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  Our dedicated staff and volunteers work tirelessly to make collections more accessible through our online and printed resources.
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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear friends and fellow researchers,

In celebration of RootsTech 2023, we put together this special edition of the New York Researcher, the quarterly member magazine of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society (NYG&B). We bring you articles and columns to help with your New York research, and I have the privilege of working with genealogists, librarians, county historians, and NYG&B members to share their knowledge and expertise.

Articles in this magazine inform our community about records available for research, and some tell the story of New Yorkers. Reading an article that seems out of the ordinary for your personal research can broaden your perspective, opening new possibilities and paths of research. This special issue contains five of those articles published in the last year.

- Obtaining New York State Birth Records: Insights from the Experts (page 5)
- New York City Public Digitized Vital Records: Now Online for Free! (page 9)
- County Board of Supervisors Proceedings: A Genealogy Source Revealed (page 12)
- Sojourner Truth’s Newly Rediscovered 1828 Court Record (page 16)
- Special Collections and Archives at Hamilton College (page 19)

Each issue contains regular columns in addition to the articles pertaining to research. They include a column called “New Access and Databases,” designed to keep you up-to-date on newly released or digitized collections. The “Five Next Steps” column, often written by an NYG&B member, helps researchers plan the pathway forward in their research. A featured county column provides history and resources for that county as well as images—check the source of the pictures for more images for that county or look for a similar source for your county of interest. Two other regular columns, “Latest Online for NYG&B Members” and “Highlights of The NYG&B Record” keep members in the loop in case they missed the eNews or email informing them of recently released content. And finally, “In Other Lines” introduces our community to one of our members, their research interests, and how the NYG&B has helped them.

Finally, in each issue we share news and events happening at the NYG&B. In this special issue, you can learn about our new Digitization Center, the initiatives to locate and digitize records, and our volunteers who contribute to making records more accessible for all of you. Plus we share information about learning experiences and programs brought to you by the NYG&B.

We hope you enjoy this issue and will want to learn more. Members access the entire archive of the New York Researcher in our NYG&B Online Collections. And we send a link to all our members for each new issue released. Join the NYG&B as a member for that access and more (newyorkfamilyhistory.org/join). Or check with your local or regional genealogy library, as they may subscribe to the New York Researcher and The NYG&B Record, our quarterly journal (see page 32 of this digital issue for “Highlights of The NYG&B Record”).

Happy researching,

Susan R. Miller, Editor
NYG&B Director, Publications

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About the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society

Since 1869, the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society (NYG&B) has been preserving, documenting, and sharing the stories of families across the state of New York. Through our programs, resources, publications, and services we actively engage with genealogists, biographers, historians, and organizations to establish the broader contexts of New York’s past and foster connections between New York’s past and the present.

The NYG&B publishes the New York Researcher and The NYG&B Record; both are quarterlies. Subscriptions to each are among the many benefits of Membership. The NYG&B warmly welcomes new members; information on Membership and benefits may be found on our website, newyorkfamilyhistory.org.

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Obtaining New York State Birth Records: Insights from the Experts

One of the initial questions we encounter in our genealogy is when and where an ancestor was born. New York’s unique record-keeping history often presents a challenge in answering this question. This article will guide the process to find and retrieve records—when they exist. This article focuses on records for all areas of New York outside of New York City.

The subject of vital records in New York is unusually complicated for several reasons:

- New York is the only state accommodating two entirely unconnected vital records systems, one for New York State and one for New York City. In addition, some cities of New York State independently kept their own vital records.
- Though New York vital records began to be broadly recorded in the 1880s, neither New York State nor New York City kept vital records completely and systematically until 1913, when new legislation went into effect.
- For a fuller understanding of vital records, please see chapter 2 of the New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer (NYFHRGG). In addition, compliance with the law took some time as seen in figure 1.

First steps: Does a birth record even exist

In the present day, the process of recording a child’s birth is a commonly accepted practice. However, it is key to remember this practice only began in earnest in the late 1800s in most of New York State. While a few cities began keeping records prior to the state-wide laws of 1880 and 1881, they were not at all complete or consistent (see NYFHRGG for laws and chapters). In addition, compliance with the law took some time as seen in figure 1.

Figure 1: Recorded Births in New York State (Analysis based on the number of indexed records and does not include certain cities)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Births</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>6,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>26,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>28,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>31,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>38,807</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Am I legally able to obtain a copy?

Access to New York birth records is restricted by law. Generally, records of births in New York State are available for births that occurred more than 75 years ago, provided that the individual is deceased. Direct-line descendants may qualify for exceptions to the rules, as detailed online by the New York State Health Department (NYSHD), see health.ny.gov/vital_records/genealogy.htm. This article focuses on those publicly available records.
Locating the record: Indexes to New York State Births

In theory, any birth occurring in New York State in 1881 or later should have been recorded in an official governmental record. However, not all events were recorded, specifically in the years immediately following 1881. (Figure 1 illustrates the low compliance in 1881 and increased compliance and birth rates in subsequent years.) Indexes to these records are available. To begin, visit the NYG&B’s free subject guide at nygbs.org/new-york-birth-marriage-death-vital-records#Accessing. The New York State Health Department (NYSDH) indexes were obtained and published by Reclaim the Records on Internet Archive (free) where they can be freely browsed. In addition, Ancestry.com ($) has placed the index into a name-searchable database (ancestry.com/search/collections/61667; Ancestry’s database also contains births in Yonkers not covered by the NYSDH.)

Using the information from the index

Once the person—or probable person—is found in the index, the next step is to obtain a copy of the record. The primary agency holding the records is the New York State Health Department, health.ny.gov/vital_records. Requesting the record from the NYSHD is taking quite some time currently (estimated wait time as of February 2022 is more than two years). Therefore, we recommend an alternative.

Excerpt from the NYFHRGG:

While the New York State Department of Health is the central repository for New York state vital records, it is not the only one. Records of births, marriages, and deaths are also filed with the municipality where the events occurred.

Sometimes the originals went to Albany, and copies were kept locally, as is the case today. However, some statutes required the originals to be retained locally, with copies to the New York State Department of Health in Albany.

Local governments created birth records which were sent to the NYSHD in Albany. That local government

would be the town, city, or village (incorporated villages). Individual town or city clerk’s offices provide directions to obtain vital records held at the local level, especially for cities (other than New York City as noted above). Check the website of the local government for information and follow their process to request a copy of the record. If the process is not noted, email or phone the Clerk’s office. Note that some villages cede the duty of creating birth records to the town of which they are a part. This is often the case in downstate/Long Island areas that have many incorporated villages.

Four Counties: Consolidated Districts

Four New York counties are “consolidated districts” where vital records are kept at the county level: Chemung, Monroe, Onondaga, and Tompkins

While we recognize the long wait time for obtaining copies from the NYSHD is frustrating, researchers should consider making an application to the NYSHD anyway. It is possible the local record may come in the form of transcription or might not contain all the details found on the State’s official copy.

If an entry in the index is not found

When the person of interest is not found in the major indexes, it is possible the event was not formally recorded. In this case, it is essential to search for substitutes (see below). Also, consider whether the birth occurred in certain cities before 1914, namely Albany, Buffalo, or Yonkers (as noted above New York City is not included in the scope of this article). These cities began keeping vital records before the state mandates in 1880 and 1881. They did not fully participate in the move to consolidate vital record keeping at the state level and instead continued to keep their own records exclusively at the municipal level (see table 1). Birth records issued between 1881 and 1913 in Albany, Buffalo, and Yonkers are kept locally and not with the NYSDH. Many counties provide dates for the earliest records in that county, for example, Chemung County, chemungcountyhealth.org/vital-records-genealogy.

Table 1: Birth Records Held by Selected Cities from 1852 to the Present
(Former City of Brooklyn and New York City excluded from this table.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Local Records; Location</th>
<th>URL</th>
<th>State-held records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albany</td>
<td>Births: 1870–present; City of Albany, City Clerk</td>
<td>AlbanyNY.org</td>
<td>Births: 1914–present New York State Department of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>Births: 1878–present; Buffalo, City Clerk</td>
<td>ci.buffalo.ny.us</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yonkers</td>
<td>Births: 1875–present; Yonkers City Clerk</td>
<td>cityofyonkers.com</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Directions for obtaining records from these three cities are on the Health Department website at health.ny.gov/vital_records/genealogy.htm
**Always search for a substitute**

If a birth certificate would not have been created for a place or time of your search, other records may identify some of the same information. Locating religious records where a baptism or bris would have occurred close in time to birth provides reasonable information. Family Bible records may also detail a family structure with dates. Some cemeteries recorded the decedent’s age in years, months, and days, allowing a calculation of the implied birth date. If the person was involved in a court case, they may have had to provide information about their exact age or birth date. Additionally estimates or more exact information may be gleaned from census, immigration, and naturalization, institutional, military, and probate records.

For births occurring in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New York, we recommend NYFHRGG’s chapter 1, Colonial Era and the Early Records section of chapter 2. Finally, it may be that estimating a birth year from an age when an event was recorded may be as exact as we can get. The person lived, and hopefully well, even if we cannot determine a more exact date.

**Where to Learn More**

The NYG&B provides multiple resources on the topic of birth records, including the online article mentioned above, *NYFHRGG* (in particular chapter 2), *New York Birth, Marriage, and Death Records* (extracted from *NYFHRGG*), and on-demand videos ([nygbs.org/webinars](http://nygbs.org/webinars)).

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### Figure 3: Pathway to Determine Where to Start in Finding a New York Birth Record

**Question:** Did the birth occur in New York City or New York State?

**If New York City,**

watch for the next issue of the New York Researcher for details or visit [nygbs.org/new-york-birth-marriage-death-vital-records](http://nygbs.org/new-york-birth-marriage-death-vital-records)

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**Update! See the article on page 9**

**If New York State,**

**Did the event occur more than 72 years ago and the person is deceased?**

If so, search the indexes created by the NYSHD.

