

# The Vosburgh Collection of Congregational Church Records

By Marian S. Henry

New York State did not begin to collect vital records data until 1880, leaving genealogists seeking earlier records with incomplete, unpublished, and scattered substitutes. For this reason any reliable collection of early vital records is especially valuable. The Vosburgh Collection, containing over 100 volumes of transcriptions of Protestant church records, is such a resource. The collection was commissioned by the Library of Congress and other institutions, and compiled between 1913 and 1928. Royden Vosburgh, archivist and historian of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, transcribed many of the volumes and edited nearly all of them. In spite of its size, the Vosburgh Collection cannot be considered a statewide database. The emphasis is on early congregations, rather than early records. The churches included are located almost exclusively in the valleys surrounding the Hudson and Mohawk rivers, where the earliest settlements in the state were located. However, many of the transcriptions extend into the twentieth century. The collection has been microfilmed and is available in the NEHGS library, the library of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society (NYG&BS), the New York State library, and in some public libraries. Films are available at the Family History Library (and local Family History Centers).

Royden Woodward Vosburgh became archivist and historian of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society in 1913. The following biographical information was extracted from an obituary published in the *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* in 1932.[i]

Royden Woodward Vosburgh, a Life Member of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, died ... on May 18, 1931. ... Mr. Vosburgh was born Feb. 5, 1875, at Buffalo, New York, the son of William Henry Vosburgh and his wife Caroline Estelle Woodward. ... He was educated at the Brown and Nichols School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and at Harvard University, 1893-1896. ... In 1913 Mr. Vosburgh became the archivist of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, and devoted much of his time to make carefully prepared copies of the church records of the State of New York. His services enriched the Society with the records of 92 churches, occupying 101 volumes. ... In the *Records* for Jan. 1918 (Vol. 49, pp. 11-16) and April, 1921 (Vol. 52, pp. 152-157) are listed the church records copied by Mr. Vosburgh. ... Mr. Vosburgh was connected with the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, and edited for that Society nine volumes of Staten Island church and gravestone records.

The NEHGS library holds a copy of the thirteen-reel NYG&BS filming of the collection. Its call number is F118/V67/1913. While there is no index to the collection, the NEHGS library has a copy of *A guide to Vosburgh church records on microfilm*, by Robert M. Murphy (Microtext REF F118/M86/1999). The majority of the records begin in the mid to late eighteenth century. Some records cover a relatively short time span, such as Round Top Lutheran Church of Pine Plains in Dutchess County (1760-1788). Other records extend into the twentieth century, such as First Lutheran Church of Albany (1774-1901) or First Reformed Church of West Coxsackie in Greene County (1738-1918).

The catalogue entries at the Connecticut State Library for this filming are particularly complete. For example, the entry for the Reformed Dutch Church of Stone Arabia, in the town of Palatine, Montgomery County, contains the following description of the contents:[ii]

*Contents* v. 1 : Baptisms and births, Oct. 14, 1739-Jan. 31, 1796. Marriages, Oct. 16, 1739-1795. Register of members, Jan. 13, 1739-1795. Elders and deacons, 1788-1796. Copy of the charter, 1791. Death register, 1787-1795. Seat owners, 1790. Seat regulations and transfer. -- v. 2 : Births and baptisms, 1796-1824. Marriages, 1796-1821. Register of members, 1796-1830. Death register, 1796-1823. Miscellanea, dismissals, etc. Abstracts from the minutes of the consistory, 1789-1850. List of the church officers, 1743, 1788-1849. Subscription lists, 1821. -- v. 3 : Births and baptisms, 1824-1911. Death register, 1851-1856. Marriages, 1844-1895. Register of members, 1826-1912. List of families, 1851. Deaths, 1872-1880. Minutes of consistory. The history of the Reformed Dutch Church of Stone Arabia, Gravestone inscriptions. Stone Arabia Reformed Burying Ground. Catalogue of books and documents

While it is true that the records of some of the churches in this collection were published elsewhere (with indexes), researchers are urged to consult the Vosburgh collection as well. Most of the published sources transcribe only the vital records; as the description above suggests, Vosburgh includes much additional information. He carefully describes his sources and includes many notes, such as the following: “Note. three blank pages follow in the original record, after which comes the page inscribed: “RECORD OF BAPTISMS CONTINUED by Jno. J. Wack.”[iii] The following extract from the introduction to his “Abstracts from the minutes of the consistory” gives some idea of how extensive this additional material can be.

