

NYG&B

NEW YORK
GENEALOGICAL
AND BIOGRAPHICAL
SOCIETY

2023

YEAR IN REVIEW





Momentum is what leaps to mind when I reflect on 2023. After previously laying some instrumental groundwork, our team hit the ground running over the course of last year: creating new relationships while deepening others with our partners; intensifying efforts to digitize greater numbers of records and make them accessible; and promoting significant research and scholarship.

The myriad of programming we offered last year engaged new audiences and expanded the NYG&B's community—providing both a gateway to those just beginning their family history search and more advanced tools for seasoned researchers. And whether your family traces back hundreds of years or are more recent arrivals, our diverse webinars, workshops, and other events meant that anyone could learn more about and better understand and connect with their family history. For example, we held programs on how those with Latino heritage can do genealogy research or finding your Chinese American roots.

Preservation is a cornerstone of our work, and so is ensuring records and knowledge are made more easily accessible. Our partnerships with churches, town historians, lineage organizations, and other organizations have resulted in fascinating new material to our records. We also launched a major statewide initiative to preserve at-risk historical documents and make them more accessible—which is a preservation model we're excited to scale up and replicate. As New York's oldest genealogical organization,

we are the stewards of a multitude of books, other published items, manuscripts, and mixed materials (print and online) about New York's earliest families. They represent a vast treasure trove of exciting family history discoveries to be made. Our Scholar in Residence program, launched in 2023, is opening a world of new avenues for scholarship and promotion of family history research.

We set the bar high and explored new ways to fulfill our mission. And with the dedication and nimbleness of our NYG&B team and the commitment of our wide family history community and other supporters, we could experiment and try different approaches.

Our mission is more relevant than ever before. The stories we preserve (and help others to find) are complex and reflective of the wondrous tapestry that is New York. We have endless opportunities to learn, share, and grow. As you learn more about our reflections and milestones over the course of 2023, we thank you for coming on this journey with us and propelling us forward.



D. Joshua Taylor, *President and CEO*

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

Whether it was ramping up digitizations to grow our online collections, launching key initiatives to preserve at-risk documents, undertaking research to uncover fascinating new materials, or developing innovative programming to engage with so many more people, the NYG&B charged ahead in 2023.

Widening Our Family History Community

New York has continuously been an epicenter and crossroads for both immigration and emigration, so it's no surprise we have members and people from all 50 states and internationally looking to us for help in discovering their New York story. To better connect this extensive, diverse family history community, our rich array of programming in 2023 both successfully engaged new audiences and strengthened ties with longstanding supporters. A generous grant from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs enabled us to cover new topics and partner with diverse speakers. In all, we held nearly 65 timely and

informative programs, many of them free of charge, such as researching women in family history; connecting with the Latino diaspora; finding places of origin for German and Italian ancestors; accessing federal records for Black history; and exploring trends in technology and genealogy.

Our wide-ranging programming lets us reach and engage with so many more people all over—both members and the general public—interested in learning more about genealogy and how New York's history and migration patterns relate to them. By expanding our online-only or hybrid events, we were able to be more inclusive and connect with a broader, more diverse audience, such as those who live outside of the New York City metro area, have mobility issues, or are otherwise unable to attend in person.



A film screening and program discussion by the NYG&B, held at Film Lincoln Center in New York City.



Participants of Research in New York City tour conducting research at the New York Public Library.



Terry Koch-Bostic, consultant for the Research in New York City tour, and a participant reviewing historical documents together.



Scenic view of Germany's Palatine wine region, as part of the NYG&B's 2023 Heritage Tour trip.



NYG&B staff receive the National Genealogical Society's 2023 Genealogical Tourism Award at the NGS conference held in Richmond, VA.