**Did the event occur less than 72 years ago and is the person still living?**

If so, generally, New York State birth records are only available to for individuals born more than 2 years ago who are deceased. Focus instead on finding a vital records substitute.

**Before 1880**

It is unlikely a formal vital record was recorded (except as noted below). Focus instead on finding a vital records substitute.

Check the following cities for some early birth records (earliest year), Albany (1870), Buffalo (1878), Elmira (1875) Syracuse (1873), Utica (1876), and Yonkers (1875)

If the birth was in late-1840s to 1850, check for “school district” records that may still exist. *Tree Talks*, the periodical of the Central New York Genealogical Society, has published many.

---

**After 1880**

If an entry is found, write to the NYSHD and the local government office to obtain a copy of the vital record.

If an entry is not found, it is possible this event was not recorded or occurred elsewhere (such as Albany, Buffalo, Yonkers, New York City, or another state). Focus instead on finding a vital records substitute.
Five Next Steps—When You Find That Birth Record

By Christy Vogt Dolan, MA

Following the articles about finding a New York birth record which appeared in the spring and summer issues of the New York Researcher, you may find yourself with a copy of your ancestor’s birth details—and lucky you! With a little digging, birth records can help you find all sorts of new things about your ancestor and their relatives.

1) Find siblings!
If you did not know the names of the parents before, or they used a different variation or spelling of their name(s) on the record, you can now use the names listed on the birth certificate to look for other children of those parents. Also, as many children unfortunately died in childhood, you may discover siblings you did not know about—and who may have had the same name as a child born later.

Using the combination of names in a family group can help you as you follow people and families through time and help confirm that you have the right “John Smith” for example, if they are listed with the other family members or living nearby.

2) Look for extended family nearby
Chances are often good that other family may be living near the place where a person was born. If the home address of the family is listed, look up the location of their house on a period map—some maps even list the owners of each property. Look closely at the names around the location and on census schedules to see if those names also show up in the family tree. You may discover grandparents, aunts and uncles, and near-cousins right in the neighborhood!

Many birth records also list the birth places of the parents to the town or county level—which can give you new insight to where they grew up, whether nearby, in another state, or in a different country.

3) Explore online collections for images and maps of where they lived
Looking beyond family members, get to know the neighborhood in more detail. Images and maps are available on sites such as New York Heritage (nyheritage.org), the New York State Archives (archives.nysed.gov), the Library of Congress (loc.gov), and local libraries and societies in the town or county where your ancestor lived.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, plat maps, and topographic maps can be used to glean information about the area and what the townscape might have been like. Some maps show the materials buildings were made from as well as the location of businesses, industry, houses of worship, trolley lines, social clubs, schools—all places to look for clues about life there. County and town histories can help you understand more about how our ancestors might have lived and the places they lived in. (While not always accurate, and sometimes embellished, they are still valuable resources.)

In addition to the traditional repositories, auction sites such as eBay often offer postcards, old photographs, or local historical books (and provide decent images or scans to download—even if you do not win an auction). Set up an alert on the site with the place(s) and/or family name(s) to receive email alerts for new items that match those keywords.

4) Reach out to local experts
The local historian, town clerk, or local historical or genealogical society might be able to tell you more about the place's history, what it might have been like in a particular time-period, schools and community, or even about an industry or an occupation important to an area. This can help you understand more about the life your ancestors might have lived—in far more detail (and a lot more fun) than just reading about it. Many societies also have local history collections comprised of small-run publications and pamphlets, photos, manuscripts, ephemera, and documents not found online.

5) Explore the parents’ occupations
Birth records often also list the occupation of the father, and when appropriate, the mother. This occupation may be different than one a person held later in life as young people, and especially recent immigrants, often started at the very bottom of the job ladder. Some occupations may also have different names and contexts than we know today and may also overlie other important clues to education level, ethnicity, and family professions.

Women, especially in poorer households or when widowed, may have occupations, too—whether working outside the home in a trade or inside the home as a landlord, taking in sewing or laundry, or in other “cottage” industries.
New York City PublicDigitized Vital Records Now Online for Free!

The largest collection of publicly available New York City birth, marriage, and death records is now online and free to access!

The New York City Municipal Archives has been working to digitize the millions of birth, marriage, and death records it holds since 2013. With the project now 70% complete, 9,318,625 digitized records from the late 1800s to the early 1900s are now available online as of March 2022 at https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov.

A complete listing of records available online can be found at New York City’s Historical Vital Records website, https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/digital-vital-records.

A Few Things to Know
While we know births and marriages happened, not all events were recorded in the official records. The earlier the birth, marriage, or death occurred, the higher the likelihood it was not entered into city records. And sometimes not all children in a family were recorded.

The good news is that about 70% of extant records are online for free, and you can download the digitized color copies. While you may have a copy from the older microfilm, these digitized records are clear and easier to read. See the Coverage Charts and Tips section below if you cannot find the record.

How Can I Start Using the Records?

View by Certificate Number—Recommended Method
If you know the certificate number and year, it is easy to search, view, and download the color copy. Simply enter that information into the “By Certificate Number” section of the search page. If you need to find a certificate number, see the Using Indexes section.

Search by Name
Search by name is also available if you know the exact name on the record and year (please note, the site does not account for spelling variations of names).

An important note: Some records available on the site do not have any name attached (see the following Tips). And at least a few are indexed incorrectly. Some records are still in the process of digitization, so are not yet included in digitized access. (For more details see the Coverage Charts section.)

Browsing Records
To search the records in the browse mode, enter the record type (birth, marriage, or death), borough [Manhattan, Kings (Brooklyn), Queens, Bronx, Richmond (Staten Island)], and year. A slider bar makes it easy for you to search for a year or a range of years. Only 500 results (50 per page, 100 pages) are available in the browse mode, so narrow your search as much as possible. If needed, perform a narrow search, and then delete some variables to get a larger number of results.

Search by certificate number or name at https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/search

Breaking News!
Using Indexes
If you are unable to find the materials you need using the name search, other indexes exist to help you identify the certificate number. The new New York City Historical Vital Records index is based on an index created by the Genealogical Federation of Long Island (GFLI) who used the microfilmed card file to create the indexes. The Germany Genealogy Group (GGG) has, over time, made corrections and additions to this index, which can be found at germangenealogygroup.com (free). The GGG also recently added a link on each search page so records missing from their database can be entered.

You can also search the indexes at FamilySearch.org (free). FamilySearch’s index has some certificate numbers missing from the GGG database and goes beyond certificates, including ledger entries, as well.

Search the FamilySearch birth index, familysearch.org/search/collection/2240282
Search the FamilySearch marriage certificate index, familysearch.org/search/collection/2143225
Search the FamilySearch death index, familysearch.org/search/collection/2240477

If you are still having trouble finding the records, you can search the indexes at Ancestry.com ($)$. Ancestry’s indexes include records generated by the NYC Health Department.

Search the Ancestry birth index, ancestry.com/search/collections/61779
Search the Ancestry marriage index, ancestry.com/search/collections/9105
Search the Ancestry death index, ancestry.com/search/collections/61778

In addition, marriage license files from the City Clerk’s office are being digitized, see the index at ancestry.com/search/collections/61406. This index contains many more records than are publicly available from the New York City Historical Vital Records site. A free online copy of the index, obtained by Reclaim the Records, is available to browse at archive.org/details/nycmarriageindex (free).

Downloading Records
As you download a record, the file name provides some key information. Files are named like this: M-K-1894-0005326 or B-M-1878-0235338.

– The first letter is the type of record: B for birth, M for marriage certificate, L for marriage license, D for death.
– The second letter is the borough: B for Bronx, K for Kings (Brooklyn), M for Manhattan, Q for Queens, R for Richmond (Staten Island).
– The first four numbers are the year: e.g., 1894 in the first example above.
– The last numbers are the certificate number.

Tips
We are all still learning about the records released and the indexes that make the records findable. At the time of publication, the New York City Municipal Archives (MUNI) does not have an index correction system in place for the public to submit updates. Therefore, if the record is not appearing in your search, follow these steps.

1. Do a name search on the Historical Vital Records site, including the year (this is where success does not always happen).
2. Perform a name search on the GGG database first, using the wildcard option if needed.
3. Perform a name search in the FamilySearch index.
4. Perform a name search on Ancestry.
5. Use the method above in Browsing Records.

If you get a sad face or other error when retrieving a certificate, it may be that the server is busy. Wait for a few minutes and try again.

Learn about NYC Marriage Licenses
How to Use Coverage Charts

To see if a record is digitized, use the site tab “Digital Vital Records” [https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/digital-vital-records](https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/digital-vital-records), and then select the tab for Birth, Deaths, or Marriages.

We have received reports of images being online even if the years are marked as “not digitized” on the charts. One example is death records for Manhattan, 1876–1919, show as not digitized, however 166,600 records appear (browse search for Manhattan death certificates, 1876–1919). And yet, those records sometimes do not appear as results when searching by first and last name—try searching by last name only.

Another challenging point is that many records do not have the name indexed on the Historical Vital Records site, e.g., births for Manhattan for 1866 to 1878. If the name is not in the German Genealogy Group’s index, try the indexes on FamilySearch and Ancestry.

Remember that marriage records between 1908 and 1937 come in two different record collections, certificates and licenses, and you should check both series. The website has an explanation of these materials, and you can also see the NYG&B guide by Leslie Corn, CG, FGBS, at nygbs.org/knowledgebase/city-clerks-marriage-licenses-new-york-city-1908-1937-one-20th-century-genealogys-best.

