records
- Organizational Records
- Censuses
- Probate
- Coroner's Reports
- Tax Lists & Directories
- Poor Records
- Military Records
- Other Sources

Civil Registration in New York State

Why is New York considered a genealogical “black hole”? This generality is due in large part to the late compliance of civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths. Thus, when tracing New York ancestors, especially before 1880, we have to be particularly creative in looking for vital information in other sources. Some of these sources include:

- Federal and State Census Records
- City Directories
- Newspapers
- Bible Records
- Church Records
- Pension Records
- Land Records
- Probate Records
- Cemetery Records
- Local Histories

Vital Records in New York

- 1664- "The Minister or Town Clark of every parrish shall well and truly and plainly Record all Births Marriages and Burials that shall happen within his Respective parrish, in a Book to be provided by the Churchwardener for that purpose."
- 1847- National Medical Convention in Philadelphia encourage statewide registration of births, marriages, and deaths via legislation from the individual states. New passed a law (Chapter 152) requiring the registration of vital events.
- 1880- New York created a State Board of Health and established a Vital Records division.
 - Birth, marriages, and deaths reported to town or city clerk (3 days)
 - Clerk created a copy of each vital record and forwarded the original to State.
- 1888- An addendum established penalties for those who failed to report vital events.

There were some cities that started recording vital records prior to 1880:

City	Year
Albany	1870
Brooklyn	1866 (births) 1847 (deaths)
Buffalo	1878
New York	1847 (births) 1801 (deaths)
Rochester	1875
Syracuse	1873
Utica	1873
Yonkers	1875

Access to post-1880 VRs

A post-1880 vital record index is available for births over 75 years, marriages over 70 years, and deaths over 50 years. These indexes are available on fiche at select places in New York State including: New York State Archives, National Archives Northeast Region, and Onondaga County Public Library, and have been recently made available online for free through Reclaim the Records, and on Ancestry.com The index is arranged by year, then by surname. The index provides: name, date of event, place, and certificate number. There are also several published transcriptions available.

Census Records

Federal Census

Mortality Schedules, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880 - Mortality Schedules, persons who died in the previous twelve months. The census day began on 1 June; therefore, individuals included in this schedule died on or before 1 June of the census year. Information includes:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| - Age | Cause of death | Place of birth (1880) |
| - Race | Occupation | Marital status (1880) |
| - Gender | Parents of foreign birth (1870) | Attending physician (1880) |
| - Days ill (1850, 1860) | # of family in sched. (1870) | |

New York State Censuses

YEAR(S)	Information Provided		
1825, 1835	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name of head of family Number of males Number of females Males subject to militia duty (aged 18 to 45) Males, eligible to vote Males, not naturalized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paupers Colored not taxed Colored taxed Colored taxed and eligible to vote (for state and county officers) Married females under 45 Unmarried females (aged 16 to 45) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unmarried females under 16 Marriages in the previous year Births in the previous year Deaths in the previous year Acres of improved land, animals, and machinery Deaf and dumb, idiots, and lunatics
1845	<i>Same as previous census years, plus:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persons born in NY State; New England; any other state; Mexico or South America; Great Britain; France; Germany; Europe (other) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children aged of 5 to 16 Children attending common schools Children attending private or select incorporated schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children attending academies or unincorporated seminaries Children attending colleges and universities
1855, 1875	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dwelling numbered by visitation Building material of dwelling Value Family numbered in order of visitation Name Age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sex Color Relation to head of family Place of birth (NY county, other state, or foreign country) Marital status Years of residence in the city or town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Profession, trade or occupation Native and naturalized voters Not naturalized Colored not taxed Illiterate persons over 21 Owners of land Deaf, dumb, blind, insane or idiotic
1865	<i>Same as previous year, plus:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name of anyone absent in army or navy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent of how many children Number of times married Usual place of employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Servicemen (lists those now or formerly in the U.S. army or navy)
1905	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address Name Relation to head of family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Color, sex, and age Place of birth (U.S. or other) Number of years in the U.S. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen or alien Occupation Inmates of institutions
1915	<i>Same as previous year, plus:</i> Infants under one year		
1925	<i>Same as previous year, plus:</i> If naturalized, when and where		

The state census is a bright spot in New York research. It was taken nearly every ten years from 1825 to 1925, with varying information. The microfilmed censuses you see today are of the county copies; the state copies were destroyed in the 1911 fire.