Our online, on-demand Family History School courses, held throughout the year, also meant that participants could learn about specific family history topics at their own pace, like tracing immigrant ancestors to New York or the differences in searching for ancestors in New York City versus the rest of the State. People also had the opportunity to learn online via our Empire State Exploration courses, held live and featuring a special guest expert genealogist, lectures, individual consultation sessions, and group Q&A periods. In 2023, they could choose courses for tracing ancestors in the Hudson Valley, New York City, and Central New York as well as on how to tackle brick walls in their research.

We also kept our finger on the pulse of innovative and informative trends in genealogy that can benefit our community. In September our in-person workshop, "Crafting a Compelling Family Narrative," helped participants hone their family history and genealogy writing skills and learn how to pitch for publication. In October we held a two-day hybrid workshop, "Exploring Trends in Technology and Genealogy," which featured experts who examined recent technological advancements that have been impacting the practice and study of genealogy. The sessions offered new techniques, approaches, and best practices for genealogists undertaking research in a fast-changing technological environment. Both programs offered information for those who had just begun their family history journey or were more seasoned researchers.

Meanwhile, our in-person programs and research trips helped to foster connections between people as together they explored different archives, libraries, and other repositories here in New York and elsewhere. Demand was great for our Research in New York City, Research in Albany, and Research at the Allen County Public Library tours, in which participants spent three days of immersive research with the experts who know New York genealogy the best. Collectively, participants were able to delve into research at the NYG&B, New York Public Library, Center for Brooklyn History, New York City Municipal Archives, FamilySearch Center in New York City, New York State Archives, New York State Library, and the Genealogy Center in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

We also got our passports out for a small group trip to Germany's Palatine region in September as part of our Heritage Tours program, which lets participants delve into the past and connect with the current culture through exclusive outings, behind-

the-scenes access to records and collections, and excursions to renowned museums, landmarks, and other iconic sites. On this trip, we explored the rich history and vibrant traditions of the Palatine region, including visits to the Speyer State Archives, the Mainz State Museum, and other places of historical and cultural significance.

In 2023 we were delighted to receive the National Genealogical Society's Genealogical Tourism Award, which recognizes an organization's efforts to communicate the importance of repositories as go-to destinations to fully advance family history research. This award honors our efforts to connect people to their genealogical and historical heritage and deepen their engagement with the past all across New York State and beyond.

We rounded out the year with our signature New York State Family History Conference in November, which featured both in-person and virtual programming and events, with two days in New York City and one day in Buffalo, New York. Nearly 325 people from all over the United States and internationally participated in the conference. Whether it was mastering the basics of New York land records, exploring ship manifest indexes, researching neighbors for clues to ancestors, or uncovering Jewish roots in the Russian Empire, conference participants had a wealth of expertise and subject matter to explore. Our keynote speaker, award-winning author and journalist A'Leia Bundles, also gave a fascinating talk on writing about the amazing women in her family, the joys and challenges of genealogical research, and the importance of making family history research open and accessible to all.

Also in November, we kicked off NYG&B Week with a slate of interactive programming and digitization opportunities (both in person and online) for members and the general family history community alike. More than 550 individuals participated in events and activities, including a talk on recovering the lost voices of women throughout history; a day for members to digitally preserve their records with our assistance at our Digitization Center; and an informational session on how the NYG&B can help people discover and learn more about their New York story.

We continued to cultivate and expand partnerships with many organizations and experts that allowed us to broaden our programming and make it more accessible to more diverse audiences. This included collaborating with the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society Jean Sampson Scott Greater

New York Chapter; Bronx Historical Society; Fraunces Tavern Museum; Museum of Chinese in America; Museum of Jewish Heritage; New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission; Oneida Public Library; Think! Chinatown; and Ulster Historical Foundation.

Through these combined efforts, more than 7,000 people participated in NYG&B programming over the course of 2023—helping thousands discover and learn more about their own unique New York story.

2023 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS
We are grateful to our partner organizations:

Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society
 Jean Sampson Scott Greater New York Chapter

Bronx Historical Society
 Fraunces Tavern Museum
 Museum of Chinese in America
 Museum of Jewish Heritage

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
 Oneida Public Library
 Think! Chinatown
 Ulster Historical Foundation



Blaine T. Bettinger leading a session at the NYG&B's technology and genealogy workshop in October.