When You Cannot Find an Image that is Indexed

With the project ongoing, don’t give up if you can’t find an image. The New York City Municipal Archives (MUNI) stated that when you can’t find a record. “Fill out the Vital Records Order Form, and we will conduct a search. If the record is located, we will digitize on demand. If not, we will provide a certified not found letter.” That means if they can find it, you can obtain a copy ($). Stay tuned for further updates!

Digitized Birth Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bronx</td>
<td>1872 to 1873, 1876, 1888 to 1891, 1895 to 1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings (Brooklyn)</td>
<td>1866 to 1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>1855, 1857 to 1861, 1863 to 1865, 1866 to 1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>1866, 1876, 1883, 1886, 1888 to 1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond (Staten Island)</td>
<td>1898 to 1909</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Digitized Death Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bronx</td>
<td>1898 to 1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings (Brooklyn)</td>
<td>1862 to 1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>1866 to 1867, 1871 to 1875, 1920 to 1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>1898 to 1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond (Staten Island)</td>
<td>1898 to 1948</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See [https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/digital-vital-records](https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/digital-vital-records) for more information on Birth and Death Records and instructions on how to access them as well as information on Digitized Marriage Certificates and Digitized Marriage Licenses. (Text and graphs, NYC Municipal Archives.)
By Rhonda Hoffman, MLS

An in-depth examination of historical Western New York supervisors’ proceedings was carried out for this article.

Background

A county board of supervisors consisted of the town and city supervisors within a county’s boundaries. Boards were required to meet at least once a year. Because many town representatives were farmers, they would usually meet for several days in the fall, after the harvest, until their business was complete. Special sessions were held if an important matter came up outside their selected meeting timeframe.

Supervisors’ proceedings record actions taken by the board and reports given to the board by committees, institutions, and county government departments. Proceedings in book format can be found by the mid-1800s, and they were sometimes published in local newspapers. Handwritten proceedings may be seen as early as a county’s formation. Their main concerns involve financial responsibility, carrying out local and New York State directives, recording county law, and monitoring county property and institutions. New York and United States law dictate county government powers and responsibilities.¹

Substantial changes happened to some New York county governments beginning in 1936. As a result of these changes, county government legislative bodies may nowadays be called Board of Supervisors, Board of Representatives, Board of Legislators, or County Legislature. For a more in-depth explanation of this complex topic, see Local Government Handbook, written by the Division of Local Government Services.²

What Might They Tell You?

At first glance, supervisors’ proceedings appear to be stodgy volumes of local government actions. However, if you look closely, they may add texture to your ancestors’ lives, rebuild lost records, or provide key evidence for a genealogical case study. Financial accountability was of utmost importance in supervisors’ proceedings. Your ancestors might be named in proceedings if county funds were put toward any aspect of their lives.

Care for the Poor

Poorhouses (or almshouses) existed in all New York counties at one time. County poorhouse reports are featured in proceedings, and their detail may be so great that reconstruction of lost poorhouse records is possible. Keep in mind that examination of two years of proceedings may be needed to recreate a whole year because while proceedings are a twelve-month report, they do not cover a traditional calendar year. A poorhouse resident’s entry may provide their name, gender, age,
town of residence, nationality, admission and discharge dates, and the number of days in the almshouse. If a resident died at the poorhouse, their date of death, cause of death, and burial place might be reported.

The financial responsibility of supporting the poor was determined by state law and may have fallen to the city, town, county, or state. Determination was usually based on the length of residence in a city or town. For example, in 1899, an adult who had established their own “settlement” was chargeable to a municipality if they lived in a city or town for at least one year. A married woman’s residence was based on her husband, and a child’s residence was based on their father (or mother if the father was deceased). This can help confirm places of residence for persons who lived in locations without city directories and for individuals who would not be recorded in directories. Martha Branscombe’s *The Courts and the Poor Laws in New York State, 1784–1929*, provides a good overview for those looking to learn the intricacies of New York’s historical poor laws.

Some almshouse residents may have been transferred to another institution for specialized care. One example of this is a person living with a mental illness. Children, both orphans and non-orphans, may have been moved from poorhouses to orphanages or foster care. After 1875 most children were not allowed to live in poorhouses any longer. These transfers and costs associated with the care of these individuals were sometimes published in proceedings. An individual’s name, age, institution of transfer, and date of transfer were often recorded. In rare cases, date and place of birth, the town of residence, ethnicity, and the location of a child placed out of the area also appear. Lists of foster families (not including the foster children’s names) were sometimes published.

At the turn of the twentieth century, poor law called for counties to incur the cost of burying the military poor. This included soldiers, sailors, and marines who fought for the United States in the Civil War or Mexican War. Burials required a headstone inscribed with the soldier’s name and, if possible, the military organization. These soldiers may be named in proceedings.

**Crime**

Finding information on an ancestor who committed a crime can be difficult, especially if a crime did not warrant a headline. Proceedings may include annual county jail reports. Prisoner names, commitment and
discharge dates, town, and offense are often given.

Inmate death reports may provide a prisoner's age, cause and date of death, and place of birth. Sheriff reports may list prisoner transportation, including the prisoner's name and the institution they were transferred to. District Attorney reports may list criminals indicted, their crimes, and case outcomes.

To add texture to your ancestor's life, proceedings often contain inspection reports of county institutions. There is a possibility of bias because there may have been motivation to ignore improvements needed to keep county costs low.

Chautauqua County's 1911 proceedings include the following description of the county jail in Mayville:

The jail contains 34 cells, each six feet wide by eight feet long. Every cell is equipped with sanitary closet and lavatory and two beds. Each bed has a mattress... and white sheets and pillow slips... The corridors are lighted by few electric lights which do not light up the cells sufficiently so that inmates can read after dark.... There are four bath tubs... no hospital room... all sick are removed to the county hospital... The women's quarters consist of a large room which does not contain cells, the women sleeping on cots... The provision for the confinement of minors... consists of only two cell... There is no work for the prisoners and no yard for exercise.⁷

Directory Substitutes

Supervisors' proceedings often record lengthy name lists, which could serve as city directory substitutes. Grand jury lists name jurors, professions, and town of residence. Excise commissioners may report those who received liquor licenses and specify the establishment type. Orleans County school tax lists are in order by municipality, provide addresses, and may include property acreage. Accounts audited by the supervisors record the names of those who provided goods or services to the county, the service or goods provided, and the amounts claimed and allowed.

Medical Examiner Reports

Medical examiner reports are a regular feature of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century proceedings. Names of the deceased, their cause of death, date of death, and date of inquiry may be found. Coroners may have been required to account for the deceased's personal effects. Lists of these items, who claimed them, and less frequently, their relationship to the deceased, were published in Erie County proceedings for several years.

Autopsies were not performed on everyone who passed away. An inquiry would have been performed on those who died suspiciously or unexpectedly such as due to sudden death, an accident, suicide, or homicide.

Published vs. Original Records

A comparison of select Erie County original and printed proceedings indicates that published proceedings are not necessarily an exact transcription of original records. Formatting changes such as the use of headings and punctuation were common, though this improved readability. Minor wording changes were also typical. This generally enhanced comprehensiveness, but sometimes given names were not recorded, or initials were used in their place. Occasionally, more information was published than was included in the original records. For example, the 1852 published proceedings contained a list of accounts audited, but it was not included in the handwritten proceedings.

To find out if original records exist for a county of interest, start by contacting the county clerk's...
Arrangement
Proceedings are arranged in chronological order by meeting date. Sometimes reports from agencies and institutions are placed at the end, after the meeting minutes. An index should be at the beginning of a volume, but proceeding indexes are more like a table of contents than the indexes we are used to today. They list main topics and subtopics. For example, a main category may be “Medical Examiner,” and its subtopic may be “Monthly statement for December, 1909.” A name may be a subtopic, but this does not frequently occur except in select topics such as “warrants.” If keyword searching online proceedings is not fruitful, browse the index and consider where your ancestor may fit in.

Access
The largest online collections of historic New York supervisors’ proceedings can be found on HathiTrust (hathitrust.org) and Google Books (books.google.com). Most online proceedings date from the mid-1800s to the 1920s.

County clerks and historians, genealogical and historical societies, colleges and universities, and public libraries generally hold the proceedings for the area in which they are located. The Grosvenor Room at the Central Library in downtown Buffalo carries most Erie County proceedings from 1840 to 1988.

Statewide Collections
The following institutions have significant but not necessarily complete collections of published New York county board of supervisors’ proceedings. It is best to check the catalog or contact the repositories before visiting to verify record availability, access, and collection policies. Supervisors’ proceedings are often kept off-site or in storage areas and may need to be requested in advance. Arrival.

Cornell University
Library Annex, 209 Bookbank Drive, Ithaca, NY 14850
607-253-3431 | libannex@cornell.edu
annex.library.cornell.edu
Online catalog: newcatalog.library.cornell.edu

New York State Library
Cultural Education Center
222 Madison Avenue, Albany, NY 12230
518-474-5355 | nysl.nysed.gov/contact.htm
Online catalog: nyst.sirsi.net
Interlibrary loan: archives.nysed.gov/research/res_serv_loan.shtml
Collection and access notes: The NYS Archives carries supervisors’ proceedings for the following counties: Fulton, Jefferson, Livingston, Orange, Putnam, Schuyler, Tioga, and Washington. Some of the records are original handwritten proceedings and others are published volumes. Many are available on microfilm and may be borrowed through interlibrary loan.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Oak Street Library
809 South Oak Street, Champaign IL 61820
217-265-9476 | cmservices@library.illinois.edu
library.illinois.edu/oak
Online catalog: search.grainger.illinois.edu/searchaid2/searchassist.asp

Rhonda Hoffman, MLS, is the content editor of the Western New York Genealogist. She has a Bachelor of Arts in History and twenty years of experience as a genealogy librarian. Rhonda is the genealogy specialist in the Grosvenor Room, the special collections department of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library in New York State.

