



New York Resources

Family History Sources in the Empire State

New York History

The earliest European settlers in New York immigrated under a charter established by the Dutch West India Company. Thirty Walloon families who had fled to Holland from the Spanish Netherlands to escape religious persecution were among the first group to arrive in 1624. The families scattered and settled up the Hudson River Valley, with a few staying in the New York City area and others moving across the river to Long Island, where the village of Breuckelen (Brooklyn) was established.

The Walloons were soon joined by more of their fellow countrymen, as well as Huguenots, Germans from the Palatine region, Ulster-Scots, Irish, and English. In 1664, England took over control of the colony, and although the Dutch regained control in 1673, that only lasted a year before the English once again took over.

There was also a significant African slave population, but by the late 1700s many of these slaves had earned their freedom. Legislation in 1799 freed children of slave mothers, and in 1827 there was a complete abolition of slavery in the state.

Settlement prior to the American Revolution was focused primarily in the New York City area and the Delaware, Hudson, Mohawk, and Schoharie Valleys. During the Revolution, the British occupation of New York drew in Loyalists from surrounding areas and nearby states.

Completed in 1825, the Erie Canal linked the Hudson River and New York City to Lake Erie. The new canal launched waves of settlers seeking an easier way to travel to the West, and provided a means by which these settlers could in turn ship goods back East.

Of the 5.4 million people who arrived in the U.S. between 1820 and 1860, more than two-thirds entered at New York. By the 1850s, New York was receiving more than three-quarters of the national total of immigrants, and by the 1890s, more than four-fifths. The Irish potato famine sent immigrants of all classes to the United States, many of them entering through the port of New York, along with many German immigrants escaping poor economic conditions.

In 1855 Castle Garden became the receiving station of note, but upon leaving the immigration station, immigrants were routinely and ruthlessly exploited. By 1890 the facilities proved inadequate for the large and increasing numbers of arrivals and Ellis Island was selected as the site for an entirely new United States immigration station. On the island, immigrants could be screened and protected before setting out in their new country. Ellis Island officially opened 1 January 1892.





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New York Censuses

U.S. federal censuses for New York, 1790–1940, are indexed and available on Ancestry.com.

Two enumerations were taken in New York City in 1870, both of which are available on Ancestry.com. Look for street addresses on the second enumerations, which were not recorded the first time around.

Parts of the enumerations for the towns of Eastchester (Westchester County) and Brookhaven (Suffolk County) are among the few surviving schedules of the 1890 federal census. A Manhattan 1890 police census, available at the Municipal Archives, also fills part of the void of the destroyed federal census. Damaged and missing censuses include the following:

- 1810: Cortland and part of Broome County—missing
- 1860: Chenango and Columbia counties—damaged
- 1880: Suffolk County and New York City Wards 21 and 22—damaged

Of almost greater value in New York than the federal are the state censuses, taken every ten years from 1825 to 1875, in 1892, and again in 1905, 1915, and 1925 (pre-1825 state censuses and state copies of those for 1855–1905 were destroyed in the 1911 state library fire).

New York State and Related Censuses on Ancestry.com

- [New York, State Census, 1855](#)
- [New York, State Census, 1875](#)
- [New York, State Census, 1892](#)
- [New York, State Census, 1915](#)
- [New York, State Census, 1925](#)
- [U.S. Census Non-Population Schedules, New York, 1850-1880](#)
- [U.S. Census Mortality Schedules, New York, 1850-1880](#)
- [U.S. Federal Census - 1880 Schedules of Defective, Dependent, and Delinquent Classes](#)
- [New York, Census of Inmates in Almshouses and Poorhouses, 1830-1920](#)
- [New York, State Censuses, 1880, 1892, 1905 \(Selected counties and years\)](#)

New York Record Dates

- Between 1664 and the present, various forms of New York naturalization documents have been recorded. (See the New York State Archives' [Naturalization Pathfinder](#).)
- Some New York Probate records date back to 1671 (See New York State Archives' [guide to probate records](#).)

