

New York City Vital Records

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explore what vital records exist (1800–1950)
2. Learn to use indexes and other methods to find records
3. Discover how to access records

WHAT NEW YORK CITY VITAL RECORDS EXIST?

Defining Vital Records

The vital records we will cover are those governmental records for the vital events of peoples' lives, their birth, marriage, and death.

Two Authorities

Birth, marriage, and death records in New York are maintained by two distinctive jurisdictions: New York State and New York City. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCHD) has jurisdiction over vital records within New York City. The New York State Department of Health has the authority for vital records for all areas outside of New York City.

When were Vital Records First Recorded?

Record Type	First Recorded	Bulk Begin	Notes
Death	1795	1810s burial registers begin 1866 in certificate form	Early records in registers with less information.
Marriage	1829 (very few this early)	1870s	First records from the NYCHD
Birth	1847	1866 in certificate form	1847 records for New York City and some towns in Kings, Queens, and Richmond counties.

Extensive tables for all of what is the modern New York City are found in Goodwin's *New York City Municipal Archives: A Guide for Family Historians (Enhanced Edition)* (see NYG&B website to purchase).

Note: compliance was not always good, therefore many events occurred that were not recorded in official records.

USING INDEXES TO FIND VITAL RECORDS

Why Use Indexes?

Indexes provide the most efficient access to locating vital records of interest. Using them can narrow the search on a website for those you can find yourself, and they can narrow the range an agency must search if you need an agency to find the record for you.

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Which Indexes to Use?

This question depends on the type of record and the years being searched. Indexes by different organizations are also needed as no single index for New York City vital records is complete.

Birth 1847–1909

For birth records 1847 to 1909, first use FamilySearch's New York, New York City Births, 1846–1909, <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2240282>. This index created from microfilm of the ledgers and certificates includes records earlier than some other indexes.

If a record is not found in this index, then proceed to the German Genealogy Group (GGG) index or Ancestry's.

The GGG index, germangenealogygroup.com/records-search/NYCSearchDatabases.php, includes mostly 1880 to 1909, with earlier records being added as they are indexed. Originally created from the 3" x 5" index cards, not from images of the certificates.

The Ancestry index, New York, New York, U.S., Index to Birth Certificates, 1866–1909, <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61779>, was created from the digitized certificates, therefore indexed separately from the two indexes discussed above.

** Early birth, death, and marriage registers may be found in this Ancestry database:

MyHeritage indexed the records as well as loading a copy of all certificates to their site. Its index was created from the digitized certificates and has some variations. <https://www.myheritage.com/research/collection-20810/new-york-city-births-1866-1909?s=343567081>

In some cases of elusive birth records, all indexes should be searched since all were created using different versions of the records.

Births 1910–1965

For births after 1909, indexes are available on Ancestry, however, some certificate numbers are not legible. See New York, New York, U.S., Birth Index, 1910–1965, <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61457>.

For indexes 1911 to 1934, the NYG&B provides legible images of the index pages up to 1934, the last year available from the NYG&B. See New York City Birth Index, <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/online-records/collection/new-york-city-birth-index>.

Death 1795–1949

FamilySearch has indexed back to the earliest records in New York, New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795–1949, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2240477>. Like the birth index previously discussed, this index was created from the microfilm of ledgers and certificates. Occasionally some certificate numbers are incorrect, therefore check additional indexes if needed.

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The NYG&B Record has indexed some very early death records (*The NYG&B Record*, vol. 81, no. 3–4 (July–October 1950): 146–155, 203–207.) <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/online-records/nygb-record/566-407/20>

The German Genealogy Group's database is nearly complete, from 1868 to 1948 and therefore should be checked after using FamilySearch, <https://www.germangenealogygroup.com/records-search/NYCSearchDatabases.php>.

Ancestry's index contains many but not all records in New York, New York, U.S., Index to Death Certificates, 1862–1948, <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61778>. This index also has some gaps, 1868–1870 and 1876–1948. Use of Ancestry's New York, New York, U.S., Extracted Death Index, 1862–1948 is not recommended as the GGG's database is more up to date.

MyHeritage indexed the deaths as well as loading a copy of certificates to their site. Its index was created from the digitized certificates and has some variations. It includes Brooklyn deaths from 1862 to 1865, despite the collection title. <https://www.myheritage.com/research/collection-20808/new-york-city-deaths-1866-1948?s=343567081>

The New York City Municipal Archives provide a digitized print index for 1949: <https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/1949-death-index>

Death 1949–1965

Ancestry provides an index from <http://www.vitalsearch-worldwide.com>, for 1949 to 1965.

Marriage Certificates 1866–1937

New York City Health Department marriage certificates may be found in multiple indexes with slightly different end dates. FamilySearch's may be found in New York, New York City Marriage Records, 1829–1938, <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2143225>.

The GGG database is split into a Groom Index and a Bride index, with slightly fewer bride's names. Use <https://www.germangenealogygroup.com/records-search/NYCSearchDatabases.php> for both brides and grooms.