Keynote address delivered virtually by Judy G. Russell at the NYG&B's technology and genealogy workshop in October.



NYG&B President D. Joshua Taylor and award-winning author and journalist A'Leia Bundles, the keynote speaker for the 2023 New York State Family History Conference.

Accelerating Digitization

Our New York City Digitization Center got off to a roaring start in 2023, with our expert digital services team and industry-leading technology that let us rapidly grow our online collections, with thousands of new pages ranging from county histories, immigration records, and birth/marriage/death records from all over New York State and New York City. Along with the support of our dedicated volunteers, our Digitization Center began releasing a new record set about once a week on average, which resulted in a 28% increase in images scanned during the year—four times the number of record releases and eight times the number of searchable record sets as compared with 2022. We also added a new section to our website, “What’s New,” so researchers can quickly jump to newly released collections as well as recent additions to existing collections.

As result, researchers now have access to a wealth of genealogical information that has never before been digitized and is unlikely to have been preserved online elsewhere—including the March 2023 release of an indexed, searchable collection of The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of New York applications from the chapter’s beginnings in 1892 up until 1919.

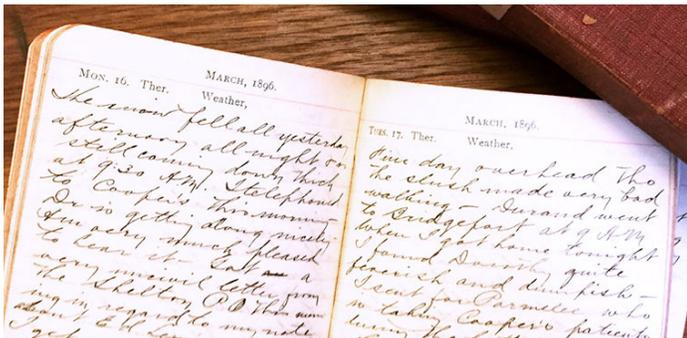
We also launched a comprehensive collection for the *NYG&B Record* that combines our names index and full-text search tools. The collection’s Article and Location Index is now fully up to date, making it simple to search through the archives by topic, location, or volume of every issue of the *NYG&B Record* from 1870–2024, with more than 1.2 million names in the index.

To help people better understand our online collections and how to use them, we also debuted a new webinar series, *Collection Close-Ups*. In this ongoing, free monthly series, the NYG&B’s Digital Services team walks participants through one of our many online collections, explaining what you can find and how you can search. Some of the NYG&B collections we explored in 2023 included colonial immigration records, New York City and New York State birth indexes, Sterling town records, and Union Hill cemetery records.

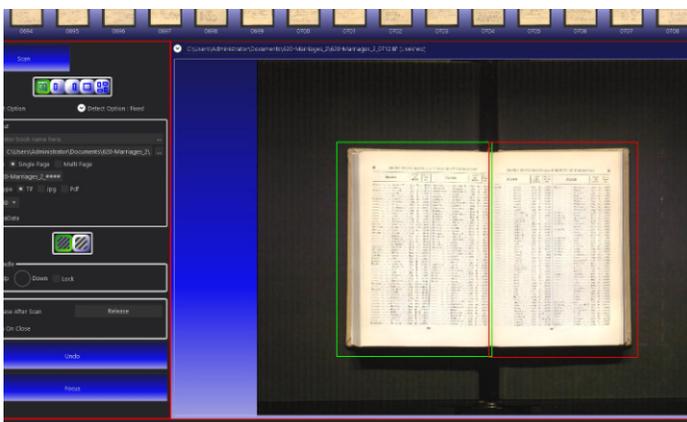
Preserving important and at-risk historical records and improving access for people conducting New York family history research are integral parts of our work. To amplify these efforts, we formally launched the Digitize New York initiative in 2023. Through this



Kalyn Loewer, NYG&B Manager, Digital Collections, at the NYG&B’s Digitization Center in New York City.