Population

1790	340,120
1800	589,051
1810	959,049
1820	1,372,851
1830	1,918,608
1840	2,428,921
1850	3,097,394
1860	3,880,735
1870	4,382,759
1880	5,082,871
1890	5,997,853
1900	7,268,894
1910	9,113,614
1920	10,385,227
1930	12,588,066
1940	13,479,142



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New York Vital Records

- Statewide civil registration began in New York in 1880-1881, although complete compliance was not met until 1913, and in some cases later.
- New York State Department of Health: Holds records of births, marriages, divorces, and deaths which occurred outside of New York City since 1881. See the Genealogy page for information on ordering records. Records may also be available from the Town Clerk where the event occurred.
- New York City Municipal Archives – Vital Records: Holds records from the five boroughs of New York City (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx), including births (before 1910), marriages (before 1930) and deaths (before 1949).
- New York City Vital Records indexes (Italian Genealogical Group): searchable indexes covering selected years for New York City birth, marriage, and death records. The German Genealogy Group (GGG) hosts these same indexes.
- The cities of Albany, Buffalo, and Yonkers maintain their own vital records collections:
 - Albany Vital Records
 - Buffalo Vital Records
 - Yonkers – Genealogy Research page

New York Birth, Marriage, and Death Records on Ancestry.com

- New York, New York, Birth Index, 1878-1909
- New York, New York, Marriage Indexes 1866-1937
- New York, New York, Death Index, 1862-1948
- New York City, Births, 1891-1902
- New York City, Deaths, 1892-1902
- New York, Marriage Newspaper Extracts, 1801-1880 (Barber Collection)
- New York, Death Newspaper Extracts, 1801-1890 (Barber Collection)
- U.S., Dutch Reformed Church Records from Selected States, 1660-1926

Special Collections on Ancestry.com

- City Directories. Use the browse box in the upper right corner to determine what directories are available for your ancestor's area. If they lived in a rural area, check to see if that area was included with a larger city in the vicinity.

New York Military Collections

- New York, Abstracts of World War I Military Service, 1917-1919
- New York, Town Clerks' Registers of Men Who Served in the Civil War, ca 1861-1865
- New York, Veteran Burial Cards, 1861-1898

[View all New York military collections on Ancestry.com](#)



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Other New York Collections

- [New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957](#)
- [New York State, Passenger and Crew Lists, 1917-1973](#)
- [U.S., Seamen's Protection Certificates, 1792-1869](#)
- [Border Crossings: From Canada to U.S., 1895-1956](#)
- [U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925](#)
- [New York, Naturalization Petitions, 1794-1906](#)
- [New York, Naturalization Records, 1882-1944](#)
- [New York, Alien Depositions of Intent to Become U.S. Citizens, 1825-1871](#)
- [New York Southern District, World War II Military Naturalization Index, 1941-1946](#)
- [New York Southern District Court, Korean War Military Naturalization Index, 1950-1955](#)
- [New York Emigrant Savings Bank, 1850-1883](#)
- [U.S. Naturalization Record Indexes, 1791-1992](#) (Free index from the World Archives Project)

[View all New York collections on Ancestry.com](#)

New York Resources

- [New York State Archives](#): The [Genealogy](#) page provides an overview of the many collections of interest to genealogists.
- [New York State Library](#): The [Genealogy](#) page provides an overview of the extensive resources at the library in Albany.
- [New York Public Library: U.S. History, Local History, and Genealogy](#) page
- [New York Historical Society](#)
- [New York Genealogical and Biographical Society](#)
- [New York GenWeb](#)
- [The New York State Digital Collections](#)
- [The National Archives at New York City](#): This facility maintains records from Federal agencies and courts in New York, including census, military, court, naturalization, and immigration records.
- [New England Historic Genealogical Society](#): NEHGS holds a wide range of records on New England states including New York. [New York Ancestors.org web site](#) showcases some of NEHGS' available New York resources.
- [Brooklyn collection at the Brooklyn Public Library](#) contains local research resources, including a searchable version of the [Brooklyn Daily Eagle](#) newspaper, 1841-1902.
- [New York Military Heritage Institute Veteran's Research Center](#)
- [Chronicling America: Online newspapers](#): Provides searchable online versions of selected New York newspapers.
- [Genealogy Resources at the Monroe County Public Library](#): Includes Rochester vital records, city directories, and newspaper index.
- [Brooklyn Genealogy Information Page](#): Great research tool with a lot of reference material and maps.



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New York Timeline (through 1960)

