

New York State Vital Records: The Legacy of Gertrude Audrey Barber

By Marian S. Henry

Introduction

Trying to find nineteenth-century vital records in upstate New York can be a frustrating experience. Fortunately, we have an ally in Gertrude Audrey Barber who made it her life's work to transcribe vital records information from different sources in various counties in New York State. Beginning in the late 1920s and continuing for nearly 40 years, Barber painstakingly transcribed many kinds of nineteenth-century records useful to genealogists. Using original county court records she prepared extracts of deeds and abstracts of wills. She made transcriptions of church records and visited cemeteries to copy gravestone inscriptions. She extracted marriage and death notices from local newspapers. In this article we look at how upstate New York researchers could benefit from the legacy left by Gertrude Barber. The type of information she transcribed for each county and the time period covered are listed below. Suggestions are included for accessing the information since these typewritten transcriptions were not published in book form. Little information is readily available about this woman who worked for so long for the benefit of New York State genealogy. Her obituary in the *New York Times* of December 17, 1974, reads simply: "Barber — Gertrude A., Genealogist, Widow of Williard Barber, died suddenly, Dec. 12, at age 83. Interment private."

Wills

Gertrude Barber prepared abstracts and/or an index of wills for the following counties: Cayuga, Chemung, Chenango, Columbia, Delaware, Dutchess, Greene, Monroe, Oneida, Otsego, Rockland, Schenectady, Schoharie, Sullivan, Tioga, Tompkins, Warren, and Washington. Many of these transcriptions are in several volumes and include surname indexes. A more complete listing is in the summary table at the end of this article. The description of her abstracts of wills for Columbia County, which was published in *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* (Vol. LXVII, 1936, page 190), will serve to illustrate what is contained in this collection. "An indexed abstract of wills is always a most helpful publication for genealogists. It is the names mentioned in the will, rather than the names of the testators themselves, of which the searcher desires to be made aware. The author has here made the first of such compilations, concerning Columbia County, available to the public. The wills have been completely abstracted and thoroughly indexed. Fifty pages of the manuscript set forth the abstracts of the will and nearly as many pages are taken up with the valuable index. Genealogical libraries collecting manuscript material should have this one in their files."

Church and Cemetery Records

Barber's transcriptions of church records consist of extracts of birth, baptism, marriage, or death information. Individual churches are listed under each county in the table below. Although other counties are represented, Sullivan County predominates in her transcriptions of church records. (Those seeking early church records are reminded of the previous column concerning the Vosburgh Collection.)

Barber's efforts in copying tombstone inscriptions are especially valuable. As tombstones weather over time, these original records become increasingly illegible and transcriptions are all we have left. Information was collected from cemeteries in Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Columbia, Erie, Orange, Otsego, Rockland, Schoharie, Sullivan, and Wyoming counties. Individual cemeteries are listed by county in the table. Some of these items are quite extensive, such as "Gravestone Inscriptions in Columbia County, New York." It occupies 12 volumes and was released in stages from 1935 to 1941. (The finding aid "The Association of Municipal Historians of New York State Name/Location Survey Project 1995–1997," the subject of a previous article, may be helpful in locating these cemeteries.)

Newspaper Extracts

Collections of vital records extracted from newspapers include such items as "Deaths and Marriages taken from Cayuga County, N.Y. newspapers, 1825–1834" and "Marriages and deaths taken from the *Delaware Gazette* at Delhi, Delaware County, N.Y." This newspaper was apparently published weekly. Issues with no marriages are entered with

“none” rather than skipped, an indication of the author’s care taken to produce complete, reliable results. Several more examples are included in the table. (An even more extensive collection of vital records extracted from early newspapers may be found in the work of Fred Q. Bowman, the subject of a previous article.)

Accessing the Collection

Barber’s typewritten transcriptions were usually deposited in the library of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society in New York City. Members of the “G&B” will find her work there. Most have been microfilmed and today are available at many major genealogical libraries.

NEHGS lists 30 items in its catalog, including some relating to downstate counties not included here. Of these, 25 are listed in the Circulating Library catalog, making them readily available to members. Her transcriptions of marriage and death notices from the *New York Evening Post*, 1801–1890 are among the searchable databases available on the Society’s website.

The [New York State Archives](#) at Albany lists 120 items authored by Gertrude Barber – a very complete collection. The Archives participates in the national inter-library loan network, which allows researchers to borrow microfilm for use in their own public library. Similarly, the [Family History Library catalog](#) lists 119 entries, including many microfilms that may be borrowed for use at local Family History Centers. The [online catalog](#) of the National Library of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington, D. C. contains 39 entries.