Historical documents scanned and preserved as part of the NYG&B’s Digitize New York initiative.



NYG&B’s book-scanning software used as part of efforts to digitize and make accessible online records and collections.

initiative, the NYG&B is partnering with organizations across New York State to digitize at-risk records and make them available online. The William G. Pomeroy Foundation first supported what became Digitize New York through an earlier pilot preservation and outreach project in Central New York. In 2023 we made Digitize New York a statewide initiative—scanning, digitally preserving, and uploading online thousands of materials to an ever-growing collection of New York historical records. Organizations could either submit their records for preservation at our New York City Digitization Center or request a digitization kit that empowered them to preserve and upload records at their own sites—at no cost to participating organizations. Digitize New York’s launch was met with much excitement and enthusiasm, with many organizations reaching out to us to learn more or submit an application to participate.

Advancing Scholarship

In 2023, we marked the 155th year of continuous printing for the *NYG&B Record*, the second-oldest genealogical journal in the United States. Ian Watson, PhD, began his tenure as editor with the January 2023 issue. Highlights of articles published in 2023 include “The Family of Eliza A. (Miller) Cutter in England, New York, and New Jersey,” “The Family of Darius and Margaret (Beaman) Chapin of Washington County, New York,” “A Widow and a Spinster Help Identify the Parentage of Sarah Hicks of New York City,” and “The Children and Grandchildren of Jonathan and Miriam (Strong) Shepard.”

Our quarterly members’ magazine, the *New York Researcher*, continued to offer up engaging and informative articles, updates, and helpful tips and tools for the genealogical community. Readers could delve into a series of articles on using New York State death records and census records; accessing religious records at the Cornell University Library; and navigating local government records. Featured New York counties were Chautauqua, Nassau, Putnam, and Tompkins. Regular columns, “Five Next Steps...,” focused on understanding what to do with new record sets, marriage date information, and death certificates, whereas “In Other Lines” highlighted members from Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia.

In September 2023 Michael Waas, MA, was appointed as the NYG&B’s first Scholar in Residence under a short-term appointment to research the



Issues of the NYG&B Record and the New York Researcher over the course of 2023.



Ian Watson, editor of the NYG&B Record, the NYG&B’s scholarly journal.



Michael Waas, the NYG&B’s first Scholar in Residence, conducting research.



NYG&B volunteer Lynne Hayden-Findlay assisting with an indexing and material assessment project.



A group of NYG&B volunteers on a field trip during Volunteer Appreciation Week.



Staff and interns at the NYG&B's New York City office.

documentation of Jewish families in the NYG&B's materials. From this research, a first-of-its-kind survey of NYG&B resources will be produced for tracing Jewish heritage from colonial times to the present in New York State. Over the course of his appointment, Mr. Waas examined materials at the NYG&B headquarters, the New York Public Library, and online—evaluating them for Jewish scholarship and compiling a detailed list of resources for tracing Jewish families across New York. Mr. Waas' appointment and the project were featured on *News 12* and in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. This project was made possible through a generous grant from Ambassador John L. Loeb, Jr. Additional scholars will be chosen to undertake different aspects or other less-examined elements of our collections under this evolving program.

Expanding a Network of Support

It takes a community to support our family history community—and we are very thankful for and appreciative of the myriad of volunteers, interns, donors, funders, and other supporters whose generosity helped advance our mission and work over the course of 2023.

We were joined by Mitchell Toolan as Coordinator, Office & Volunteer Engagement, who oversaw day-to-day office administration, volunteer management, and customer support at the NYG&B. Mitchell also played a crucial role in connecting NYG&B staff with our members and the wider community with the genealogical and family history resources that they need.

We were also delighted to have welcomed Patrick Smith to the NYG&B Board of Trustees. Patrick is currently the Head of Data & AI Specialists for Telecom, Media, Entertainment, and Gaming at Google Cloud, leading a team of solution engineers in developing custom platforms in the cloud. He aims to bring his skills, including his knowledge of machine-learning tools, to speed up and optimize many of the document-processing efforts the NYG&B is pursuing.