TIP: Be aware of district boundary changes. Census divisions were created from existing local boundaries (town, military district, ward, or precinct). These divisions, however, were not well defined and may have changed with each census. People may be listed twice and others omitted.

Keep this in mind when someone disappears from a location one year and reappears in the next census.

1855- Schedule IV, Marriages, and Deaths- Does NOT include the names of the persons who married or died in the previous twelve months, but statistical information is included. The census day began on 1 June; therefore, individuals included in this schedule died on or before 1 June 1855.

1865- Table V, Marriages- Lists names of any person who married in the previous twelve months with full name before marriage, age, race, gender, date, and place of marriage, etc. The census day began on 1 June; therefore, individuals included in this schedule died on or before 1 June 1865.

1865- Table VI, Deaths occurring during the year ending 1 June 1865, exempting those in the Military or Naval Service of the United States, and those from Wounds or Sickness acquired in said Service- Lists name, age, race, gender, cause of death, occupation, etc. of civilians who died in the past twelve months.

1865- Table VII, Deaths of Officers, and Enlisted Men since April 1861- These schedules list by name, those who died while serving in the military and includes information such as rank, date of enlistment, age at death, civil status, and citizenship.

1875- Table II- Marriages and Table III- Deaths- List the names of any person who married or died in the previous twelve months. Information such as full name (before marriage), age (at death), race, gender, date and place of marriage/death, etc. was also included. The census day began on 1 June; therefore, individuals included in this schedule died on or before 1 June 1875.

Church Records

Types of church records that may contain vital information:

- Baptisms
- Marriages
- Communion/Eucharist
- Reconciliation
- Holy Orders
- Confirmation
- Anointing of the Sick
- Burial Records
- Circumcision Records (Bris)

Because most interpreted early vital record laws as the responsibility of the church, records prior to 1880 may be located on the church level. Use the Guide to Vital Statistics Records of Churches in New York State or other inventories to identify possible churches where your ancestors may have been baptized, married, or buried (along with other religious events).

Some NY religious denominations were:

- Baptists
- Catholic
- Congregational

- Eastern Rite Catholic and Eastern Orthodox
- Episcopalian
- Jewish
- Lutheran
- Methodist
- Mormon (LDS)
- Presbyterian
- Quaker (Society of Friends)
- Reformer (Dutch, German, and French or Huguenot)

Cemetery Records

Cemetery records offer genealogists an important alternative to vital records. Where religious or civil registrations were not recorded or have been destroyed, cemetery records may be the only remaining authority. A cemetery record may hold the key to an elusive birth or death date or prove the existence of a previously unknown maiden name, spouse or child.

While transcriptions or compiled databases are popular resources, be sure to contact the cemetery association or management directly, as they may have a more detailed record including:

- Plot number or map of the cemetery
- Date of Purchase
- Name of Purchaser
- Names of person buried in the plot

Pension Records

BIRTH YEARS	BATTLE YEARS	WAR	BIRTH YEARS	BATTLE YEARS	WAR
1726-1767	1775-1783	REV WAR	1849-1885	1899-1902	PHILIPPINE
1762-1799	1812-1815	WAR 1812	1872-1900	1917-1918	WWI
1796-1831	1846-1848	MEX WAR	1877-1925	1941-1945	WWII
1811-1848	1861-1865	CIVIL WAR	1900-1936	1950-1953	KOREA
1848-1881	1898	SPANISH/AMERICAN	1914-1955	1964-1972	VIETNAM

Types of Pensions

- Invalid Pension
- Widow Pension
- Mother or Father's Pension
- Remarried Widow Pension
- Combination Pension
- Soldier Pension files

Typical Pension file papers

- Declaration for pension and application
- Certificate of disability
- Surgeon's certificate with disability description (form and sketch)
- Questionnaires
- Affidavits (for and against the pensioner)
- Correspondence
- Bills and receipts

Mug Books

Who was included?

- White Males (some females-spinsters/widowers)
- Farmers, Small Businessmen, Professionals (such as Lawyers and Doctors), teachers, and religious officials.
- Living persons (some in memoriam)

What information was included?

- Place and Date of Birth
- Names of Parents, Siblings, and Children (sometimes grandchildren)
- Ancestry
- Political Affiliation
- Occupation and Place of Residence
- Migration History
- Military Service
- Marriage Information
- Fraternal Organizations

General Works

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