- 1524-Giovanni da Verrazano, commissioned by the King of France, sailed into New York Harbor. Credited for being the first European explorer to see New York.
- 1609-Henry Hudson explored the Hudson River and Samuel de Champlain explored northeastern New York.
- 1621-The Dutch West India Company established New Netherland, which would grow to include New York City and parts of Long Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware.
- 1624-New Amsterdam was settled by 30 Walloon families through the Dutch West India Company creating the first permanent settlement in what is now New York City.
- 1626-The Dutch purchased Manhattan from the native Indians.
- 1635-Dutch colonists established a village they call Breuckelen (now Brooklyn).
- 1664-Four English warships sailed into the harbor at Fort Amsterdam and Peter Stuyvesant surrendered the settlement to England. The new English governor changed the name to New York but many of the prevailing Dutch customs and rules remained.
- 1673-The Dutch recaptured New York after the Anglo-Dutch War, renaming it New Orange.
- 1674-After the Third Anglo-Dutch War, the Dutch ceded what would be thereafter called New York City to the English.
- 1690-French-Canadians and Native Americans raid settlement of Schenectady, killing most of the inhabitants.
- 1702-A yellow fever epidemic, thought to have been imported from St. Thomas, killed more than 500 people.
- 1754 to 1763-The French and Indian War pits the British and American colonists against the French and Canadians, with Native Americans joining both sides. Several battles in the war were fought within the state of New York.
- 1775 to 1783-The Revolutionary War: The first American victory of the Revolutionary War was won at Fort Ticonderoga on 10 May 1775.
- 1776-New York declared its independence on 9 July 1776, becoming one of the original 13 states of the Federal Union. The British Royal Navy captured New York City and made it their main base. British troops routed the Continental Army in the Battle of Long Island and captured lower Manhattan. Approximately 1,000 houses, approximately a quarter of New York City was destroyed in a fire a week after the British captured the city.
- 1777-Americans defeated the British at the Battle of Saratoga, marking a turning point of the American Revolution. Kingston became the first capital of New York and was burned by the British on 16 October 1777.
- 1783-George Washington entered as the British evacuated New York City, which they had occupied since 1776.
- 1787-The Surrogate's Court in each county generally has records dating back to the establishment of the county or 1787, whichever was later.
- 1785-The capital of the United States was New York City before moving to Philadelphia in 1790. The nation's first president, George Washington, was inaugurated in New York in 1789.



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- 1794-A yellow fever epidemic led to the creation of Belle Vue (Bellevue) Hospital on the banks of the East River.
- 1795-A yellow fever epidemic killed 732 of the estimated 50,000 people in New York City
- 1797-Albany became the permanent capital of New York. From 1810 until 1860, Albany was one of the ten most populous cities in the country.
- 1798-A yellow fever epidemic killed 2,086 people in New York City. Donations of food poured in from surrounding areas.
- 1801-The Brooklyn Navy Yard opened. *New York Evening Post* founded by Alexander Hamilton.
- 1805-As many as 50,000 people fled New York City during a yellow fever epidemic
- 1806-The Free School Society (later called the Public School Society) began educating poor children in New York City.
- 1807-Robert Fulton's *Clermont* steamed up the Hudson River and reached Albany in 34 hours.
- 1809-Free Blacks were allowed to pass down property to their children.
- 1811-Manhattan street grid system was adopted. Castle Clinton at Battery and Castle William on Governors Island completed.
- 1812 to 1815-War of 1812 disrupted commerce when British blocked New York Harbor and Long Island Sound.
- 1815-New York African Free School opened. Old St. Patrick's Cathedral on Prince Street, a parish started by Irish had founded in 1809 was dedicated.
- 1817-New York legislature authorized the building of the Erie Canal and construction began.
- 1818-Quaker merchants founded Black Ball Line, the first monthly packet service between New York and Liverpool.
- 1819-Depression dropped the value of New York State real estate and property. Yellow fever once again hit New York. U.S Congress passed "An act was passed regulating passenger-ships and vessels," requiring ship captains to file [passenger lists](#) with the authorities upon arrival in U.S. ports.
- 1822-New York City became America's largest city. Star Line began sailing four vessels a month to Liverpool. Another and reportedly the last major yellow fever epidemic hit New York.
- 1825-Erie Canal completed to link the waters of Lake Erie in the west to the Hudson River in the east. Called the Eighth Wonder of the World, it was an engineering marvel.
- 1830-A New York City home was the first private residence to use gas lighting. A stagecoach journey from New York to Boston took one and a half days.
- 1831-New York was the second state to outlaw imprisonment for poverty. First horse-drawn carriages called omnibuses in New York City.
- 1832-Cholera pandemic reached North America and took as many as 100 people a day in New York City at its peak. As many as 80,000 or a third of New York City residents are said to have fled.
- 1834-New York and New Jersey settled a boundary dispute over the Hudson River and the harbor, with the dividing line set at river's middle.
- 1835-The New York Stock Exchange and hundreds of buildings near it burned for two days. 23 insurance companies went bankrupt from the claims that resulted from the fire.