Public libraries in upstate New York may hold some of this material. Results will vary. The public library for Monroe County, in Rochester, New York, lists 48 items authored by Gertrude Barber. However, the online catalog for all 50 of the public libraries in the Southern Tier Library system lists none.

The following table lists works related to 21 upstate counties including, when known, the time period covered for each item. For cemetery transcripts the date of publication is given. The table below, while extensive, is far from a complete record of the work of Mrs. Barber.

Transcriptions Compiled by Gertrude Barber Relevant to Upstate New York

County	Title
Allegany	Cemetery records of Allegany County, New York.
Cattaraugus	Cattaraugus County, N. Y., cemeteries.
	Cemetery near Yorkshire Corners, Cattaraugus County, New York and Maple Grove cemetery, town of Freedom, Cattaraugus County, New York.
	Gravestone inscriptions in Cattaraugus County, New York: including cemeteries in the towns of Freedom, Franklinville and Yorkshire.
	Gravestone inscriptions of Cadiz cemetery, town of Franklinville; Sugartown cemetery, town of Franklinville; Delevan cemetery, town of Yorkshire; Cattaraugus County, N.Y.
	Silome cemetery in the town of Freedom, Cattaraugus County, New York and Farmersville Center cemetery, in the town of Farmersville Center, Cattaraugus County, New York.
Cayuga	Abstracts of wills of Cayuga County, New York, 1799–1842. Volumes 1–4. Includes indexes after each volume.
	Cayuga County, New York, deaths and marriages taken from Cayuga County, N.Y. newspapers, 1825–1834.
Chautauqua	Gravestone inscriptions of Chautauqua Cemetery, Chautauqua, N.Y., published 1932.
Chemung	Abstracts of wills of Chemung County, N.Y. from 1836–1850. Copied from the original records at the Surrogate’s Office, Elmira, N.Y., 1941. Includes index.
Chenango	Index to wills of Chenango County, New York, from 1797–1875.

Columbia	Abstract of wills of Columbia County, New York, 1796–1851, 8 vol.
	Gravestone inscriptions in Columbia County, New York, published 1935–41, 12 volumes.
Delaware	Abstracts of wills of Delaware County, N.Y., 1796–1875.
	1855 census of Delaware County, New York. Lists name, age, state or area of birth, and occupation, with index.
	Deaths, 1819–1879, copied from <i>Delhi Gazette</i> , published at Delhi, Delaware County, N. Y.
	Index of wills, Delaware County, New York, from 1797–1885.
	Letters of administration of Delaware County, New York: copied from the original records at the court house, Delhi, N.Y., v. 1 1797–1844, v. 2 1844–1863, v. 3 1863–1874, v. 4 1874–1875.
	Marriage and deaths taken from the <i>Delaware Gazette</i> at Delhi, Delaware County, N.Y., listed chronologically, with an index. Index does not include ministers' names.
Erie	Gravestone inscriptions from cemeteries in Erie County, New York, published 1930.
Monroe	Monroe County, New York abstracts of wills: copied from the original records at Rochester, New York, v. 1, 1821–1841, v. 2, 1841–1847.
Oneida	Abstracts of wills, of Oneida County, N.Y., 1798–1848. v. 1, 1798–1822, v. 2, 1822–1832, v. 3, 1832–1839, v 4, 1840–1843, v. 5, 1843–1847, v. 6, 1847–1848.
Oswego	Records of the Congregational Church at New Haven, Oswego County, N.Y. Includes baptisms, 1821–1850, deaths, 1817–1850, and members, 1817–1850.
Otsego	Abstracts of wills of Otsego County, New York, five volumes: 1794–1824, 1817–1829, 1829–1838, 1837–1845, 1845–1850.
	A collection of abstracts from Otsego County, New York, newspaper obituaries, 1808–1875.
	Deaths taken from the <i>Otsego Herald</i> and <i>Western Advertiser</i> and <i>Freeman's Journal</i> , Otsego County, N.Y., newspapers, 1795–1840.
	Index of wills of Otsego County, New York, from 1792–1850.
	Inscriptions from the Lake View Cemetery at Richfield Springs, Otsego County, N.Y., Published 1930. Names not arranged alphabetically, probably in order of location. With index.
	Marriages taken from the <i>Otsego Herald</i> and <i>Western Advertiser</i> and <i>Freeman's Journal</i> , Otsego County, N. Y., newspapers from 1795–1850.
	Record of births and baptisms, 1797–1827: kept by Daniel Nash, Christ Church, Cooperstown, Otsego County, N.Y.
	Tombstone inscriptions in the Catholic Cemetery at Richfield Springs, N.Y. and also in the Exeter Cemetery at Exeter, N.Y.: both located in Otsego County, N.Y. Published 1931.
Schenectady	Abstracts of wills of Schenectady County, N.Y.: copied from the original records at the court house, Schenectady, N.Y. Three volumes, each with index.
Schoharie	Abstracts of wills, letters of administration, letters of guardianship, of Schoharie County, New York, from 1795–1863.
	Schoharie County, New York, cemetery records, 7 vol., published 1932.
Sullivan	Sullivan Co., New York cemetery records: Wurtsboro, Bridgeville, Bethel, Hurd, Swan

