

New York Repositories: What You Can Find and How to Search

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WHAT WE WILL COVER

1. Overview of main research repositories and collection highlights
2. How research trips empower you to conduct research
3. Resources and publications for repositories and archives

REPOSITORIES

New York's repositories may have collection coverage at the statewide, regional, county, or local level. They may also be topical in nature.

STATEWIDE REPOSITORIES

New York Public Library (NYPL)

New York, New York

The NYPL is located 2 blocks from the NYG&B headquarters in Manhattan, in the heart of midtown. The Schwartzman Building is the main branch and contains multiple research divisions.

Research Divisions

- Milstein Division: US History, Local History, and Genealogy
- Manuscript and Archives
- Dorot Jewish Division
- Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division

While the NYPL has digitized materials, many manuscripts remain accessible only by an on-site visit. Manuscript collections usually have full finding aids available through the archive's portal, <https://archives.nypl.org>. The NYPL holds the majority of NYG&B physical collections. An overview of the 75,000 books and 30,000 manuscripts of the collection may be found here: <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/online-records/collection/nygb-collections-new-york-public-library>. The NYG&B conducts two tours each year that include site visits to the NYPL, among other repositories.

NYG&B Manuscripts

- Locale Files
- Localities Files
- Bible Transcript Files

- Subject Files
- Family Files
 - MSC division
 - Milstein division

Additional Research Divisions

- Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 135th Street
- New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center

New York State Library (NYSL)

Albany, New York

NYSL is the state's law library, established in 1818. For family history, two divisions are of most interest:

- Research Library, 7th floor
- Manuscripts and Special Collections, 11th floor

The genealogy department of the research library encompasses more than one-quarter of the 7th floor, containing open stacks for local history, compiled genealogies, record transcriptions and military unit histories. The DAR transcription books are openly available. Many newspapers are on microfilm or in print. Most typescripts are also on open shelves. The New Netherland Research Center is located on the 7th Floor.

The Manuscript and Special Collections (MSC) division requires contact in advance and annual registration. Besides rare books, private papers and collections form the bulk of the materials. This division hold non-governmental items.

New York State Archives (NYSA)

Albany, New York

NYSA, opened to the public in 1978, holding record series of the state and colonial governments formerly held by the NYSL. Examples of record types held at NYSA are land records (patents, grants, tax, etc.), military papers, canal construction and management material, records pertaining to Loyalists, and much more.

See Jane E. Wilcox's *New York State Archives Guide: For Family Historians, Biographers, and Historical Researchers* (New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2024) for an overview of record types, historical background, and record examples.

New York City Municipal Archives (MUNI or NYCMA)

New York, New York

MUNI holds the city's historic governmental records, including the colonial government's records. Some county and city level court records are among the holdings. MUNI is best known for publicly available records of birth, death, and marriage. Many other collections for family history include building and property records, court and city governance, census, directories, voter registrations, licenses, and photographs.

See the online collection guides: <https://a860-collectionguides.nyc.gov> and Aaron Goodwin's *New York City Municipal Archives: A Guide for Family Historians* (New York: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 2025).

Buffalo and Erie County Public Library (BECPL)

Buffalo, New York

The BECPL focuses on the city of Buffalo and western New York. It holds some vital records (birth, marriage, and death) and the extensive collections of the Western New York Genealogical Society. Digital collections and research guides provide some online access.

Onondaga County Public Library

Syracuse, New York

The library is in Syracuse, New York. It focuses on the central New York area but has materials extending across New York State and into New England. Collections include obituaries, tax assessment rolls, family papers, the census of Almshouses/Poorhouses, and vital records for 1847 to 1849.

Center for Jewish History (CJH)

New York, New York

The CJH serves the holdings from five organizations (American Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Federation, the Leo Baeck Institute, the Yeshiva University Museum, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research). About 100 million archival documents, 500,000 books, and other artifacts and photographs are included. The CJH is the largest Jewish repository outside of Israel.