MyHeritage has an index with certificate images: <https://www.myheritage.com/research/collection-20807/new-york-city-marriages-1866-1949?s=343567081>

Early Kings and Richmond County Marriages, 1880s–1890s

The GGG also created a marriage index for Kings and Richmond counties for various towns (pre-consolidation into New York City) in Early Kings and Richmond County, New York Marriage Database, https://www.germangenealogygroup.com/records-search/marriages_early_town.php. See the page for the years of coverage for each town.

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Marriage Licenses 1908–1949, 1950–2018

Indexes for the New York City Clerk’s marriage licenses can be found in a searchable database (\$) or by images online. The searchable database on Ancestry in New York, New York, U.S., Marriage License Indexes, 1907–2018 is the most comprehensive, <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61406>.

Images of the marriage license index obtained by Reclaim the Records with 1908 to 2018 on Internet Archive page NYC Marriage Index: Reclaim The Records, <https://archive.org/details/nycmarriageindex>. And licenses from 1950 to 2018 are also on <https://www.nycmarriageindex.com>.

HOW TO ACCESS NEW YORK CITY VITAL RECORDS

Three main agencies hold vital records for New York City:

- New York City Municipal Archives (MUNI)
- New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDH)
- New York City Clerk—Marriage Bureau

Access for each agency varies as discussed below.

Accessing Records Held by the New York City Municipal Archives (MUNI)

The publicly available vital records for New York City held by MUNI are largely *available online for those in certificate form*. But there are exceptions for earlier records and for those not yet digitized.

Online records are access on Historical Vital Records, <https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/browse-all>. The Historical Vital Records site notes which certificates are not yet digitized and are updated quarterly.

Searching by certificate number is recommended—see indexes above. The search by name must be exact to how the site is indexed. When a certificate is found, it may be downloaded and the URL copied for a citation and/or sharing.

Summary of New York City Vital Records Held at MUNI by Borough*				
Borough	Birth	Marriage	Death	Notes on Early Records
The Bronx	1847– 1909	1847– 1949	1847– 1949	Earliest dates do not apply to all pre-consolidation municipalities. For western annexations, 1874–1897, and eastern annexations, 1895–1897, see “Manhattan.”
Brooklyn	1847– 1909	1847– 1949	1847– 1949	Earliest dates do not apply to all pre-consolidation municipalities.
Manhattan	1847– 1909	1829– 1949	1795 1802– 1949	Earliest records are sparse except for deaths, which are continuous beginning in 1812. See also notes on early records of the Bronx in this table, above.
Queens	1847– 1909	1847– 1949	1847– 1949	Earliest dates do not apply to all pre-consolidation municipalities.

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Staten Island	1847–1909	1847–1949	1847–1949	Earliest dates do not apply to all pre-consolidation municipalities.
For significantly greater detail by town and village pre-consolidation, see Aaron Goodwin's <i>New York City Municipal Archives: A Guide for Family Historians (Enhanced Edition)</i> .				
* extracted from the <i>New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer</i> (NYG&B, 2017)				

If a record is found in an index but not located on the Historical Vital Records site, a search from MUNI may be requested for a fee, and if found a copy sent to the requestor.

If a record is not found in an index, check all available indexes. If it is still not found, although the event (likely) happened, it may not have been recorded in the governmental records.

Accessing Records Held by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDH)

Records for birth and death held by the NYCHD may be requested on the department's website by those eligible.

Birth 1910–present

All birth records, if the person is deceased (proof required), individuals with one of the following relationships (proof required) to the subject of the certificate can obtain copies of birth records:

- Spouse/domestic partner
- Parent
- Child
- Sibling
- Niece/nephew
- Aunt/uncle
- Grandchild/great-grandchild
- Grandniece/grandnephew

See the NYCDH website for the process, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/services/birth-death-records-birth>, specifically the section "Ordering a Deceased Person's Birth Certificate."

Death 1950–present

Death certificates are available to individuals with one of the following relationships (proof required) to the subject of the certificate can obtain copies of death records:

- Spouse/domestic partner
- Parent
- Child
- Sibling
- Grandparent
- Grandchild, great-grandchild, or great-great-grandchild

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- Nephew/niece
- Aunt/uncle
- Grandnephew/grandniece

Accessing Records Held by the New York City Clerk—Marriage Bureau

The City Clerk’s Marriage Bureau holds records 1950 to the present. Records 50 years or older may be requested using the mail-in application. Their website should be checked for updated information, <https://www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/content/marriage-records>, particularly the section “ Strict rules for obtaining records less than 50-years old are specified on the same website.

Another Place to Obtain NYC Vital Records

FamilySearch microfilmed vital records from the New York City Municipal Archives and has digitized that microfilm. The digitized images are available at the FamilySearch Library (Salt Lake City) and at FamilySearch Centers across the United States. To locate a FamilySearch center, use <https://www.familysearch.org/centers/locations>.