Endnotes
5 Branscombe, p. 154–155.
Sojourner Truth’s Newly Rediscovered 1828 Court Record

By Stanton F. Biddle, PhD

At the core of genealogy and family history research is the quest to find documentation of events that shape and define a family’s past. In February 2022 the New York State Archives (NYSA) announced the rediscovery of a nearly two-hundred-year-old New York court record documenting a formerly enslaved African American woman’s effort to recover her nine-year-old son from her former owner [enslaver].¹ The re-discovery was made by James D. Folts, PhD, FGBS, head of research services at the NYSA, while he was searching for examples of early records for a book on the history of New York courts when he recognized a name on the document.²

The announcement received unusual attention in the contemporary media including CNN, Fox News, the Associated Press, and a number of National Public Radio outlets.³ The robust media response was triggered by three major factors.

First, many Americans are unaware that slavery still existed in the north less than two hundred years ago. In New York State, slavery was not fully abolished until the terms of the Gradual Emancipation Law of 1799, along with a number of statute revisions, went into effect in 1827. Before that date, enslaved children born after July 4, 1799, would remain in bondage until age 28 for males and 25 for females.⁴

Second, experts suggest that this may have been the earliest case in U.S. history in which a Black woman had successfully sued a White man for a family member’s freedom. The final reason was the identity of the woman. She would go on to take a unique place in African American history, women’s history, and American history as perhaps the most famous Black woman of 19th-century America. Her name on the documents is Isabella Van Wagenen—but she would be later known as Sojourner Truth.

Sojourner Truth was born as Isabella Brumfield in 1797 in the Hudson River Valley region of New York. She was the daughter of an enslaved couple, James and Elizabeth (Mau Mau) Brumfield. In 1810 after having several owners as a child, she eventually became the property of John Dumont of New Paltz, New York. During her time with Dumont, Isabella had five children—James, who died in childhood; Diana, from Dumont; and Peter, Elizabeth, and Sophia with her husband, Thomas, an older man also enslaved by Dumont.⁶

NYSA described the re-discovered documents as an eight-page writ of habeas corpus sworn out by Isabella against her former enslaver John L. Dumont. By 1828 Dumont was Isabella’s “former” enslaver because, according to her Narrative published in 1850, she had negotiated an early release from his service in 1826—one year before the complete implementation of New York’s statewide emancipation. When Dumont defaulted on the agreement, Isabella left the Dumont farm, taking her infant daughter, Sophia, with her. Her only surviving son, Peter, two older girls, and her husband remained Dumont’s property, and she was forced to leave them behind. She found refuge with the Dumont’s neighbors.
Isabella Van Wagenen. The Van Wagenens did not support slavery, but they paid-off Isabella's final year of service and purchased her infant daughter from Dumont. Shortly thereafter, the Van Wagenens freed them both, and Isabella assumed the surname Van Wagenen.

A short time after she was emancipated, Isabella learned that Dumont had sold Peter to Dr. Eleazer Gedney of New Paltz, and Dr. Gedney had planned to use Peter as a body servant and to take him to England. But when plans fell through, Dr. Gedney sold Peter to his brother Solomon, who in turn sold him to the new husband of their sister, Eliza Fowler, and the Fowlers took Peter with them when they relocated to Fowler's home in Alabama. This action violated New York State law regarding the interstate sale of enslaved persons and also circumvented the New York State Gradual Emancipation Law.

When Isabella learned of Dumont's treachery, she first confronted his wife, then Dr. Eleazer and Solomon Gedney's mother. But their mother was not sympathetic as she was too upset about her daughter being carried off to Alabama. Further outraged by this new information, Isabella set out to recover her son. The Narrative is rather circumspect about what assistance and contacts Isabella was able to receive—except to say that Quakers directed her to the Court House in Kingston, New York. There, she was able to get the support and guidance she needed to petition the Grand Jury for the writ of habeas corpus from the Supreme Court of Judicature. The writ was served on the Gedney brothers in New Paltz and the March 1, 1828, court order rediscovered by Folts in the State Archives demanded the return of the child:

The People vs. Solomon Gedney
Habeas Corpus
Romeyn Van Buren, attorney
By the Statute allowed 10th March 1828
A Bruyn Hasbrouck Commissioner to perform certain duties of a Judge of the Supreme Court
Charges of bringing the xxx named Peter Van Wagener and a half Cents for Van Wagener
A Bruyn Hasbrouck Commissioner
State of New York
Ulster County ss. Isabella Van Wagenen of New Paltz in the County of Ulster being duly sworn saith that Peter a boy of colour now of the age nine years was about two years ago sold by John L. Dumont of New Paltz xxx to Eleazer Gedney and said Eleazer Gedney gave or sold him to Solomon Gedney of New Paltz aforesaid shortly thereafter as she is informed and believes to be true — That said Peter was born since the fourth day of July in the year 1799 to wit about the month of July 1818 at the town of New Paltz in said county of Ulster and is the son of this deponent — and this deponent says that since the said Solomon Gedney became the master of said Peter he the said Peter has been absent since last spring from said town of New Paltz until within five or six weeks past and during that time has been constantly absent from the said town of New Paltz where said Solomon Gedney resides and has resided during the time aforesaid and has as this deponent is informed and believes been during all that time in some of the Southern States with the knowledge of said Solomon Gedney and in places without this state—and this deponent says that she is informed and believes and expects to be able to prove that the said Peter has been exported to some place or places without the State of New York for all the time aforesaid and that said Solomon Gedney did himself exported him at the time of aforesaid or aided or consented to such exportation contrary to the provisions of the Act of the Legislature of the State of New York entitled “An act concerning slaves” and contrary to the laws of said State of New York and the statutes in such case made and provided and that this deponent does believe that said Solomon
The documents reveal that when Gedney’s brother-in-law, Fowler, was prosecuted for kidnapping, he returned Peter—beaten and severely abused—to New York to avoid indictment. The documents also included a response from the Gedney brothers indicating that neither of them retained further interest in Peter’s services. Therefore, the Supreme Court Commissioner ordered him free as of March 15, 1828. (Digital copies of the eight-page document are available on the New York State Archives website. A transcription has been posted on New York Almanack.)

Since Sojourner Truth was not literate, much of the information about her and this incident is derived from The Narrative of Sojourner Truth, a book based on her conversations over a number of years with Olive Gilbert, a white colleague in the abolitionist movement. The Narrative was first published in 1850 and was reissued in 1875 (see note 8).

But one of the unanswered questions raised from this case is, “How did a recently emancipated woman who was uneducated and illiterate gather the wherewithal, resources, and contacts to bring to the full weight of the government to her aid in regaining her son who had been removed from New York and, presumably, taken south?” Several of Sojourner Truth’s biographers have addressed this issue over the years.

Truth’s Narrative falls within a genre of ex-slave narratives—autobiographies or stories “as told to” friends and associates—and where the “authors” were continuously under suspicion about the truth of their stories.

According to historian David W. Blight, “the sixty-five to seventy slave narratives published in America or England between 1760 and 1860 were windows into the nature of slavery itself; they were the first-person witnesses to the will to be known and the will to write something among a people so often set apart and defined out of the human family of letters...” Many of their publications were accompanied by testimonials and endorsements by well-known white abolitionists.

It is noteworthy that nearly two centuries after the fact, American scholars are still able to unearth original documents supporting the contents of a formerly enslaved black woman’s story of her life. Thanks to the diligence and alertness of one archivist, Jim Folts, scholars today can compare Sojourner Truth’s description of her quest to retrieve her son with the actual documents she swore out against John L. Dumont and the Gedney brothers back in 1828.

The re-discovery of these documents, after 194 years, is an important contribution to the legacy and legitimacy of Isabella Van Wagenen. It demonstrates that even before Isabella Van Wagenen walked into the pages of history as the abolitionist, religious leader, and women’s rights advocate Sojourner Truth, she was a formidable force to be reckoned with. She had a profound effect on those around her, and she remains a source of inspiration to younger generations as they learn of her exploits. And as recently as 2021, a group of her descendants gathered together at the Sojourner Truth Center for Liberation and Justice in Battle Creek, Michigan, to rekindle the flame and to rededicate themselves to preserving her memory.

Endnotes


5 May also be noted as Baunfree or Bomfree.


10 Ibid.


Special Collections and Archives at Hamilton College

By Jeremy Katz, MA, CA

Originally and affectionately known on campus as the “Treasure Room,” the Special Collections and Archives at Hamilton College house records documenting the rich history of the third oldest institution of higher education in the State of New York and items of enduring historic value gifted to the school throughout its more than 200-year existence. Students, faculty, and outside researchers from all over the world frequently utilize the resources found in this unique repository located in central New York.

Hamilton College

Samuel Kirkland founded Hamilton College in 1793 as Hamilton-Oneida Academy. Alexander Hamilton supported the school’s mission of an integrated education for Oneida Indians and white settlers, becoming a founding trustee and lending his namesake to the academy. In 1812 the school was chartered as Hamilton College by the State of New York. Unfortunately, neither Kirkland or Hamilton lived to see the fruits of their labor as Hamilton died by duel in 1804 and Kirkland passed away from natural causes in 1808. Special Collections and Archives care for the founding documents of the college, as well as the papers of Samuel Kirkland and the table top writing desk of Alexander Hamilton that was used to write his essays for *The Federalist Papers* and George Washington’s Farewell Address.