Volunteers were an active component of our success. More than 92 in-person volunteers rolled up their sleeves on our behalf, many of whom volunteered more than once in our Digitization Center or at the reception desk, assisted with mailings, or participated in our volunteer orientation sessions, where they were trained on our

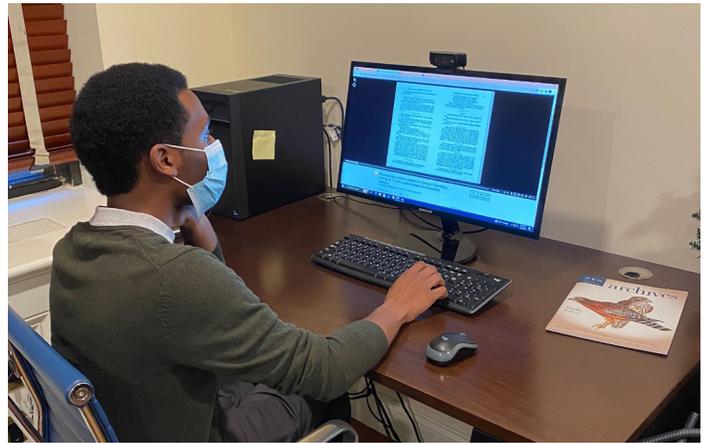
digitization process. They logged more than 1,050 hours in the Digitization Center, scanning documents, indexing materials, and editing images.

During the summer and fall, we were also thrilled to bring on five interns, including our first remote intern in Scotland: Hannah Cuthbertson, Malik Flemming, Shannon Moore, Aveline Plenter, and Matthew Shore. They assisted in the Digitization Center, performed administrative tasks, undertook crucial indexing work, helped organize NYG&B materials, and met with members of the team to learn more about working at a nonprofit historical and genealogical organization.

Donor and funder support made a vital difference in enabling us to digitize more New York records, provide free educational programming, and produce our publications in 2023. Whether through grants, donations, bequests, support for our Annual Fund or other fundraising events, in-kind gifts, or other means, our supporters made a tangible impact on furthering genealogy research and helped advance important issues, like record preservation and access.

We were thrilled to have some illustrious speakers at some of our fundraising events in 2023. In October we hosted a special discussion with Blaine Bettinger, PhD, JD, and Jennifer Mendelsohn on DNA'S role in genealogy. The speakers held a riveting conversation on what is happening in the world of DNA research. They also shared how they first got interested in this field as well as the promise and pitfalls that genetic genealogy holds for unlocking the past. And in November our fall benefit luncheon featured veteran *New York Times* journalist and prolific writer Sam Roberts, who shared highlights of his most recent publication, *The New Yorkers: 31 Remarkable People, 400 Years, and the Untold Biography of the World's Greatest City*. These events helped to raise critical support for our mission and also enlightened those who attended.

We are extremely grateful to all of our supporters, including Ambassador John L. Loeb, Jr., the H.W. Wilson Foundation, the Hawk Rock Foundation, the Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, the Order of Colonial Lords of Manors in America, the Peck Stacpoole Foundation, the Society of Daughters of Holland Dames, and the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, as well as for matches established by NYG&B Board of Trustees Adrienne Auerbach and William C. Hallett (Chairman).



An intern assisting in digitization efforts at the NYG&B's New York City Digitization Center.



Interns review documents with Kalyn Loewer, NYG&B Manager, Digital Collections.



Journalist Sam Roberts speaks at the NYG&B's fall benefit luncheon, held at the Penn Club in New York City.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all of our supporters in 2023. The list below includes donors who supported all programs of the NYG&B and were instrumental in advancing our mission to preserve, document, and share family history and stories from across New York State.

With gratitude,

— *Joshua and the NYG&B Team*

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