

Searching New York Records on Ancestry

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GENERAL SEARCH TECHNIQUES

1. Searching by name and hoping the records you want appear
2. Searching within specific collection for the person of interest (research subject)

HOW TO FIND NEW YORK COLLECTIONS

Location Search

Ancestry has gathered the collections that pertain to New York by filtering the location search. To find this page, click the “Search” menu, and then the “All Collections” option. Next scroll down to the map and select New York.

Once the New York page appears (https://www.ancestry.com/search/places/usa/new_york) you will see the collections groups into general record types. Only a limited number shows unless you click the option to expand the list.

Some collections will appear in more than one category. The collections may or may not be a state-wide collection. The collections may also be narrowed by county.

Categories

- New York census & voter lists
- New York birth, marriage & death
- New York military
- New York immigration & emigration
- New York newspapers & periodicals
- New York pictures
- New York directories & member lists
- New York court, land, wills & financial
- New York dictionaries, encyclopedias & reference

Searching the Catalog

Many, but not all, New York collections use “New York” in the title. When a specific collection is known from a citation, a guide, or a program, the easiest way is to search by that title.

To find the catalog, click the “Search” menu, and then the “Card Catalog” option.

SELECTED NEW YORK COLLECTIONS

Search the card catalog for “New York,” sorting the list for record count (largest first). The following types of record collections may be found and more:

- Newspapers (multiple collections)
- Passenger arrivals (immigration)
- Voter records (Manhattan/New York County)
- Marriage licenses
- Censuses (state)
- Naturalizations
- Birth, marriage, and death indexes
- Methodist (incl. New Jersey and Connecticut)
- Emigrant Savings Bank
- Almshouse and some orphanages
- Military (multiple conflicts and peacetime)
- Episcopal (New York and Rochester dioceses)
- Cemetery abstracts/indexes (multiple religions)
- Directories (often single location collections)
- Criminal justice (prison, commutations)

New York Probate Collections

Ancestry holds two distinct probate collections, both of which are name indexed for primary name. The larger collection comprises records microfilmed by FamilySearch from the county surrogate courts (various date ranges per county; no Nassau, Suffolk, or Sullivan).

New York, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1659–1999

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8800>

The smaller collection is from the New York State Archives, comprising several record series, the bulk of which are pre-1829, but some of which go up to 1879.

New York County, New York, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1658–1880 (NYSA)

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60387>

For Sullivan, check the “Index of wills of Sullivan County, New York,” by Audrey Gertude Barber.

Strategy: search the first larger collection and then contact the surrogate court in the county for any additional records not microfilmed (therefore not a part of the online collection).

New York, U.S., State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1794–1943

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2280>

This collection is a compilation of naturalization records from various courts, state and federal. The county-level court may be a part of the overall state court (e. g., the supreme court in each county).

Tip: Checking the Ancestry collection description may or may not reveal the original court in which the event took place. Sometimes other clues may be found in the record.

New York, U.S., Emigrant Savings Bank Records, 1850–1883

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8760>

This is an unique record set from the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank, now known and Emigrant Bank. If your ancestor or research subject had an account, information may or may not survive. The original records are at the New York Public Library. If information is found but you are having trouble making out the information, e.g., townland, check Kevin J Ric's. *Irish Immigrants of the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank* (3 vols. Massapequa, NY: Broadway-Manhattan Co., 2001).

COLLECTIONS WITHOUT NEW YORK IN THE TITLE

Not all collections needed for New York research contain a New York label. Many of these will be national collections, e.g., federal censuses. Some collections are covered here; others may be found by using location or subject in the card catalog.

1940 United States Federal Census

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2442>

Federal collections play an important role in finding New Yorkers.

U.S., Jewish Welfare Board, War Correspondence, 1917–1954

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1865>

This collection contains many New York research subjects.

Example of not every name on the page being indexed

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1865/records/1015596>

U.S., Presbyterian Church Records, 1701–1970

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61048>

This is an example of a national collection. Ancestry's collection description reveals where the original materials were sourced. It also demonstrates that not all records of people in a given collection are indexed.

TIPS

Understanding What the Collection Contains

Collections descriptions can be thin or robust. When first accessing a collection, read the collections description to understand from where the records or index were sourced.

Viewing the catalog to see how many records are in the collection and when the collection was last updated can give you a sense of how often the collection should be re-checked.

Use the browse function to understand if the state, county, and/or locality of interest is included in the collection.

Finally, if your name search was unsuccessful, go back and review the collection using the three tips above. It may be the event happened but was not included in the scope of the collection.

Checking the Indexing Coverage

Sometimes an assumption is made that all records on Ancestry are indexed for every name. This is not so for all collections.

If a collection for a place in a time is a good target for your research subject, review the collection pages individually, noting if they are indexed. Even if some names on the page are indexed, it may be that not all the names were indexed.

Search Technique: Using Wildcards

https://support.ancestry.com/s/article/Searching-with-Wild-Cards?language=en_US

Ancestry's search allows the use of wild cards asterisk * and question mark ?. Using these can assist in finding a person whose record was recorded with a name variant.

Examples:

Henry vs Heinrich, use "H*nr*"

Selig, Telig, Jelig, or ?, use "?elig"

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JOIN:

The New York Genealogical & Biographical Society (NYG&B) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, documenting, and sharing family history and stories from across New York State. Our award-winning publications, expert staff, professional research services, extensive online records and collections; and comprehensive educational programming and resources help our members become New York family history experts. Learn more at:

<https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/content/join>

VOLUNTEER:

Volunteering with the NYG&B—either in person or remotely—is a great way to actively support a community dedicated to researching New York ancestors. And there are so many ways to help, whether virtually wherever you may be, at one of our regional Digitization Centers, or at our bustling New York City headquarters. Volunteers can assist with scanning documents, indexing records, and editing images. We provide both remote and in-person training and guidance.

Please reach visit <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/volunteer> or email us at volunteer@nygbs.org for more information.

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