Hamilton Libraries and “Treasure Room”

When Hamilton College was chartered in 1812, the campus possessed 223 volumes. The collection was originally maintained in the Academy building before moving to the third floor of the Chapel. In 1826 the library got its first printed catalogue, which recorded 1,600 titles. The books that comprised the 1826 Library have been reassembled and are still available today through Special Collections and Archives.

The first dedicated building, the H. Perry Smith Library, was erected in 1872. It was succeeded by the James Library in 1914 and its current home, the Burke Library, in 1972. All the while, the library collection has grown alongside its Special Collections and Archives, or as it was known in the James Library, the “Treasure Room.”

Alumni Materials

Throughout the centuries, Hamilton College has produced distinguished alumni such as biblical scholar and cartographer, Edward Robinson (Class of 1816); Secretary of State and Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Elihu Root (Class of 1864); Vice-President of the United States, James Sherman (Class of 1878); controversial and notorious poet, Ezra Pound (Class of 1905); and authors Samuel Hopkins Adams (Class of 1891), Terry Brooks (Class of 1966), and John Nichols (Class of 1966). Special Collections and Archives house publications

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**Top:** Asahel Strong Norton (1765–1853), Record of burials, Clinton, New York, 1802–1839. Hamilton College Special Collections (General), https://sparc.hamilton.edu/islandora/object/hamLibSparc:53a12354625#page/4/mode/1up. **Above:** Hamilton-Oneida Academy Building, c. 1799. **Bottom:** Alexander Hamilton’s Table Top Writing Desk (Gift from Mrs. Helen Hamilton Woods, photo by Nancy L. Ford).
and original manuscript materials documenting the works and lives of alumni, which are frequently accessed by internal and external patrons.

**Special Collections**

In addition to documenting the college’s significant history, Special Collections and Archives also house materials that reflect the growing and evolving teaching, learning, and research needs of Hamilton College and the broader communities it serves. This effort led to Special Collections and Archives becoming the home of the world-class Beinecke Lesser Antilles Collection (see below), the Fillius Jazz Archive, and the largest and broadest collection of materials documenting American communal societies.

Efforts to evolve the collection also led to the inclusion of cultural artifacts such as cuneiform tablets, Roman-Egyptian papyri, and rare books including incunabula (usually pre-1500s printed book and pamphlets). These world-renowned collections are heavily requested by faculty to aid instruction, students for their class work, and patrons of all backgrounds with wide-ranging research goals.

**Communal Societies Collection**

Of special interest to family historians may be the Communal Societies Collection documenting groups of people who intentionally separate themselves from general society and live together according to a shared set of principles, whether religious or secular, in common ownership of property. The collection houses documents, photographs, and ephemera from the Shakers, House of David, suffragists, and many other communal societies that extend beyond New York to states across the country. Items of special note are agricultural and homestead products created by the Shakers, imprints from the Rogerene, and periodical literature related to Robert Owen. Explore these collections at [communalsocieties.hamilton.edu](http://communalsocieties.hamilton.edu).

**Lesser Antilles (Beinecke) Collection**

Researchers of colonial and state-period New York may find the Lesser Antilles collection of interest given the extensive trade between these Caribbean islands (including the now U.S. Virgin Islands) and the New Netherland and New York colonies, as well as the European nations of Great Britain, The Netherlands, France, and Spain. One of the preeminent collection of materials from these smaller Caribbean Islands, the Lesser Antilles Collection includes approximately 1700 manuscripts dating from the 17th through the 19th century, as well as printed materials, maps, and artwork. In 2019 Hamilton College embarked on a partnership with the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society to digitize historical materials about Nevis, the birthplace of Alexander Hamilton.

**Access to Collections**

To provide a high level of access, Special Collections and Archives meticulously inventory and catalog collections, which can be searched online via its website. The department also boasts a robust digitization program that preserves its collections in a computer-generated format and allows greater access online. Materials available online include the correspondence of Samuel Kirkland, the Beinecke Lesser Antilles Collection, the Edward Robinson Collection, and significant amounts of materials from the Ezra Pound Papers and Communal Societies Collection. To explore these collections online, please visit [SpArc.hamilton.edu](http://Sparc.hamilton.edu).

The Special Collections and Archives reading room, located on the third floor of Burke Library, is open during normal business hours Monday through Friday. Appointments made in advance are highly encouraged so staff can best serve patrons. To learn more, please visit [hamilton.edu/offices/lits/special-collections](http://hamilton.edu/offices/lits/special-collections).

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College Archivist **Jeremy Katz** holds a BA in History from The Ohio State University, an MA in Public History from Wright State University, and certification from the Academy of Certified Archivists. Prior to joining the Special Collections and Archives staff at Hamilton College, he served as Senior Director of Archives at the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum. He is the author of The Jewish Community of Atlanta (Arcadia Publishing, 2021).
NYG&B’s New Digitization Center: Expanding Our Capabilities and Services

A dedicated space to preserve and make New York’s records accessible for all.

The preservation of New York’s records is central to our role in empowering the community to preserve, research, and share their New York stories. In 2021, 97% of our community reported that the preservation of New York’s records was very or extremely important to them. To that end, the inclusion of a Digitization Center in our office enhancement plans was an absolute necessity.

As you enter the new Center the item that catches your eye is the new CopiBook OS A2 scanner equipped with LIMB Suite software, which is currently used by organizations such as FamilySearch to capture millions of images each day. Volunteers both new and old exclaim over the ease of using this scanner to quickly take high-resolution images. This new equipment and technology have bolstered the NYG&B’s digitization capability by more than 50%.

This exponential increase in our digitization capabilities enables us to pursue new collections that will be preserved for all New York researchers. Our ability to do this was so important to James D. Laur, member of the NYG&B Board of Trustees, that he decided to fund the new Digitization Center.

“There are thousands of records awaiting digitization, representing millions of pages and countless New York stories,” says Mr. Laur. “I want to do my part in making these stories come alive by making them accessible to online researchers.”

The Center has become a place where volunteers and team members can work together to preserve New York
documents by imaging, assessing, and indexing New York records that need to be preserved. Volunteers are enthusiastically capturing images at the CopiBook scanner every day of the week. While one person scans, another is sitting at a nearby computer, running the images taken the previous week through the LIMB software to automatically correct borders and other issues. A third volunteer is working on indexing the information that has been captured to make it accessible when it is uploaded to the website. A team member walks between the desks, answering questions and guiding the process.

Last year 94% of our members felt that continuing to digitize unique New York records for online access should be a high priority for the NYG&B. We are grateful to Mr. Laur for his gift that allows us to open a Digitization Center that will do just that—save and protect pieces of New York stories that have not been seen before.

To kick off our first full year of the Digitization Center, we held a 24 hour scan-a-thon in January. Volunteers signed up for two hour “give one, get one” shifts in which they scanned NYG&B materials for one hour and their own family history materials for the second hour. More than 2,500 images were captured over those 24 hours, with volunteers scanning scrapbooks, family photos and other precious documents to be preserved. We look forward to more events in this community space throughout the year and into the future.

This Digitization Center is open to families, individuals and organizations that seek to preserve materials.

D. Joshua Taylor Awarded FUGA (Fellow of the Utah Genealogical Association)
The Utah Genealogical Association Fellow Award is given in recognition of those living individuals whose distinguished contributions and ongoing commitment to the field of genealogy are of national or international scope. This may be evidenced by any combination of publications, teaching and speaking, or leadership of major genealogical organizations over a significant period of time.

The latest recipient of the UGA Fellow Award is D. Joshua Taylor, the president and CEO of the NYG&B. Joshua is well-known nationally as a researcher, speaker, author, and leader of genealogical organizations.

Previously, Josh worked on staff with Genealogy Roadshow, FindMyPast, and the New England Historic Genealogical Society. He is a past president of the Federation of Genealogical Societies.
NYG&B’s Upstate Initiative

Last year the NYG&B embarked on the Upstate Initiative; a program to reach out to churches, libraries, local historians, archives, cemeteries, historical societies, and others and assist them with digitizing records they hold. This program is in alignment with the NYG&B’s mission to preserve New York’s records by locating and digitizing materials throughout New York State.

Thanks to a generous grant from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, the NYG&B enlisted the talents of Bridge & Case to begin the pilot phase of the project. Research into appointed historians (town/village, city, county), historical and cultural organizations, and cemeteries that might have pre-1880 records led to a Central New York Target List. Outreach began to these organizations, engaging them in an application process, asking them to describe items from their collection, and apply for digitization assistance. Options include sending records to NYG&B to be digitized in our Digitization Center or sending a digitization kit to the location for scanning on site.

Materials sent to the NYG&B to digitize are scanned in the Digitization Center; the resulting images and indexes will be shared with the organizations and uploaded to the NYG&B’s Online Records Collections.

For those organizations that prefer to digitize at their own sites, we provide a digitization kit, which includes a portable table-top scanner, laptop, monitor, and other tools necessary to successfully scan and index images. Training videos and virtual sessions provide instructions, as does email assistance. Once completed, these materials will be accessible for the NYG&B community at newyorkfamilyhistory.org.

Phase 1 of the project resulted in fourteen projects from Cato, Onondaga, Sterling, and other Central New York locations. The records include tax assessment books, cemetery plot information, court cases and transactions, and church records. The first project completed was the account book of a physician, Dr. Amaziah Church Sherwood of Tompkins County (below), which our volunteers digitized and returned to its owner in 48 hours!

