

# New York City Research Guide, Part Three: Censuses, Cemetery Records, Military Records, Newspapers, and Libraries

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This is the third and final segment of the New York City Research Guide. Part one included information about vital records, property records, and estate records. Part two covered naturalization records, immigration records, court records, religious records, and city directories.

## CENSUSES

New York City residents were enumerated in federal, state, and municipal censuses. They were also counted in other records, such as "juror censuses" and tax lists.

### FEDERAL POPULATION CENSUSES

Federal population censuses that include New York City were done in the decennial years beginning in 1790. The latest federal population census currently available is the one taken in 1930.

In 1870, New York City residents were enumerated twice, due to dissatisfaction with the results of the first counting. The First and Second Enumerations can both be searched and compared. The Second Enumeration contains addresses of residents; the First Enumeration does not. Heads of households in the 1870 census are searchable on [HeritageQuestOnline](#). [Ancestry.com](#) has completed an all-name index.

The Family History Library's every-name index and abstracts of the 1880 federal census is searchable [online](#). Subscribers to Ancestry.com can link from the abstracts to the census images.

The 1890 federal census was almost completely destroyed. Only fragments remain and none from New York City. But the 1890 Census of Union Veterans still survives.

The 1910 census is searchable online at Ancestry.com and HeritageQuestOnline as well as on microfilm with the aid of a street index on microfiche listing the enumeration districts for addresses in Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, and Staten Island: *Cross Index to Selected City Streets and Enumeration Districts, 1910 Census* [HA201/1910/M1283 Microfiche].

The 1930 federal census is searchable online at Ancestry.com. The census can also be searched by address on microfilm by finding the E.D. of an address in the street index finding aid available at the National Archives Northeast-Region (NYC) or through Family History Centers. Or use Steve Morse's "[Obtaining E.D.s for the 1930 Census in One Step](#)." The National Archives has a "[1930 Census Microfilm Locator](#)."

Microfilm copies of the federal population censuses in New York City are widely available and can be searched at various repositories, including all National Archives branches, the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society Library, New York Public Library, Brooklyn Historical Society, through Family History Centers, and online at Ancestry.com, Genealogy.com, and HeritageQuestOnline. As well as the online indexes, some with soundex capabilities, there are book indexes to these censuses.

### NEW YORK STATE CENSUSES

New York State censuses, taken in years between federal census years, are currently not indexed and must be searched by address. Various maps and other finding aids are available, depending on the census year and locality. New York State censuses of New York City are widely available on microfilm at various New York City repositories and through the Family History Library. Original census schedules are kept at the County Clerk's office in each county. State censuses are not available at the National Archives.

State censuses are extant for the following years and New York City counties. Some of the various finding aids are noted. Ward maps are available for most years.

**Manhattan/Bronx:** (until 1914, Bronx was part of New York County)

1855  
1905  
1915  
1925

A map created in 1862 ("Map of the City of New York, City Directory Ofc, 50 Greene St.") is available at the New York County Clerk's Office/ Division of Old Records, the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, and the New York Public Library. It can be used to narrow the area searched in the 1855 census to a specific ward and election district.

A street index available on microfilm, "Card Index to Street Names and House Addresses in New York County," for the New York State censuses for 1905, 1915, and 1925, facilitates the search. Addresses in the Bronx are included in the 1905 street index, but not for the years 1915 and 1925.

### **Brooklyn**

1855  
1865  
1875  
1892  
1905  
1915  
1925

Joseph Silinonte compiled the *Street index to the 1892 New York State Census, City of Brooklyn*. This book makes searching for the location of an address in this unindexed census a snap.

A street index for the 1915 New York State census of Kings County was compiled by Lois Owen and Theodore R. Nelson and facilitates finding persons when the address is known. It is available through local Family History Centers and at the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society.

### **Queens**

1892  
1915  
1925

Among the finding aids are an *Index to Street Addresses* for the 1915 and 1925 censuses.

### **Richmond:**

1835  
1855  
1865  
1875  
1915  
1925

A ward map for 1925 shows the wards, assembly districts, and election districts for this census.

## **COUNTING AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL: JUROR "CENSUSES," TAX LISTS, AND THE 1890 POLICE CENSUS**

Censuses of the residents of New York City were taken during various years from 1795 through 1829 to assess who was a viable juror. Several electoral censuses were also taken from 1790 to 1821. Portions of these censuses survive from 1816, 1819, and 1821. (See Roger D. Joslyn's article, "[New York City Censuses of 1816, 1819, and 1821](#) .")

