

## **Preserving Your New York Story: Exploring Greek Ancestry!**

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## Step #1

Do **not** start looking for Greek records (Step 2), unless you know:

- 1) the **original surname** of your Greek family, and
- 2) the **exact place** in Greece that your family came from!

1) Greek immigrants used to change their names in order to integrate more easily into the hosting society. They would shorten their names or alter them in other ways. Therefore, you need to be careful.

### Examples

“Pappas” can stand for dozens of different Greek surnames: Papachristou, Papadimitriou, Papadopoulos, Papageorgiou. Accordingly, “Poulos”: Angelopoulos, Konstantopoulos, Pavlopoulos, etc.

Zimmar < Zymaras

Condos < K’ontos (Κόντος) or Kont’os (Κοντός)

2) When asked where they came from, Greek immigrants would usually not answer accurately, but use a reference that would make more sense to their descendant. “I am from Sparta” usually meant “I am from a village close to Sparta.”

## Step #2

Search for Greek records online

Availability depends on location

The most important types of Greek records that are currently available and searchable online are:

- Voter Lists (1840s-1930s)

A voter list is a register of men eligible to vote in Greek elections. The information contained in a voter list differs depending on when it was created. Lists from the 1840s-1850s include the voter's given name, surname, age, occupation, nativity status, property ownership, father's initial. Lists of the 1860s-1870s include the voter's given name, surname, age, occupation and father's name. Lists from the 1880s to the 1930s include the voter's given name, surname, age, occupation, residence, and father's name.

- Male Registers (1810s-1910s)

A male register is a list of the men born in a particular municipality and is created for military purposes. It typically includes the person's given name, surname, YOB, POB and father's name.

- Business Directories (1900s-1940s)

Business directory is a list of businesses and professionals operating in a particular area. It typically includes the given name (initial) and surname of the professional/business owner, the type of business/profession, and the address.

- Vital Records: Church & Civil

In Greece, the civil authorities did not keep vital records systematically until 1924. Many areas would not keep records at all, and most would not keep records carefully. That gap was filled by record-keeping of the church. In particular, the church was interested in keeping track of marriages.

- Civil – Civil vital records of the island of Samos (1855-1932) – Available on [GreekAncestry.net](https://greekancestry.net)
  - Births: given name, surname, date of birth, place of birth; father's name, age & residence, mother's name, maiden name & age, names of grandfathers'; godparent; priest
  - Marriages: given name, surname, age, residence, father's name of each spouse; date & place of marriage, officiating priest
  - Deaths: given name, surname, age, occupation, place of birth; parents' names; date and place of death, priest
- Church – Marriage Records of the Metropolis of Monemvasia & Sparta (1835-1935) – Available on [MyHeritage.com](https://myheritage.com)
  - Index typically includes: given name, surname, father's name of each spouse; 1st/2nd/3rd marriage; date & place of marriage, officiating priest; bestman & guarantor
  - License typically includes: given name, surname, age, father's name, other relatives of each spouse; date & place of marriage, officiating priest; bestman & guarantor

### Step #3

#### Take a DNA test!

Before you take a DNA test, you should know why you need it and what to do with the results.

- Ethnicity Estimates

Ethnicity estimates are estimates. In fact, the ethnicity estimate you get depends on how many people of the same ethnicity have been tested with the same company you used, and how that company analyzes the data and creates the ethnicity groups. The ethnicity estimates of most Greeks will show origins from Greece, Italy, Albania, Bulgaria and Turkey. Unless you get a surprisingly big percentage of a non-Greek ethnicity, it is maybe advisable not to overthink about your ethnicity estimate results.

- DNA Matches

Since DNA matches are accurate (especially those that are over 3%), you have only one mystery to solve: not whether you are related with your match, but only how. The challenge that is posed for the Greek genealogist is to use archival material to trace the ancestors you share with your DNA matches. While more and more records become available, we still do not have enough to archivally determine common ancestors beyond 4 generations before us. Female ancestors are particularly hard to trace, since most records available concern men.

### Step #4

#### Education & Networking

Genealogy is not about the names and the dates, it's about your family history. Learn about the sources available, experiment with research tools and options, read history, try to learn some words, look at maps, find old photos from your area.

Greek Ancestry leads educational initiatives around Greek genealogy and family history. On [GreekAncestry.net](https://greekancestry.net) you can find dozens of articles and webinars, for free, or you can book a free consultation to get your questions answered.

In your journey, you will also need companions. You will find them on the [Hellenic Genealogy Geek Facebook group](https://www.facebook.com/HellenicGenealogyGeek), created by the late Georgia Stryker Keilman. Having dozens of thousands of members, and growing rapidly, this group is an active and very helpful community. On the [Hellenic Genealogy Geek website](https://greekancestry.net/), you can also find a wealth of resources that will help you in your research.