As we move into the second phase of this Initiative, our focus expands beyond Central New York to other parts of the state. We are grateful to the William G. Pomeroy Foundation for recognizing the need for this program and giving us the opportunity to make these connections and help record-holding organizations around the state. Everyone at the NYG&B is excited to see where the next phase of this initiative will take us!
Volunteers of the NYG&B

By Anna King, Manager, Office and Volunteer Engagement

In 2022 we saw the return of volunteers to the enhanced NYG&B headquarters. With a special focus on the Digitization Center, we trained dozens of volunteers to capture thousands of high-quality images of documents using our CopiBook scanner, refine these images using LIMB processing software, and index the files so that they can be used effectively in research. High school students from New York City public schools discovered our Volunteer Match post online and have been signing up to fulfill their service commitments. They have contributed to our success of getting numerous volumes of lineage society applications scanned and indexed. The students are joined by volunteers who have been with us for many years, such as Deborah Barber, Lynne Hayden-Findlay, and Jack McQuade, as well as others who are new to us this year, like Neena Abraham, Emily Henry, Ben Farber, Steve Losie, Kali Norris and Denise Stephens.

Digitization Center

The Digitization Center is open while we are open, Monday through Friday, 9 am–5 pm. Our goal is to make it a productive place to make more records accessible to more people, but it also serves as a place to foster community. First-time volunteers often start with one of our monthly Digitization Friday events with experienced volunteers providing assistance. During these and other events, like our 24-hour digitization and indexing events, we welcome volunteers to scan our material and to bring their own material to scan. Our scanner creates amazing quality images, and we want our community to benefit from it. The more people see what can be accomplished, the more word will get around that we have this tool to preserve all types of New York records.

NYG&B Digital Collections Manager Kalyn Loewer oversees the work our Digitization Center volunteers undertake. She coordinates numerous projects simultaneously and is always pleased when records are ready to be published on our website so that our volunteers can see the results of their efforts and our community can access them.

New Projects

In addition to working with volunteers in the office, Kalyn is facilitating a project at the Church of the Transfiguration, also known as “The Little Church Around the Corner.” Volunteers, including Deborah Barber, index their fragile card catalog containing data on marriages. The marriages noted in the index are in volumes that will be scanned at the NYG&B’s Digitization Center.

Organizations across New York, such as the Cato Union Hill Cemetery, Sterling Town Hall, and Onondaga Historical Society are part of our community helping us
achieve our preservation goal. Working closely with partners at these organizations, we identified records sets for digitization. The NYG&B sent portable scanners specifically for this purpose, and in some cases, has identified local volunteers to do the actual scanning. We were lucky to find volunteer Steve Izzo who goes onsite at both Cato Union Hill Cemetery and the Sterling Town Hall. His quick grasp of the each organizations needs and the scanning equipment made the project possible. Now we have digital files of materials that perhaps would not have been preserved otherwise, such as interment books, school and tax records, and census records in parts of New York in which our members have interest. This is just a sample of initiatives we are undertaking in the name of preservation. We continue to seek organizations that can use our help with this important mission.

Indexing
It is not just the Digitization Center that sees the impact of our volunteers. Our own Sue Miller, who in addition to running our education programs and editing the New York Researcher, among other publications, is an avid indexer and indexing expert. She engages our remote volunteers by providing indexing tutorials. Over the past year, she has shown dozens of remote volunteers how to get involved in the New York Land Records Indexing Project on FamilySearch. Sue has provided demonstrations to new indexers and has answered questions from experienced indexers like Ruth Huggler. The part played by NYG&B volunteers, including Barbara Bodden who has indexed thousands of records, in this massive indexing project gets it closer to the finish line (see next page).

Office and Membership Assistance
As the office manager, I personally benefit from the help so many provide whenever we have book orders to pack and ship. And Jen Davis counts on these same volunteers—such as Gail Frank, Earl Miller, and Jack McQuade—to assist with mailings each month.

Volunteer Appreciation
To show our thanks, we host occasional appreciation events. This year, our volunteers were invited on a tour of Governors Island provided by Lynne Hayden-Findlay, who in addition to being a volunteer tour guide for Governors Island, is a dedicated weekly volunteer with the NYG&B. Lynne is a research and history enthusiast, both of which have great bearing on the intricacy and quality of work she does for us as well as for Governors Island.

This year, we were thrilled to be able to award NYG&B volunteer Deborah Barber with our annual service award in person at NYSFHC in Albany. Deborah has been volunteering on a weekly basis for many years. She scans, indexes, does research for us at the New York Public Library, and can answer all of the questions that our new volunteers have, and even some that Kalyn and I have about historical records. (See “In Other Lines” on page 111.)

Our valuable volunteers accomplish a great deal with the enhanced office space—bringing even more records and value to you, our members. This is a time of year to reflect and be thankful. And we are. We are grateful for the work our volunteers do and for the warmth, generosity of spirit, and joy with which they do it.

If you are interested in volunteering for the NYG&B, email volunteer@nygbs.org to reach me.

In Memoriam: Don Eckerle (1936–2022)
Don Eckerle, founding member of the German Genealogy Group, died 22 November 2022. He was born 11 February 1936, growing up in Ridgewood, Queens County, New York.

In 1996 Don attended the first meeting of the German Genealogy Group (GGG) going on to spearhead the database project that now contains more than 23 million records. Don’s contributions to the family history community have been honored by the National Genealogical Society, and 11 times by the National Archives. He told some of his story in an oral history project by the Italian Genealogical Group (IGG) in 2020. The GGG shares his genealogical contributions and the IGG video here, germangenealogygroup.com/about-us/Don_Eckerle-InMemoriam.php.
Latest Online for NYG&B Members

Here are a few of the latest releases for NYG&B members. Happy researching!

New Online Collection
nygbs.org/online-records/collection/account-journal-dr-amaziah-church-sherwood

The Account Journal of Dr. Amaziah Church Sherwood—a set of records that had never before been digitized or published on the web—is the most recent online collection for you to explore.

This is a handwritten journal of Dr. Amaziah Church Sherwood’s patients and their accounts, approximately 1841–1860. He graduated from Geneva Medical School in 1841, and worked as a physician in Cayutaville, Newfield, and Enfield, New York, until his death in 1860.

The journal includes handwritten records of 150 patient names and fees/expenditures, but does not include treatment information. It is possible the entries in this journal are the only place some names can be found.

New On-demand Programs—Log in to view these programs!

Evidence in Printed Sources for Irish Family History
nygbs.org/video/irish-popular-print

Printed material captures a greater sweep of the Irish population, of all backgrounds and at an earlier time, than many official or transactional archival documents. Fiona Fitzsimons walks us through a few transformative centuries and helps connect links from Ireland to New York families by using these sources.

1921 Census of England and Wales
nygbs.org/video/1921-census

Was your grandma a female pioneer like Dorothy Levitt, the first female racing driver? Was your grandpa one of the last mole catchers? Today, the most extensive British census ever available online will reveal where your grandparents were, who they were with and what they were doing in the summer of 1921. Jen Baldwin from Findmypast walks us through some fascinating information, history, and stories found in the 1921 census of England and Wales!
Discovering One’s Scottish Past Through Storytelling and Oral History (Three Part Series)

In hearing the stories and tales of the past from those who remember, we can discover our Scottish past. Learn from leading projects underway in Scotland that help bring color to people and history.

nygbs.org/video/tartan-day (Part 1)
Donald Smith talks about the Edinburgh Scottish Storytelling Festival—and tells a tale. John Copeland’s describes Orkney’s history and traditions.

nygbs.org/video/scottish-stories (Part 2)
Carenza Murray walks us through the ongoing project at Inverness Castle and Fiona Mackenzie’s shares her story of the Canna House Project.

nygbs.org/video/scottish-past (Part 3)
As we travel to the Outer Hebrides, Donnie Steele tells the story of South Uist and Flora McDonald. Finally, Dr Andrew Jennings tells the history of the Shetland Islands north of the mainland and how to find family there.

Exploring the NYG&B Online Collections

nygbs.org/video/exploring-nygb-online-collections
Join Fred Wertz, the NYG&B Director of Digital Services, for a look at the online records you can find on our website. Fred reviews some of our most popular and essential online records, which cannot be found anywhere else.

Navigating the 1950 US Census

nygbs.org/video/1950-census (March 28, 2022)
nygbs.org/video/1950-us-census (update, April 27, 2022)
The 1950 census is here! NYG&B Director of Programs Susan R. Miller helps members learn more about exploring these new records, finding yourself and family members, or locating some of your favorite celebrities!

Navigating the “Voyages of New Netherland” Database

nygbs.org/video/voyages-database
The Voyages of New Netherland project has created a database that captures the activities of ships that undertook voyages between the Dutch Republic and the colony of New Netherland and aims to integrate them into the larger story of the colony. The database’s creator, Julie van den Hout, reviews its features and demonstrate the best methods for searching, extracting, and interpreting the data. Learn all about this fascinating database and how you can use it in your own research.
New Access and Databases

When you see a new record set for New York, please let us know by emailing education@nygbs.org.

New York, Birth Indexes outside of New York City, 1881–1942

familysearch.org/search/collection/4460198

This collection (above) was secured by Reclaim the Records, which hosts the microfilm images at the Internet Archive (https://archive.org/details/nybirthindex).

FamilySearch's collection provides the microfilm images and a searchable database (not yet complete as the indexing effort is ongoing). Transcribed information includes the typewritten entries as well as additions to the indexes handwritten in later—which may include names of children where they were initially recorded as unknown in the typed index.

Death registers for United States soldiers serving in Cuba and Puerto Rico, 1898–1900

https://a860-collectionguides.nyc.gov/repositories/2/archival_objects/900710

A newly microfilmed, but not digitized, collection from MUNI is accessible in their research room.

U.S., Carded Birth Records in Military Hospitals, 1884–1916

ancestry.com/search/collections/62370

Nearly 1,500 New York births recorded by the Adjutant General's Office show parent and child names and place of birth. The Military Hospitals were located across the U.S. and its territories, therefore families of New York origin in various locations depending on the service person's posting.