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- 1837-Financial panic after President Jackson's bank war starts depression that stopped economic development until 1843. Samuel Morse sent the first telegraph message from New York University. New York had 17 daily newspapers.
- 1838-Great Western was the first steamship company in regular transatlantic service from Pier 1 in New York. The Green-Wood Cemetery, burial place of famous New Yorkers, was completed in Brooklyn.
- 1839-Cunard Line moved its U.S. office to New York City.
- 1845 to 1847-Potato famine forced thousands of Irish to leave homeland and to settle in New York.
- 1846 to 1847-Crop failures in Europe and mortgage foreclosures sent tens of thousands of the dispossessed to the United States.
- 1846-U.S. Congress declared war on Mexico. Judge ruled that Georgia's laws do not apply in New York in runaway slave case. First telegraph sent between New York, Philadelphia and Washington.
- 1847-A serious epidemic of typhus started in Europe and spread to the United States.
- 1848-War with Mexico ended. German political refugees emigrated following a failed revolution. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott and more than 500 people gathered in Seneca Falls for the first women's rights convention.
- 1848-49-Cholera reached epidemic proportions and killed approximately 5,071 people in New York City.
- 1849-Gold Rush lured New Yorkers and people from all over the world to California.
- 1851-New Yorkers celebrated completion of the Erie Railroad from Piermont on Hudson River to Dunkirk, Lake Erie. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony met at an antislavery assembly in Seneca Falls, New York, beginning a lifelong friendship.
- 1852-Reports claimed that there were 10,000 homeless children on New York City streets. New York Custom House provided about 80% of the federal government's revenue.
- 1854-319,000 immigrants arrived in New York. Cholera epidemic killed 2509.
- 1855- Castle Garden at lower Manhattan, previously used as a fort and a concert hall, opened as the principal U.S. immigration station. New York City, with 622,924 people had the highest city population in the hemisphere.
- 1856-Blackwell Island's smallpox hospital opened.
- 1857-A financial panic slowed the economy and flow of immigrants to the U.S. Also, North German Lloyd shipping line established regular service between Bremen and New York.
- 1861-The Civil War began on April 12, 1861. New York supplied almost one-sixth of all Union forces.
- 1862-The Homestead Act passed encouraging naturalization by granting citizenship and providing New Yorkers and others land grant opportunities.
- 1863-The Conscription Act of March 1863 established draft of males 20-45 for military service which led to approximately 50,000 participating in the 13-16 July Draft Riots in New York City.
- 1866-Cholera epidemic killed 1,137 in New York City, the efforts of the new Metropolitan Board of Health credited with its limited spread. Atlantic telegraph cable linked New York and London.



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- 1876-Fire at Brooklyn Theater killed 295 people.
- 1883-Brooklyn Bridge was completed.
- 1886-Statue of Liberty dedicated in New York Harbor.
- 1888-The Great Blizzard of 1888 hit on March 12 and paralyzed the Eastern seaboard. Called the "Great White Hurricane," the blizzard of the century whipped a snowfall of 21 inches in New York City and Long Island into 20-foot drifts. The storm downed telegraph lines and hundreds of people in the region died.
- 1891-The Bureau of Immigration was established and Congress added health qualifications to immigration restrictions.
- 1892-Ellis Island replaced Castle Garden as the largest receiving station when it opened on 1 January 1892. Between 1892 and 1954, more than 12 million passed through the busiest of American ports. 1896-A nine-day heat wave killed 420 in New York City, mainly in crowded tenements.
- 1897-Pine frame buildings on Ellis Island burned to the ground in a disastrous fire.
- 1898-Greater New York was created by merging five boroughs to form the world's largest city.
- 1900-Ellis Island reopened with brick and iron structures.
- 1901-President William McKinley was assassinated in Buffalo and New York's Theodore Roosevelt was elected president.
- 1902-New York's first skyscraper, the 21-story Flatiron building was built.
- 1904-Over 1,000 people were killed when the *General Slocum*, carrying 1,300 people to a picnic on Long Island caught fire near Astoria, Queens. New York's first subway line, called the IRT opened.
- 1906-Bureau of Immigration was established, creating uniform naturalization procedures.
- 1911-A fire in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City killed 146 employees, mostly women.
- 1914 to 1918-World War I halted a period of mass migration to the United States.
- 1917-U. S. declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917, thereby formally entering World War I. New York sent more soldiers to fight in that war I than any other state in the Union. In 1917 and 1918, approximately 24 million men living in the United States completed a World War I draft registration card.
- 1917-Women were allowed to vote in New York state elections.
- 1918-Thousands died in the Great Influenza Pandemic. The Erie Canal was replaced by the Barge Canal.
- 1920-The 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote.
- 1921-The first quantitative immigration law sets temporary annual quotas according to nationality. Immigration dropped off.
- 1929-New York Stock Exchange crashed the Great Depression began.
- 1952-United Nations was completed in New York. The Immigration and Naturalization Act brought into one comprehensive statute the multiple laws that govern immigration and naturalization.
- 1959-The St. Lawrence Seaway opened.