

# Empire State Research

by Sara Allen

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## Beginning Strategies:

- Gather Background Information:
  - Speak to knowledgeable relatives (even distant cousins/aunts/etc.) from all branches of family, not just yours
  - Seek out pictures/documents within the family
- Research the family fully in their new location!
  - If they moved out of NY to Ohio or Michigan, research the family fully in OH or MI before trying to research them in NY
- Read up on the history and geography of the areas in New York where they lived & study maps
- Get to know your Ancestor
  - Compile all known information about him/her, such as: approximate age, economic status, names of wife and children, where & when married, where, when & to whom children were married, religious affiliation, where & when lived in particular state/county/town, landowner, when acquired land, when sold, what goods paid taxes on, who was property distributed to upon death, when died, where buried, etc.
  - Trace all children to adulthood, seeking out documents that name parents, grandparents, other relatives or family origins
  - Use Research Checklist (Google this)
- Cluster Research
  - Research the entire family (all known children, spouses, siblings, parents, in-laws) and his **F**riends, **A**ssociates and **N**eighbors (FAN Club)
- Be flexible about spelling
  - Use the Soundex option if available; first names may be abbreviated or use initials only
  - Compile lists of phonetic spellings of last name
- Use Genealogy Center materials fully
  - Print, Microtext, Databases, and Periodicals
  - PERSI (Periodical Source Index): <https://www.genealogycenter.info/persi/>
- Utilize FamilySearch.org website to its full potential:
  - Options under Search include: Records (including “Browse” unindexed records), Family Tree, Books, Catalog, Images, and Research Wiki.

## Records types

### Federal, State and Local Censuses

- Find family in all applicable censuses, view original (handwritten) documents, and read all columns of information recorded
- Federal and State Censuses online at Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org or on microfilm  
Record names of neighbors also (for FAN Club)- 20 families prior and after their census entry. These families may be relatives (such as married sisters or relatives of the mother), or close acquaintances that may lead you to family origins back in NY
- Review book, “New York State Censuses & Substitutes” by William Dollarhide.

### City Directories

- Locate in libraries on microfilm or in print, some on Ancestry.com
- Locate in local library in the city desired or at the New York State Library

### Land deeds/property records – buying and selling land/property; possible former residence named on deeds

- Locate at libraries in books, microfilm, periodicals as abstracts & indexes
- Originals in County Courthouse or some available on FamilySearch (browse records)
- Colonial land records – New York State Archives
- Manors/Patents – New York State Archives and other places
  - Read book, “Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York” and articles: “Manors in New York” by Henry Hoff and “Exploring Research Resources for Hudson Valley Tenant Farmers” by Jane E. Wilcox. (see Bibliography at end of this handout).
  - Robert Livingston papers here on microfilm for Livingston Manor
  - Book series “Settlers of the Beekman Patent” edited by Frank Doherty

### Naturalization records – may give town of origin, date of immigration, especially post-1900 records

- Locate at libraries in books, periodicals, microfilm as abstracts & indexes
- Some originals online at Fold3, FamilySearch.org, Ancestry.com
- Originals at County Courthouse, National Archives, New York Branch, or USCIS (<http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>)

### Religious records – often give home parish or baptismal parish & parents’ names

- Locate at the church itself; denominational archives, local or state libraries;
- Locate abstracts and indexes in libraries in books, microfilm or periodicals
- Online at FamilySearch.org/Ancestry.com/Fold3 or other website

- New York City Catholic records (select parishes) at FindMyPast database, see: <https://www.findmypast.com/catholicrecords>

Civil birth, marriage, death records – often give birthplace, parents' names

- Locate at town clerk or registrar or NY State Health Dept ([https://www.health.ny.gov/vital\\_records/](https://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/))
- New York City vital records
  - New York Municipal Archives <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/records/historical-records/genealogy.page>
  - New York City Dept. of Health <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/services/birth-certificates.page> OR
  - New York City Clerk <http://www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/html/marriage/records.shtml>
- Indexes online at Ancestry.com, Familysearch.org or other website; in libraries in books, periodicals or microfilm (transcriptions)
- Some marriage records online

Cemetery records – tombstones sometimes give birthplace/parents' names

- Go to cemetery; see pictures of stones online at [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com) or other website

Cemetery records – sexton's records

- Go to cemetery or call office; locate in libraries in books, periodicals and microfilm or in another library; other online sites

Funeral home records

- Contact funeral home; locate in libraries in books, periodicals & microfilm; online at various sites

Obituaries

- Locate at local library, New York State Library (may be able to order on microfilm via Interlibrary loan)
- Online at various sources such as Ancestry.com, findagrave.com, Newspapers.com, NewspaperArchive.com & other websites;
- Abstracts in books, periodicals and microfilm at libraries

Home records – Bible, Letters, Photographs – at your house or a relative's house

Draft registrations/military – often gives birthplace

- Originals online at Ancestry.com; some transcripts available in libraries in books, microfilm and periodicals

Court records – could give clues to family information

- Originals in County Courthouse or National Archives, New York branch or New York State Archives
- Some online on FamilySearch.org, Ancestry.com
- Some transcripts available in libraries in books, microfilm and periodicals

County or city histories

- Locate in libraries in books, microfilm or periodicals; some online at Familysearch.org; Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/>); Google books (<https://books.google.com/>), etc.