Carded Birth Records, 1844–1912, U.S. National Archives Record Group 94

Images of the cards described are also accessible on the National Archives website, although not through a name searchable database.

https://catalog.archives.gov/id/655727

More than 710K Records Added to NYC Historical Vital Records

https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov

Since the initial release in March 2022 (above), the NYC Municipal Archives has completed its first quarterly update by adding more than 710,000 records, including:

- Manhattan (New York County) Death Records, 1930–1945 — 437,303 new records
- Queens Death Records, 1881–1892 — 2 new records
- Queens Marriage Licenses, 1940s — 12,087 new records
- Staten Island (Richmond County) Marriage Licenses, 1947–1949 — 4,789 new records

We will continue to identify the additional records added.

New York Heritage Digital Collections—New York Historic Newspapers

nyshistoricnewspapers.org

Baldwinsville has been busy adding five newspapers now available online. Searches may be performed for a county or town/city within that county. Updated and new titles include:

Onondaga County

- The Baldwinsville Gazette, 1878–1882
- The Baldwinsville Gazette and Farmers' Journal, 1883–1891
- The Gazette and Farmers' Journal, 1891–1965
- The Messenger, 197?–1965
- Onondaga Gazette, 1846–1877

Updated collections include:

Onondaga County

- The Utica Observer, J an. 1831–Dec. 1852? (updated)
History

The area that is now Tioga County was once inhabited by the Cayuga and Onondaga tribes (members of the Iroquois Confederacy). Its location in Southern Tier borders Chemung, Tompkins, Cortland, and Broome counties and Pennsylvania.

In August 1779, the contingents of John Sullivan's army burned the Iroquois villages in the county, becoming the first permanent white settlers there. It was officially formed as a county on February 16, 1791, from Montgomery County (though it was later split to form Onondaga, Chenango, Broome, and Chemung counties).

The county seat is the village of Owego, and the county's name means “at the forks” in the Iroquois language. Early industries in the county include farming, logging, and the fur trade. After railroad tracks were built in the mid-1800s, manufacturing of butter and wooden products flourished.

A notable native of Tioga County, Esther Hobart Morris, was the first American woman in an official government position. In 1870 she was appointed justice of the peace for South Pass City, Fremont County, Wyoming.

New York State Census Records

County originals at Tioga County Clerk's Office: 1835, 1855, 1865, 1875, 1892, 1905, 1915, and 1925 are digitized on FamilySearch, which provides indexes and images.

For the 1825 census abstract and index, see Barnello, et al., in “Abstracts, Indexes, and Transcriptions,” below.

The 1845 census is lost. For a transcription of the Factoryville census, see Miles and Anderson in “Abstracts, Indexes, and Transcriptions, Other Resources,” below.

State originals at the NYSA: 1915, 1925; digitized by Ancestry.

Note that most of the 1855 New York state census for Clinton County is lost but the information for the Town of Clinton was published in The Capital, vol. 4, no. 2, 1989 [NYGB Online Collections, nybgs.org/online-records/capital-periodical/208-030/2].

Countywide Repositories and Resources

Tioga County Clerk
16 Court Street, PO Box 307, Owego, NY 13827
(607) 687-8660
tiogacountyny.com/departments/county-clerk

Land records; court records; naturalization records 1854–1955; and the New York state census for Tioga County 1825, 1835, 1855, 1865, 1875, 1892.


Tioga County Surrogate’s Court
20 Court Street, PO Box 10, Owego, NY 13827
(607) 689-6099
nycourts.gov/courts/6jd/tioga/surrogate/index.shtml

Holds probate records from the early 1800s to the present. See many but not all probate records digitized from microfilm on FamilySearch’s collection, familysearch.org/search/collection/1920234 (1800 to early 1900s) and indexed records on Ancestry.
Local Repositories and Resources (Alphabetized by location)

Berkshire Free Library and Berkshire History Museum
12519-1 State Route 38, PO Box 151, Berkshire, NY 13736
(607) 657-4418 | berkshirefreelibrary.org
Holds local and family history books. Library houses and operates the museum, which includes photographs and ephemera.

Candor Public Library
2 Bank Street, PO Box 104, Candor, NY 13743
(607) 659-7258 | candorfreelibrary.org
Family histories, Candor Chronicle 1800s–1950s, New York civil war records, and local history books.

Coburn Free Library
275 Main Street, Owego, NY 13827
(607) 687-3520 | coburnfreelibrary.org
Family and local histories, including materials relating to the Daughters of the American Revolution and Mayflower descendants.

Spencer Historical Society
22 Spencer Street, PO Box 71, Spencer, NY 14883
(607) 589-6134
Local collection of census records 1825, 1835, 1855; birth and death records 1880s–1915; newspapers 1888–present; and family files. Quarterly newsletter.

Selected Print and Online Resources

Abstracts, Indexes, and Transcriptions


Selected Print and Online Resources


Other Resources


Kingman, LeRoy W. Our County and Its People: A Memorial History of Tioga County, New York. Elmira, NY, 1897. [archive.org/details/ourcountyitspeop00kin]

Kingman, LeRoy W. Owego: Some Account of the Early Settlement of the Village in Tioga County, NY, Called Ah-wa-ga by the Indians, Which Name was Corrupted by Gradual Evolution into Owago, Owego, Owegy, and Finally Owego. Owego, NY: Owego Gazette, 1907. [archive.org/details/owegosomeaccount00king]


Washburn, Raymond Secord. Cost of production of an acre of potatoes in Tompkins and Tioga counties. Ithaca University Library, 1913. [archive.org/details/cu31924013943273/page/n7/mode/2up]


Additional Online Resources

FamilySearch
A catalog search for Tioga County produces many results, including:
- 1825 and 1835 state censuses (familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS4Y-L326-6)
- Multiple cemetery records (link to one in the book view familysearch.org/library/books/viewer/869982/)
- Typescripts of early court recordings (familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSK7-53SM-L)

Tioga County GenWeb tioga.nygenweb.net
The Tioga county site included abstracts of several churches’ records, an 1887-1888 directory, an 1856 business directory, and several newspapers.

Further Reading


Tioga County, New York

Formed: February 16, 1791
Parent County: Montgomery County
Daughter Counties: Onondaga 1794; Chenango 1798; Broome 1806; Chemung 1836
County Seat ★: Village of Owego
Major Land Transactions: Boston Ten Towns 1787; Watkins and Flint Purchase 1794

County Cities, Towns, and Villages:
Barton
Berkshire
Candor
Newark Valley
Nichols
Owego
Richford
Spencer

Endnotes
The Editor’s View—September 2022

Family history has always fascinated me. My paternal grandparents’ accents were steady reminders of their decision to leave County Louth, Ireland, and to settle in New York City with dreams of their future. They worked diligently to achieve those dreams. My grandfather was a laborer for Consolidated Edison, just a few blocks away from the family’s flat in Manhattan’s Gas House District. My grandmother baked, cleaned, sewed, and cared for their four children. Intrigued by my grandparents’ lives even as a child, I often spoke with my grandmother about Ireland, her voyage to America, and her experiences in her new home. Little did I know that my childhood curiosity would lead me to genealogical research—and to the remarkable opportunity to edit The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, helping others tell stories of New Yorkers from all walks of life.

During my time at The Record, I have had the chance to work with dozens of authors, insightful peer reviewers, an exceptional and dedicated editorial board, and the creative, hardworking NYG&B staff. New York genealogists—and those who research families with New York roots—are consistently generous with their time and knowledge, committed to the goal of outstanding genealogical scholarship. What a priceless gift it has been to learn from them!

As guest editor of the January 2011 issue, I expressed hope that articles in this journal would inspire readers to research and to write about their conclusions. Today, as I finish my term as editor, that hope endures.

And so I will close as I began: “Are you ready? Turn to the next page. Let the inspiration begin.”

— Gratefully, Laura Murphy DeGrazia, CG®, FGBS, Editor

Article Summaries

Parents for Lydia (Maltby) Burdick of Oneida and Cattaraugus Counties, New York
By Mary G. Burdick
Published local histories, unsourced genealogies, and handwritten (or scribbled) family notes provide clues for further research as the author demonstrated in this article. The use of tables to correlate information demonstrates the usefulness of the technique. This article continues in the January issue.

Time period: 1800s, 1900s
Location: Cattaraugus, Herkimer, and Oneida counties, and Michigan, Ohio, and Texas
Sources: Unsourced authored works, census records, land company records, county land records, a family manuscript, a family letter, probate files, religious records, and newspapers (among others)

Identifying Lydia Burton (About 1778–Before 1 May 1839) as the Wife of Ephraim Page Jr.
By Susan Gardner Boyle
The author uses deeds and estate records, as well as Connecticut town records to link family members, allowing careful analysis of the information to come to a conclusion. This article continues in the January issue.

Time period: 1700s, 1800s
Location: Greene, Fulton and Hamilton (then Montgomery) and Columbia counties, and Connecticut and Texas
Sources: Tax records, town records, census records, published county histories, county land records, gazetteers, probate files, religious records, and pension files (among others)

October Issue Extras
The October issue also contains Additions and Corrections, and a book review.

The annual article and name indexes are included in this issue.
Exploring Our Past: The NYG&B Visits Northern Ireland

The NYG&B’s first heritage trip to Northern Ireland was a fascinating and enriching experience, including record repositories, historical locations, and the enchanting local scenery. Participants on the tour were aptly guided by members of the Ulster Historical Foundation, who joined Jen Davis, NYG&B VP, Advancement and Membership.

Our visit was anchored in Belfast, where we began to learn the city’s history. A visit to Titanic Belfast, a modern museum that tells the story not only of the famous ship, but of the city and people who built her. The group then explored Clifton House, once the home of the Belfast Charitable Society, established in 1752 to aid Belfast’s poor. Our private tour gave us insight into the history of poor houses in the 1700s and 1800s. A tour of the Crumlin Road Gaol, a prison that opened in 1846 and was in operation until 1996, followed. While there we learned the stories of people who were imprisoned there and the conditions they faced.