Taken as a whole, this abstract with the notes, gives every fact worthy of note, concerning the history of this church for three score years. It contains all the documentary data relating to the building of, and the repairs made, to the present church edifice; the consecration of the church, its admission to the Classis[iv] of Albany; and presents authoritatively for the first time, the facts concerning the suspension and deposition of the Rev. John J. Wack. [Rev. Wack was accused of repeated drunkenness and profanity.] This latter phase of the church history is in itself a most interesting study, and it shows that the members of the Classis of Montgomery, by whose acts the Stone Arabia Church became independent for about ten years, were the same band of malcontents who finally organized the True Reformed Dutch Church. In short, what follows presents the primary sources of information from which the history of the church must be written.[v]

The version available at the Family History Library presents the same information in sixty-one reels instead of thirteen. The Family History Library does not have a copy of Murphy’s guide, but does have an *Index to the Vosburgh collection of the early church records of the state of New York* (#1697744, item 27). The FHL catalog entries list the names of the churches included in each of the sixty-one reels.

The following table lists the relevant congregations, collected by county, together with the dates for which records were transcribed. From this a researcher should be able to evaluate the relevance of this collection to his work.

Table I: Churches Forming the Vosburgh Collection[vi]

County	Location	Congregation	Dates
<b>Albany</b>	Albany	First Lutheran	1784-1900
	Albany	First Presbyterian	1785-1870
	Berne	Reformed Dutch Church of the Beaver Dam	1763-1877
	Berne	St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran	1790-1875

	New Scotland	Presbyterian	1787-1893
<b>Cayuga</b>	Fleming	Reformed Protestant Dutch Church at the Owasco Outlet	1807-1886
	Owasco	Reformed Dutch	1799-1834
<b>Columbia</b>	Canaan	Congregational Church and Society of New Canaan	1740-1884
	Canaan	First Presbyterian	1830-1854
	Chatham	Congregational Church of New Concord	1781-1854
	Claverack	St. Thomas Evangelical Lutheran	1760-1905
	Germantown	Christ's Evangelical Lutheran	1746-1859
	Ghent	Christ's Evangelical Lutheran	1801-1901
	Ghent	Reformed Dutch (known as Christ Church)	1775-1919
	Hillsdale	Reformed Dutch	1776-1849
	Kinderhook	Reformed Dutch	1716-1864
	Manorton (Livingston)	St. John's Evangelical Lutheran	1764-1848
	West Copake	Reformed Church of West Copake (formerly Reformed Church of Taghkanick)	1783-1856
<b>Delaware</b>	Harpersfield	Presbyterian Congregation	1787-1837
	Moresville (Roxbury)	Reformed Dutch	1836-1889
	Stamford	First Presbyterian	1834-1882
	Stamford	St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Hobart	1794-1907
<b>Dutchess</b>	Pine Plains	Round Top Lutheran	1760-1788
<b>Fulton</b>	Broadalbin	First Presbyterian	1799-1895
	Johnstown	Presbyterian	1785-1867
	Johnstown	St. John's Episcopal	1815-1862
	Mayfield	Reformed Dutch	1792-1821
	Perth	First Presbyterian Church of West Galway (formerly First Presbyterian Church in Galloway)	1793-1912
	Perth	United Presbyterian Church of Broadalbin	1821-1918
<b>Greene</b>	Catskill	Reformed Dutch	1732-1833
	Durham	First Presbyterian	1792-1857
	Durham	Reformed Dutch Church in Oak Hill	1794-1832
	Durham	Second Presbyterian	1816-1872
	Prattsville	Reformed Dutch	1798-1896
	West Coxsackie	First Reformed	1738-1918

<b>Herkimer</b>	German Flats	Reformed Protestant Dutch	1763-1848
	Herkimer	Reformed Protestant Dutch Church	1801-1848
<b>Montgomery</b>	Florida	United Presbyterian	1743-1861
	Florida	Reformed Protestant Dutch	1808-1918
	Fonda	Reformed (formerly Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Caughnawaga)	1758-1858
	Glen	First Reformed Protestant Dutch (formerly First R.P.D. Church at Charleston)	1805-1882
	Minden	St. Paul's Lutheran (otherwise known as the Geisenberg Church, formerly at Hallsville)	1792-1836
	Minden	Reformed Dutch Church at Fort Plain (formerly Reformed Calvinist Church at Canajoharie)	1788-1850
	Palatine	Lutheran Trinity Church of Stone Arabia	1751-1866
	Palatine	Reformed Dutch	1739-1912
	St. Johnsville	St. John's Dutch Reformed	1788-1878
<b>New York</b>		Christ Protestant Episcopal	1793-1848
		Reformed Dutch Church at Greenwich [Greenwich Village]	1804-1859
		Madison Avenue Reformed (formerly Reformed Dutch Church in Sugar Loaf Street, and North West Reformed Dutch Church in Franklin Street)	1808-1850
		South Reformed Dutch Church ("in Garden Street" to 1835, "in Murray Street" 1837-48)	1812-1853
<b>Oneida</b>	Clinton	Congregational Church (also known as the Society of Clinton)	1788-1846
	New Hartford	Presbyterian Church (formerly the First Religious Society in Whitestown)	1791-1887
	Paris	Congregational Church (also known as Paris Religious Society)	1795-1855
	Utica	First Presbyterian	1797-1852
	Whitestown	First Presbyterian Church of Whitesboro	1795-1898
<b>Oswego</b>	Oswego	First Presbyterian	1832-1870
<b>Otsego</b>	Cherry Valley	First Presbyterian	1799-1849
	Cooperstown	Presbyterian	1800-1869
	Springfield	First Baptist	1787-1852
<b>Rensselaer</b>	Brunswick	Gilead Evangelical	1777-1859
	East Greenbush	Reformed Protestant Dutch	1787-1910
	Hoosick	Reformed Dutch Church of Taishokeat	1792-1873

