

## Research Strategies For Upstate New York

**Upstate New York** is the portion of the state of New York lying north of the New York City metropolitan area. The region includes most of the state of New York, excluding New York City as well as Long Island, though the exact boundary is debated. Upstate includes the major cities of Buffalo, Rochester, Albany and Syracuse etc.

**Introduction:** New York was a colony, first part of Dutch New Netherland and then in 1664 an English New York colony. New York State was the 11<sup>th</sup> state to join the Union on July 26, 1788 and now has 62 counties. Political jurisdiction exists at the village, town and city levels, as well as at the county level. Counties, cities, towns and villages can all generate official records in New York State. A village remains part of a town even though it has its own government, but a city is separate from a town. **In New York State the term “township” is not used as a unit of local government – the term is simply ‘town’.** In New York State, researchers may need to check in counties, towns and villages for vital records. When using catalogs be sure to search under each jurisdiction or level – not just the county.

In New York, a city is a municipality with its own individual charter. A city is defined by the way it is organized, not by its size. Not every county has a city within its boundaries. Cities are never subdivided into towns or villages, but may be subdivided into wards, districts or other civil boundaries.

Within town, cities and some villages – there are places with no governmental structure and do not create official records – these are often called hamlets or neighborhoods. These same names may be recognized by the US Post Office and appear on census records as a designated place.

### **Key Strategies for Upstate NY:**

- Remember key dates: 1787, 1825, 1830, 1855, 1880
- Look where families might have come from
- Look where families went to
- Religious Groups
- Military Service
- Newspapers

**State Census Records:** 1825-1925. The 1855, 1865 & 1875 schedules give the county of birth if person was born in New York State. (FamilySearch & Ancestry have 1855-1925)

**Probate Records:** From 1664 to 1787, almost all estates probated were recorded in New York City by the New York County court. After 1787, most probate records will be found in the surrogate's court in the decedent's county of residence. (FamilySearch has browse image collection & Ancestry has almost 3,000,000 images now online)

Beginning in 1830, it was required that all heirs-at-law be notified of the probate of will or the administration of an estate. This was true even if the heirs-at-law were not mentioned in a will. The probate petition is usually found among the loose probate papers relating to an estate.

**Vital Records:** Statewide registration of vital statistics began in 1880 and was usually complied with by 1890 for deaths and by 1915 for births. Births, marriages, and deaths were also recorded for a short time in most counties from 1847 to about 1850. Some cities began keeping vital records before 1880; New York City, Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica & Yonkers.

- **New York State and New York City maintain separate vital records.**
- **Early vital records were mainly preserved as church records.**

Some town records from the colonial era contain vital records most of which have been published in journals (like New York Genealogical and Biographical Record: NYG&B) or in books. Those books that are out of copyright can be found in online archives such as FamilySearch.org (look in the Catalog), Ancestry.com, Archive.org or Hathitrust.org.

**Church Records:** Valuable as record substitutes for lagging vital records.

### **Historic Newspapers:**

- Old Fulton NY Post Cards - <http://www.fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html>
- NYS Historic Newspapers - <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/>
- New York Heritage Digital Collections - <https://www.nyheritage.org/newspapers/>
- The Ancestor Hunt (click on 'Newspaper Research Links' on black bar – then select state) - <http://www.theancestorhunt.com/>

## Periodicals:

- *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, 1870-present* (www.NewYorkFamilyHistory.org)
- *Tree Talks* (Central New York Genealogical Society, 1961-present) – <http://cnygs.org/>

**Getting Started:** FamilySearch Research Wiki – put the term ‘New York’ in the search box and that will take you to the New York State page – to see everything be sure to scroll down: [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main\\_Page](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Main_Page)

Pay attention to the ‘Getting Started’ section that will help you:

- [Step-by-Step New York Research, 1880-Present](#)
- [How to Find Birth Records](#)
- [How to Find Marriage Records](#)
- [How to Find Death Records](#)
- [Research Strategies](#)

## Some NY Resources:

- *New York Family History Guide and Gazetteer* (New York Genealogical and Biographical Society)
- *New York in the American Revolution: A Source Guide for Genealogists and Historians* (by Eric G. Grundset, National Society of the American Revolution)
- *New York State Probate Records: A Genealogist’s Guide to Testate and Intestate Records, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (by Gordon L. Remington, New England Historic Genealogical Society)
- *New York State Censuses & Substitutes* (by William Dollarhide, Heritage Creations)
- *Abstracts of Wills, Administrations, and Guardianships in New York State 1787-1835* (by William A. D. Eardeley, searchable database on AmericanAncestors.org)
- *New York, Probate Records 1629-1971* and *New York, Land Records, 1630-1975* (online on FamilySearch.org under New York Historical Records.
- *New York Essays: Resources for the Genealogist in New York State Outside New York City* (by Marian S. Henry, New England Historic Genealogical Society)
- *Settlers of the Beekman Patent, Dutchess County, New York, 12 vols to date* (by Frank J. Doherty – website; beekmansettlers.com)
- *Western New York Land Transactions, 1804-1835, Extracted from the Archives of the Holland Land Company, 2 vols* (by Karen E. Livsey, Genealogical Publishing Company)

- *Directory of Collections of New York Vital Records 1726-1989, with Rare Gazetteer* (by Fred Q. Bowman and Thomas J. Lynch, Heritage Books)
- *10,000 Vital Records of Eastern New York, 1777-1834* (by Fred Q. Bowman)
- *10,000 Vital Records of Central New York, 1813-1850* (by Fred Q. Bowman)
- *10,000 Vital Records of Western New York, 1809-1850* (by Fred Q. Bowman)
- *8,000 More Vital Records of Eastern New York, 1804-1850* (by Fred Q. Bowman)
- *7,000 Hudson-Mohawk Valley (NY) Vital Records, 1808-1850* (by Fred Q. Bowman)
- *Revised Master Index to New York State Daughters of the American Revolution Genealogical Records Volumes, 2 vols* (by General Peter Gansevoort Chapter – online index at [services.dar.org/public/dar\\_research/search/](http://services.dar.org/public/dar_research/search/))

DC/Sept/17