As noted above, the 1890 federal census was destroyed. But because New York City was dissatisfied with the 1890

enumeration of its inhabitants, the city took its own 1890 census in Manhattan and the western Bronx. The enumerators were police officers, and this census became known as the "Police Census." Fortunately, most of that enumeration survives. Searchable by address and listing the names, genders, and ages of New York County residents, this municipal census can be viewed on microfilm at various New York City repositories, and through Family History Centers. Parts of this census are available online at Ancestry.com.

Howard Jensen's three volume *Aid to Finding Addresses in the 1890 New York City Police Census* greatly facilitates finding which microfilm to search when an address is known and indicate which of the records were lost.

Tax lists, from colonial times into the twentieth century are also of interest to the genealogist. Among these are the tax lists of 1793, 1795, and 1796 at the New York Historical Society and New York Genealogical and Biographical Society; *Annual Record of Assessed Valuation of Real Estate, 1789-1988*, available at the New York City Municipal Archives; and *Internal Revenue Assessment Lists for New York and New Jersey, 1862-66* (M603), available at the National Archives Northeast-Region (NYC).

### CEMETERY RECORDS

Find a New York City death listed in a death register or on a death certificate, and the name of the cemetery should be listed.

To locate a cemetery and its contact information, one book to consult is *The Graveyard Shift: A Family Historian's Guide to New York City Cemeteries*, by Carolee Inskeep [F128.61/A1/I57/2000 also LOAN].

If a death certificate from 1868 or later names no cemetery, or if the cemetery is identified as City Cemetery, the person was probably buried on Hart Island, New York City's potter's field from 1868 forward. Records can be accessed for most years at the New York City Municipal Archives. For more information, see my article, "[New York City's Potter's Field: A Visit to Hart Island's City Cemetery in Bronx County.](#)"

Extant cemeteries keep their own records and must be contacted directly. Interment lists are provided for a fee. Cemetery staff will not view or photograph grave markers.

Books and manuscripts of tombstone inscriptions exist for some cemeteries, including:

- *Tombstones of the Irish Born: Cemetery of the Holy Cross, Flatbush, Brooklyn*, by Joseph M. Silinonte [F128.61/C46/S5/1992 also LOAN].
- *Old Calvary Cemetery: New Yorkers Carved in Stone*, and *Second Calvary Cemetery: New Yorkers Carved in Stone*, by Rosemary Muscarella Ardolina [F128.25/A73/1996].
- *Gravestone Inscriptions of Trinity Cemetery, New York City, New York*, compiled by Ray C. Sawyer.

Some New York City cemeteries have websites that give names of the persons buried in their grounds. The cemeteries' offices can be contacted for additional information. Some cemeteries with helpful websites are:

- [New York Marble Cemetery \(Second Avenue Cemetery\)](#)
- [New York City Marble Cemetery](#)
- [Green-Wood Cemetery](#) (click the link for Burial Inquiry)

### MILITARY RECORDS

From colonial times forward, military records available to New York City researchers are plentiful, whether published or in their original form.

A handful of the many sources are:

- *Muster Rolls of New York Provincial Troops, 1755-1764*, Edward F. DeLancey ed. Volume 24 of the New York Historical Society Collections

- *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, 1800-1900*. National Archives microfilm M804
- *Genealogical Abstracts of Revolutionary War Pension Files*, by Virgil D. White. (Data taken from National Archives microfilm M805.)
- "[Guide to Records Relating to the Revolutionary War in the New York State Archives](#)"
- *Index to War of 1812 Pension Application Files*, National Archives microfilm M313
- *Index to War of 1812 Pension Files*, transcribed by Virgil D. White. 2 volumes.
- *Index of Awards on Claims of the Soldiers of the War of 1812*. New York Adjutant General's Office (also searchable at [Ancestry.com](#)). The original records are in the [New York State Archives](#).
- *Military Minutes of the Council of Appointment of the State of New York, 1783-1821*, 4 volumes.
- Daniel Lorello, comp., *The Union Preserved: A Guide to Civil War Records in the New York State Archives*, Harold Holzer ed.
- *Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of New York*. National Archives microfilm M551
- 1890 Veteran's Census Index, New York
- [New York Civil War Database](#), compiled by the New York State Archives.
- *General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934* (National Archives microfilm T288)  
Original pension files are available at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and can be requested with NAFT Form 85. Images of the index cards are found at [Ancestry.com](#).
- *Military Census of 1917*, New York. Registers are at County Clerk's offices. Each man is listed with address, date of birth, occupation, whether any previous or present military service, and if exempt.
- *World War I Selective Service Draft Registration Cards, 1917-18: New York City*. National Archives microfilm M1509 Partially indexed on [Ancestry.com](#)
- "[Records Relating to World War I at the New York State Archives](#)."
- *World War II Selective Service Draft Registration Cards, 1942*, for men ages 45-64. Part of National Archives Record Group 147. Available only at the National Archives Northeast-Region (NYC). Currently being microfilmed by the Family History Library.