	Lake, Brooke-Side & Harris, Fallsburgh-Never-Sink. (no date)
	Sullivan County, New York, gravestone inscriptions, 10 vol., published 1929–1934.
	Bloomingsburgh Cemetery, Bloomingsburgh, Sullivan County, N.Y., published 1930.
	The church record of the Kenoza Lake Charge of the Methodist Episcopal Church: Heard Settlement - Foster - Dale - Jeffersonville - Youngsville - Pike Pond, now known as Kenoza Lake; all in Sullivan County, N. Y.
	Church records of various places in Sullivan County, New York.
	Cemetery, Ferndale, N.Y., and Old Fallsburg (Palen's) Cemetery, Fallsburg, N.Y. All located in Sullivan Co., N.Y.
	Index of wills, Sullivan County, New York, 1876–1909.
	Index to records of the Presbyterian Church, Monticello, Sullivan County, New York.
	Records of consistory of the Union Tabernacle Reformed Church, Unionville, Sullivan County, N. Y.
	Records of the Associated Reformed Church of Mongaup Valley, Sullivan County, N. Y.: membership records; baptisms, 1830–1919; marriages, 1831–1919. This Church was abandoned in 1927.
	Records of the Barryville Congregational Church of Barryville, Sullivan County, New York, 1836–1927.
	Records of the Dutch Reformed congregation of Mamakting, later known as the Dutch Reformed Church of Wurtsboro (Rome), Sullivan County, New York.
	Records of the First Congregational Church in the town of Lumberland, Sullivan County, New York: formerly known as the First Presbyterian Congregational Church of Narrow Falls and also as the Narrow Falls and Middlebrook Church.
	Records of the First Presbyterian Church at White Lake, Old Newburgh, Cohecton, Sullivan County, New York.
	Records of the Free Methodist Church, Ferndale, Sullivan County, N. Y.
	Records of the Methodist Episcopal and the Baptist Church of Sullivan County, New York.
	Records of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Monticello, Sullivan County, N. Y.
	Records of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Rock Hill, Sullivan County, N.Y.: baptisms, 1884–1892; marriages, 1883–1893; membership records.
	Records of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Sandburgh, Sullivan County, N.Y.: baptisms, 1863–1880; marriages, 1863–1882; membership records.
	Records of the Presbyterian Church of Cohecton, Sullivan County, New York.
	Records of the Presbyterian Church, Monticello, Sullivan County, New York.
	Records of the Reformed Dutch Church, Grahamsville, Sullivan County N.Y.: baptisms, 1845–1905; membership records; marriages, 1844–1888.
	Records of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Bloomingburg, Sullivan County, N.Y.
	Records of the White Lake Presbyterian Church, Bethel, Sullivan County, New York.
	Cemetery inscriptions, Sullivan County, New York, published 1929.
Tioga	Abstracts of wills of Tioga County, N.Y., from 1799–1847.

Tompkins	Abstracts of wills of Tompkins County, N.Y., from 1817–1833.
Warren	Abstracts of wills of Warren County, New York: book A, 1813–1850.
	Extracts of deeds of Warren County, NY from 1813–1825, copied from the original records at the Court House at Lake George, N.Y.
Washington	Abstracts of wills of Washington County, New York, v. 1, 1786–1806; v. 2, 1806–1814; v. 3, 1814–1825.
	Index of wills of Washington County, New York: from 1825–1890.
Wyoming	Gravestone inscriptions of Wyoming County, N.Y.: including cemeteries in Sheldon and Bennington, N.Y., published 1933.
	Gravestone inscriptions of Wyoming County, N.Y.: including cemeteries in Silver Springs, Hermitage and Genesee Falls, published 1932.
	Prospect Hill cemetery at Arcade, Wyoming Co., N.Y., published 1930.
	Tombstone inscriptions from cemeteries located in Wyoming County, New York. Includes index. Published 1931.