Social Security Application – birth place, parents' names

- Order from the Social Security Administration, called SS-5 – person must have been born 120 years ago for full release of information (<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/forms/ssa-711.pdf>)

Newspapers

- Newspaper databases: Newspapers.com, Newspaper Archive, African American Newspapers;
- New York Times (microfilm) and online
- Free website: Old Fulton Postcards, see: <http://fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html> and <https://fultonsearch.org/>
- Free website: NYS Historic Newspapers: <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/>
- New York newspapers on microfilm – order on ILL from New York State Library and other institutions, use the Newspaper database search to determine which libraries hold which newspaper: <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/nysnp/>

Vital Records Substitutes:

- Newspapers
- Family Bibles
- Church/Synagogue Records
- Mortality Schedules (1850-1880)
- State Censuses (1865, 1875) give some marriage/death info.
- Coroner's Inquests
- Probate/Estate records

## Government Websites

*New York City Clerk* - Order marriage records

<http://www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/html/marriage/records.shtml>

*New York City Department of Health* –Order birth and death records

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/services/birth-certificates.page>

*New York City Municipal Archives (MUNI)*

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/records/about/municipal-archives.page>

*New York City Historical Vital Records* – early births, deaths, marriages online

<https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/>

*New York State Department of Health*. Order birth and death records, post-1913

[https://www.health.ny.gov/vital\\_records/](https://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/)

*New York State Archives*. Online indexes, finding aids, and records of state agencies.

<http://www.archives.nysed.gov/>

*National Archives, New York City Branch*. Finding aids and online order forms for federal records from NY and NJ, including naturalizations <https://www.archives.gov/nyc>

*United States Citizenship and Immigration Services*. Copies of naturalization records, 1906-1956. <<http://www.uscis.gov/historyandgenealogy>>

## Libraries

*New York City Public Library*, Stephen A. Schwarzman Building. Newspapers, City directories, county histories, and more

<https://www.nypl.org/locations/divisions/milstein>

*New York State Library* – newspapers on microfilm (order on ILL)

<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/>

## Other websites

*Children's Aid Society – Orphanage*

<https://www.childrensaidnyc.org/about/orphan-train-movement>

*Family Search Books.* View digitized books from FHL and other library collections.

<https://books.familysearch.org/>

*Family Search Catalog.* Search the catalog of the Family History Library (FHL) in Salt Lake City, UT. Many records online and viewable freely, or at a Family History Center or Affiliate (ACPL is an affiliate)

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog>

*Family Search Records.* Search indexes and browse digital records for NY and more  
Search all records at: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/> or browse all collections at:

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/list>

*Family Search Wiki.* Learn how-tos and research tips about New York (and other places).

[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page)

*Internet Archive.* Out of copyright, digital books, city directories, microfilm.

<https://archive.org/>

*Italian Genealogical Group (IGG)* – online indexes to NYC records

<http://www.italianguen.org/>

*JewishGen* -- large website with Jewish genealogy helps: including maps, online records, contacts with other researchers, etc.

<http://www.jewishgen.org/>

*List of Local Historians NYS*, at Association of Public Historians of NYS website:

<https://www.aphnys.org/Find-A-Historian>

*National Orphan Train Complex*

<https://orphantraindepot.org/>

*New Netherland Research Center*

<https://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/about-nni/about-the-nnrc/>

*New York Foundling – Orphanage*

<https://www.nyfoundling.org/connect-to-your-foundling-roots/>

*New York Foundling Hospital Records*, at New York Historical Society

<http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/nyhs/foundling/dscref198.html>

*New York Genealogical and Biographical Society*

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

*New-York Historical Society Library*

<https://www.nyhistory.org/library>

*Newspaper Holdings in New York:*

<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/nysnp/>

*NYS Historic Newspapers*

<http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/>

*Old Fulton NY Post Cards*

<http://fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html> or <https://fultonsearch.org/>

*Reclaim the Records* – group working to gain public access to NY and other records

<https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/>

*Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation* – search Ellis Island passenger lists

<https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/>

*Steve Morse One Step Website* -- finding aid to help with searching passenger lists; use Ellis Island Gold Form for NY passengers 1892-forward

<http://www.stevemorse.org/>

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