## NEWSPAPERS

New York City has published a vast array of newspapers, with a wealth of data for the genealogist.

Major newspaper collections can be found at the New York Historical Society and New York Public Library. Other institutions with strong collections are the Brooklyn Historical Society, Queens Borough Library's Long Island Division, Bronx Historical Society, Brooklyn Public Library, and Staten Island Institute of Arts & Sciences.

Book and manuscript indexes to various newspapers, such as the annual *The New York Times* indexes, *The New York Herald*, 1835-1918, and the indexes to the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 1891-1902, are also available. Many libraries have

created their own manuscript and card indexes to local papers, such as the Queens Borough Library's Long Island Division's master card catalogue index of marriages and deaths from the *Long Island Star*, 1809-1845. The Brooklyn Division also has the [Brooklyn Daily Eagle's "morgue"](#) (clippings of articles).

Abstracts of newspaper notices also abound and are a boon to the researcher. Among them are James P. Maher's *Index to Marriages and Deaths in the NY Herald*, 1835-70, *Vital Records from the Long Islander*, 1847-1870, by Harriet Stryker-Rodda, and Gertrude Barber's abstracts (some noted in the section about Vital Records).

More databases of full-text New York City newspapers are becoming available online, the most notable of which is the every-word-searchable ProQuest Historical Newspapers database of the complete *The New York Times*, 1851-2001. It is available onsite at the New York Public Library and via remote access for members of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society Library. (For research tips, [see this page](#).)

Of equal importance is the [online database of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 1841-1902](#), which is searchable at no cost. The database was created by the Brooklyn Public Library. As funding permits, the rest of the newspaper will also be made available online.

## MAJOR LIBRARIES

( Partial list)

### [American Irish Historical Society](#)

991 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10028  
212-288 2263

### [Bronx County Historical Society, Research Library and Archives](#)

3309 Bainbridge Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10467  
718-881-8900  
By appointment only

### [Brooklyn Historical Society](#) (formerly the Long Island Historical Society)

128 Pierrepont Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
718-222-4111

### [Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn Division](#)

Grand Army Plaza  
Brooklyn, NY 11238  
718-230-2483

### [Center for Jewish History](#)

- **American Jewish Historical Society**
- **American Sephardi Federation**
- **Leo Baeck Institute**
- **Yeshiva University Museum**
- **YIVO Institute for Jewish Research**

15 West 16 Street  
New York, NY 10011  
212-294-8301

### **Family History Center**

125 Columbus Avenue, New York, NY 10023  
212-873-1690

The Center for Jewish History and the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society are also designated Family History Centers, where microforms can be ordered and viewed.

**Holland Society Library**

122 East 58th Street  
New York, NY 10022  
212-758-1675

**New York City Department of Records and Information Services****City Hall Library (formerly The Municipal Reference and Research Center)**

31 Chambers Street, Room 112  
New York, NY 10007  
212-788-8590

**New York Genealogical and Biographical Society Library**

122 East 58th Street  
New York, NY 10022-1939  
212-755-8532

**New-York Historical Society Library**

2 West 77th Street, 2nd floor  
New York, NY 10024  
212-873-3400

**New York Public Library****Humanities and Social Services Library (formerly Central Research Library)**

476 Fifth Avenue (at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street)  
New York, NY 10018-2788  
212-930-0830

**Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy|**

212-930-0828

**Dorot Jewish Division**

212-930-0601

**Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture**

515 Malcolm X Boulevard  
New York, NY 10037  
212-491-2200

**Queens Borough Public Library, Long Island Division**

89-11 Merrick Boulevard, 2nd Floor  
Jamaica, NY 11432  
718-990-0770

**Staten Island Historical Society Library**

P.S. 28, 276 Centre Street  
Staten Island, NY

Mailing Address: 441 Clarke Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10306  
718-351-1611

**Staten Island Institute of Arts & Sciences (SIAS)****History Archives and Library**

75 Stuyvesant Place  
Staten Island, NY 10301  
718-727-1135, x 21

May your research for New York City ancestry be enjoyable and successful!