

Searching the NYG&B's Online Collections

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn how to locate the Online Collections Catalog and become familiar with the various fields by which collections can be filtered in order to narrow results.
2. Identify supporting materials, such as webinars and knowledge articles, to help deepen your knowledge of a specific collection and how it can be used.
3. Gain an understanding of the different types of search results and how to research collections that are not yet indexed.

THE NYG&B ONLINE COLLECTIONS CATALOG

Locating the Catalog

The NYG&B's [Online Collections Catalog](#) can most easily be located from the tab at the top left-hand side under "Online Records", which is viewable from any page of the website. When hovering over "Online Records", the button for "Collections Catalog" appears as the second item in the drop-down menu, under "Search All Records".

Why Not "Search All Records"?

An important note regarding the NYG&B's online collections is that not all of the records are searchable. This is because the NYG&B endeavors to digitize at-risk records, most of which are handwritten and must be manually indexed to become searchable. Many of the records are available to view, but not yet search, and those will not generate any results when searched from a "Search All Records" box. Researchers not familiar with the NYG&B's collections who overlook the catalog and go straight for "Search All Records" may never become aware of the wealth of information available from these digitized materials that do not yield search results. It is helpful to explore the catalog first to get a sense of the scope of the NYG&B's collections prior to searching.

Filters and Search Options

From the Online Collections Catalog page, researchers may use several filtering options to narrow search results. Known titles can be typed into a "Search by Title" box. Additionally, each collection is tagged by category, location, type, and creator, and can therefore be filtered by any of these criteria.

Examples of Category: Census, Military, Religious Records, Vital Records

Examples of Location: Albany County, New York County, Sullivan County, Wyoming County

Example of Type: Image Browse, Indexed, OCR (Optical Character Recognition), Text & Images

Example of Creator: Arthur C.M. Kelly, Royden Woodward Vosburgh

Additional Search Tools

The following are suggested links to aid in your search:

Digital Collections Map, <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/nygbs-digital-collections-map>

Titles and Volumes Directory, <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/collections-titles-volumes>

Collection Close-Ups, <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/collection-close-ups>

What's New, <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/online-records/whats-new>

USING SUPPORTING MATERIALS

NEW YORK GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

NEW YORK FAMILY HISTORY SCHOOL

©2025, New York Genealogical and Biographical Society

Searching the NYG&B's Online Collections

Webinars

We offer many recorded webinars that can assist in searching and using our collections. Our Webinar Library (<https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/webinars>) includes sessions on a range of record topics as well as previously recorded *Collection Close-Ups*, which are webinars that specifically highlight an NYG&B collection, what you can find in it, and how to search it. The webinar library can be located on our website in the top navigation bar as the second item under “News & Resources”. The *Collection Close-Ups* (<https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/collection-close-ups>) also have their own recordings archive, located on our website in the top navigation bar as the fourth item under the “Online Records” tab.

Articles and Guides

In addition to webinars, our website holds written materials that can support your research. The “Articles & Guides” section (<https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/blog>) can be found in the top navigation bar as the first item under “News & Resources”. We offer essential reading guides, a knowledge article index for easy access, and a blog archive. You can search these different resources for to locate supporting documents that aid in locating or using a collection.

Programming

Our many program offerings, including our *Collection Close-Up* series, include programs that may be geared toward searching the NYG&B's online collections. Check our Events Schedule listing (<https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/events>) to register for these and other upcoming programs, which can also be found in the top navigation bar under “Events”.

UNDERSTANDING THE SEARCH BOX AND SEARCH RESULTS

Making Search Box Fields Work for You

Most searchable collections are searched by first and last name, as well as keyword. Any data can be entered into the keywords field. aside from the “First Name” and “Last Name” sections.

Full-Text Search Results

These search results are generated from materials that fall under the “OCR” category. OCR, or optical character recognition, means that the materials in the collection are typed and are readable by software. These results will analyze every page of a document and produce results for those that most closely match the data entered in the search. As such, these results, while more extensive, are less contextual. It is imperative that researchers view the full image for these results to better determine if the results are a true match.

Indexed Search Results

Indexed results are generated from materials that have been manually indexed. This means that humans examined documents and provided a transcription of specified metadata that the NYG&B digital team used to create a search for those materials. Indexed results will provide more clarity and context for the results. Because this is indexed metadata and not a full transcription of a full document, researchers are encouraged to view the images and read the full document.

Using Waypoint Links

For materials that have not been indexed and have not had OCR applied, the collection landing pages will offer more extensive waypoint links. These links allow researchers to easily locate different

NEW YORK GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

NEW YORK FAMILY HISTORY SCHOOL

©2025, New York Genealogical and Biographical Society

Searching the NYG&B's Online Collections

sections of a volume or record set, rather than needing to browse through hundreds or thousands of pages.