		Buskirk (formerly Buskirk's Bridge, or Tiossick)	
	Lansingburgh	First Presbyterian	1804-1827 1833-1858
	Nassau	Reformed Dutch	1804-1878
	North Greenbush	Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Wynantskill	1794-1889
	Schodack	Reformed Dutch Church of Schodackat Muitzeskill	1770-1832
	Troy	First Presbyterian	1793-1864
	Troy	Second Street Presbyterian	1834-1911
	West Sandlake	First Evangelical Lutheran Church (formerly the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rensselaerwyck and Greenbush)	1785-1868
<b>Richmond (Staten Island)</b>	New Springville (in former Town of Northfield)	Asbury Methodist Episcopal (formerly M.E. Church in Town of Northfield)	1802-1809 1856-1881
	Port Richmond (Northfield)	Reformed Protestant Dutch Church on Staten Island	1790-1871
	Richmond (Northfield)	St. Andrew's Protestant Episcopal	1808-1875
	Rossville (Westfield)	St. Luke's Protestant Episcopal	1844-1877
	Tompkinsville (Castleton)	Reformed Protestant Dutch (in 1922 the Reformed Church of Brighton Heights)	1823-1871
	Tompkinsville (Castleton)	St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal	1833-1876
	West New Brighton (Castleton)	St. Mary's [Protestant Episcopal]	1849-1875
	Woodrow (Westfield)	Woodrow Methodist Episcopal	1798-1876
<b>Rockland</b>	Kakiat	Reformed Dutch	1774-1864
<b>Saratoga</b>	Ballston	First Presbyterian	1783-1865
	Charlton	Freehold Presbyterian	1800-1861
	Charlton	United Presbyterian Church at West Charlton	1794-1858
	Clifton Park	Reformed Dutch Church of Amity	1802-1856
	Schuylerville	Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Saratoga	1789-1857
	Stillwater	First Congregational	1752-1849
	Stillwater	First Presbyterian	1791-1904

<b>Schenectady</b>	Duanesburgh	Reformed Protestant Dutch	1798-1804
	Niskayuna	Protestant Reformed Dutch	1783-1861
<b>Schoharie</b>	Blenheim	Reformed Dutch	1797-1831
	Cobleskill	Union Reformed Dutch	1827-1848
	Cobleskill	Zion's Evangelical Lutheran	1795-1871
	Gilboa	Reformed (formerly the Reformed Dutch Church in Dyse's Manor in Broome)	1801-1885
	Middleburgh	Reformed Dutch	1786-1865
	New Rhinebeck	German Reformed (later the Reformed Church of Lawyerville in Cobleskill)	1788-1882
	Schoharie	Reformed (formerly the High and Low Dutch Reformed Congregation)	1730-1892
	Schoharie	St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran	1728-1882
<b>Washington</b>	Cambridge	First United Presbyterian Congregation	1794-1869
	Cambridge	Protestant Presbyterian Congregation	1791-1886
	Easton	Reformed Protestant Dutch	1803-1909
	Greenwich	Reformed Dutch (formerly Reformed Dutch Church of Union Village)	1809-1879
<b>Bennington (Vermont)</b>	Sandgate	Congregational	1782-1835 1860, 1867
<b>Warren (New Jersey)</b>	Johnsonburg	Hardwick Friends Meeting	1803-1822

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[i] New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, Vol. 76 (1932), pp. 185-6.

[ii] <http://csulib.ctstateu.edu/search/a?SEARCH=Vosburgh,+Royden>

[iii] Vosburgh Collection, reel 12, item #1, p. 141.

[iv] Classis: "In certain Presbyterian churches; an inferior judicatory consisting of the elders or pastors of the parishes or church of a district; a presbytery. Used in England under the Commonwealth; and subsequently in certain Reformed churches of the continent, and America. A district formed by the parishes so united." Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition, prepared by J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

[v] Vosburgh Collection, reel 12, item #1, p. 153.

[vi] <http://www.nygbs.org/info/articles/vosburgh.htm>