The next day began at the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). The team at PRONI welcomed the NYG&B, as we learned about the collections kept there. PRONI opened in 1924 and is one of the best regional archives in the world. The group had a first-hand look at PRONI’s work to conserve documents in their impressive conservation lab and learned more about their impressive storage space. Next the group visited Linen Hall Library, the oldest library in Belfast. This beautiful building has a huge genealogical collection in addition to the Burns Collection, the largest collection of material relating to Scottish poet Robert Burns outside of Scotland. The day concluded with a return to Clifton House for dinner and live Irish music.

The tour’s third day saw our group venture out of Belfast, driving along the beautiful Antrim Coast and through the Glens of Antrim on our way to the Giant’s Causeway. The coast is dotted with small villages and fishing sites and the amazing panoramic views, including Dunluce Castle on the Causeway Coast. The Giant’s Causeway is Northern Ireland’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site, made up of 40,000 basalt stone columns formed by volcanic eruptions over 60 million years ago. Seeing these stones as they cascade down the mountain into the ocean was breathtaking.

Thursday was a day of libraries, beginning with a visit to Benburb Priory, which was originally a fortified castle. A manor house was built on the estate in the late 19th century which was used as a military hospital during the World War II. The Servite Order took over the home in 1948 and now it houses an archive and library with books dating back to the early 1500s. After lunch, the group visited the Cardinal Tomas O’Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive, which holds a collection of 50,000 published works on various aspects of Irish history, language, and culture. The library also has a unique archive of Irish sports records. The librarian was excited to show us the program from the first all-Ireland football tournament held outside of Ireland, in 1947 at the Polo Grounds in New York City.

Our final stop of the day was a very special one. Baron’s Court, home of the Duke of Abercorn, was built in the 1770s. It has been extensively modified over the years but remains a grand estate. The house is the private residence of the present Duke of Abercorn, who graciously allowed us to visit his home and grounds. We are grateful to the Duke for allowing us this privilege.

The history of Ireland is a complex and fascinating, and we are grateful to everyone at the Ulster Historical Foundation for guiding and educating us through a wonderful week.
In Other Lines
A column in which we ask NYG&B members to tell us their own stories.

Charles and Rose Lankford | Colorado | Member since 2020

What is your earliest genealogical recollection?
My grandmother was a colorful, self-reliant person who loved to tell stories about our family. I always enjoyed listening to her stories and it always made me want to learn more about them and where we came from.

How did you get started in genealogy?
Rose’s family history is fairly straightforward being Germans from Russia. A significant amount of research has been accomplished over the years. A book published about their family tree describes a rich but tragic history and details their family struggles and where their family came from.

Whereas, although my family had collected a considerable number of family photographs and some artifacts along with a few family stories, little was passed along about our roots. I have Rose to thank for collecting as much as possible from my side of the family while I was extremely busy with my demanding project management career with a major oil company. She interviewed relatives, collected photographs, and welcomed any family heirlooms they passed along. If it was not for her, we would not have much to start with. Then, when I retired, we were able to begin making sense of all she had collected and fill in the gaps with detailed genealogy research.

Tell me about your hobbies?
We have both been retired for some time but have several hobbies that keep us busy along with traveling abroad and enjoying our grandkids. Our primary hobbies being family genealogy, BBQ judging, and owning a small cemetery. We are KCBS certified BBQ judges with more than 110 contests judged. We have been all over the United States judging events. Surprisingly, we have been able to meld BBQ judging together with researching Charles’ family tree. There always seems to be a contest near where we are researching. So, we combine the two on every genealogy trip. Also, we have been fortunate enough to be asked by the owner of the Colorado Rockies to organize and put on two BBQ contests for him during baseball season. We really enjoyed working with his group. The Rockies owner, Mr. Monfort, has even been to our home for BBQ. The BBQ community is made of a lot of great people that enjoy getting together. Great food and great times.

Maybe the other unusual “hobby” is that while tracing Charles’ father’s family line back into Missouri, we found a small country church cemetery where his 2-time great grandparents were buried. It was a Presbyterian Church, school and cemetery established in 1836 in the countryside of Missouri. The Church building had long been torn down, but the one room school building that they stopped using in the early 1940s still stands and is used as a private home today. Unfortunately, the cemetery with more than 100 grave sites was allowed to degrade. Several decades ago, the descendants had cleaned it up and made some repairs, but no significant work had been done in more than twenty-five years. Charles’ ancestor’s headstones along with a number of the others in the cemetery had been lost or destroyed. A previous landowner’s intent was to return the land to agriculture. The cemetery the remaining headstones needed care or repairs. After a couple years of “whining,” Charles finally convinced the present landowner to sell us the cemetery. We cleaned up the cemetery removing the underbrush and seedling trees. Since then, we go back a couple times a year for cleaning and repairs. Also, we have had a professional company come out and repair some headstones. We installed a single headstone listing Charles’ 2-time great grandparents and their children who were recorded as buried in the cemetery. A landscaper maintains the cemetery for us.

Have you held a family reunion?
We have not. We were going to attend two significant family reunions associated with our ancestors, but Covid shut both of them down. Hopefully, they will be resurrected this year or next and we will be able to attend.

What brought you to the NYG&B?
The NYG&B is now my go-to for anything New York as well as the New England area. Our Dutch branch passed through New York and left their mark in NYG&B records.
I hadn't been familiar at all with NYG&B, but a local New York county genealogist recommended your website for what was available. I found not only a large amount of information but great assistance from professionals there, which has made my research significantly easier. We recently joined a group on a research trip to Albany which was a very productive trip.

Have you always had an interest/a passion in genealogy?
Genealogy was always a backburner type subject. Something I thought I was mildly interested in. However, once I began to accumulate details about our family tree and see how many stories there were associated with so many family members, the bug really bit me. Now, we take at least four genealogy trips per year.

What is the most surprising thing you found in your research?
Two stories come to mind. The first is that NYG&B research revealed that Charles’ 4-time great grandfather, Jacob Janszen “Flodder” Gardenier, owned six lots on Wall Street in New York City. He subsequently sold them, but it would have been nice if he would have passed them down through the family. Imagine what they are worth today.

The other surprising family story concerns a 2-time great grandfather of Charles from England—probably a life lesson for us all. In 1866 after his mother died of cholera, his father took two sons, 11 and 15, and immigrated to the United States, where he and the sons are employed for approximately 4½ years. His father had to leave behind his youngest son, Charles’ 2-time great grandfather, age 13, and four daughters in the County Workhouse. The two eldest daughters 22 and 11 lived as full-time servants in private homes, while the two younger daughters 8 and 9 were students living in the Workhouse. Recorded minutes of the Workhouse show that their father sent a request that they be sent to the United States, but the Workhouse denied providing him the funds to do so. So, it appears that the family had to save for four and a half years to pay for passage. Imagine children of that age first losing their mother and then having their father place them in a Workhouse with the promise that he would be back for them once he could save the money to pay their way. I followed their lives from the time they came over until their death. The siblings stuck together. Lived near each other and worked near or with each other. Only my great grandfather and one sister married and raised families. The others did not. They all purchased cemetery plots together and are buried together. They stuck together in tough times and wanted to be together forever. It goes without saying the life lessons that could be learned.

I firmly believe the children of today should spend time learning about their ancestors and what they went through to give us the opportunities we have today.

What do you think are the five best things about being a NYG&B member?
It is not only the amount of research materials but the experienced team members available to assist you in accessing and interpreting the material. To us this is one of the most significant draws to being members. On some sites you may never know a pertinent piece of information is available or exists because you may not realize how or where to access it. But, at NYG&B there is always someone, an article, or a guide to help.

NYG&B is not a static repository. It is always growing and changing. We are always interested in what is new when the latest New York Researcher and The NYG&B Record edition arrive.

Record organization is really great. For me, the breakdown by County is of great value. Since my ancestors were only located in a couple counties, it allows me to concentrate in a couple different counties and reduce the amount of information to go through. Which in turn reduces my research time.

Along with the other resources are webinars and other educational resources. I look forward to taking advantage of the DNA series in particular. There are so many DNA courses and so-called experts available on the internet. I am glad to see webinars from a reputable provider such as NYG&B. Where I can count on a quality product.

Organized research trips such as the Albany trip that we were on last year really helped my New York research. There were genealogists along with us to not only guide us and answer questions, but they helped me keep my focus on the most important research issues.
NYG&B Learning Experiences
Research with the New York Experts—In-Person and Online!

In-Person Research Trips
Our research tours are an ideal setting for those just beginning their search and those seeking answers to longstanding New York questions. Registration includes a pre-consultation with a professional genealogist and lectures to prepare you for the onsite guidance offered throughout the program. Register early, as a limited number of spaces are available for each tour and often sell out quickly.

Research in New York City
Manhattan, New York
Explore New York City’s vast repositories under the careful guidance of the NYG&B. This program is based in-person at the NYG&B’s headquarters.

Research at the Allen County Public Library
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Dive into the incredible collections at the nation’s largest public library for family history. In addition to consultations and sessions to help prepare you for your time, dedicated genealogists will be on-hand to assist you as you explore The Genealogy Center’s collections.

Research in Albany
Albany, New York
Join the NYG&B for three days of research in Albany at the NY State Library and NY State Archives. Online orientation sessions and advance consultations prepare you for research onsite.

Online Learning with the NYG&B
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- New York State Research Fundamentals, First Run
- New York City Research Fundamentals
- Tracing Immigrant Ancestors to New York, 1780s to 1924: Part B—The People
- New York State Research Fundamentals, Second Run

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