Center for Brooklyn History (CBH)

Brooklyn, New York

Formerly the Brooklyn Historical Society, the CBH is now a part of the Brooklyn Public Library. The holdings of its Othmer Library cover the full geographic extent of Long Island—Kings, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk counties. Special collections include the Eardeley Genealogy Collection, which contains will abstracts (1787–1835) and research notes compiled by the prodigious genealogist William Applebie Daniel Eardeley.

County Clerks

County clerks are the record keepers for their respective Supreme and County courts. They may also hold original records of censuses, land, naturalizations, and other kinds of records such as voter registration records or military discharge records.

Genealogical and Historical Societies

County and local societies and museums can be tremendous resources for family history and context. Holdings can include vertical, family, or subject files, compiled genealogies, early vital records, oral histories, and card files.

RESEARCH TRIPS AND TOURS

For this session, the trips will be those unguided, self-designed trips. Tours will be those guided events with experts accompanying the participants.

Research Trips

As an individual, investing significant time in planning the trip will pay off. You will need to research repositories, decide which repositories will likely pay dividends, and plan all the logistics.

Research Tours

The organizers provide information about the repositories, orientations, logistics, consultation(s) with experts, and guidance throughout the tour. Individuals should be preparing for the tour using the guidance provided.

On-site Research Empowers

When researching on-site, individuals obtain access to records not online, of which there are many. Researchers can have extended conversations with local experts. The ability to walk the ground that ancestors trod and visit the farm, store, or house of worship is a unique experience.

Making an on-site visit contributes to reasonably exhaustive research, which is one element of the Genealogical Proof Standard.¹

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

New York Researcher

The *New York Researcher* and its online archive is full of materials for you to explore as an NYGB member or in print at major genealogical libraries. Specifically, look for articles about repositories:

- Featured Repository columns
- Featured County columns
- Collections articles

View the New York Researcher archive here: <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/online-records/collection/new-york-researcher>

New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer (NYFHRGG)

This is New York's "textbook for family history." It is the definitive resource for New York State genealogists and family history researchers. More than 100 experts have reviewed and contributed to this work, which includes authoritative guidance on every key topic about New York family history.

The two-volume 869-page guide has a chapter on each major record group and research resources; guidance on researching all major ethnic and religious groups that have lived in New York; gazetteers and research guides for each of New York's 62 counties; and much more. This publication was revised and updated in 2017.

¹ Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, Nashville, TN: Ancestry, 2021.

For more information on NYFHRGG, see this page: <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/new-york-family-history-research-guide-and-gazetteer>

New York State Archives Guide: For Family Historians, Biographers, and Historical Researchers

by Jane E. Wilcox, FGBS

This comprehensive reference book identifies key collections, strategies, and methodologies for accessing the vast holdings of the New York State Archives. This is an essential tool for anyone researching New York's heritage—including its numerous towns and villages. The guide discusses rarely explored collections as well as those more commonly known, explaining the history of the records and methods to access them.

For more information, see: <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/new-york-state-archives-guide>

New York City Municipal Archives: A Guide for Family Historians (enhanced edition)

By Aaron Goodwin

This reference work answers the need for historians, genealogists, students, and others to have a clear, rational description of the New York City Municipal Archives' relevant public records—where they are located, what they contain, and how they can be accessed. Coverage includes the City of New York and its predecessor cities, towns, and villages.

All chapters contain updated access information, including the extensive digitization efforts of MUNI. New material includes information on additional birth, death, and marriage records, voter registrations, and police and fire department records. Extensive attention is given to vital records of births, marriages, and deaths; court records; almshouse records; real estate records; and photographs. Less well-known collections are also covered, including early records of the Dutch and English colonial eras; extensive farm histories that trace deed chains for former Manhattan farms to their earliest days; records of the Civil War Volunteer Soldiers' Family Aid Fund; and voter records.

For more information, see: <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/new-york-city-municipal-archives-guide-family-historians-enhanced-edition>