

## DEATHS IN BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY: SELECTED SOURCES IN THE GROSVENOR ROOM



### KEY

*	= Oversized book
Buffalo	= In Buffalo collection in Grosvenor Room
GRO	= In Grosvenor Room
HSS	= In Humanities & Social Sciences Department
Ref.	= On Reference Shelf
WNYGS	= In Western NY Genealogical Society Collection

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	2
General How-To Guides .....	3
Books with Lists of Deaths .....	3
Card Files .....	6
Databases .....	7
Newspapers: <i>Buffalo News &amp; Courier Express</i> .....	7
Scrapbooks .....	8
Selected Websites .....	9
Vertical Files .....	9
Vital Records Index.....	9
WEB2: The Online Catalog of the BECPL.....	10
What about Funeral Home Records? .....	10
Where Else Can I Look Up Deaths?.....	11

## INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended to show the variety of sources that might help you find your ancestor's date of death, which in turn might help you find an obituary or death certificate.

The Grosvenor Room does not have a comprehensive obituary index or database or one single source that lists everyone who lived or died in the Buffalo area. Instead, there are multiple sources, including newspaper indexes, compiled indexes, and published lists, with small or large numbers of names. Almost everything listed in this handout will be found in the Grosvenor Room.

Keep in mind that there is no guarantee that a death notice or obituary exists. Many deaths went unrecorded, especially in the years before New York State had a vital records law (1880). There is no law that requires that a death notice or obituary be published.

This guide does not list our church records, many of which include the deaths of parishioners. For church records we have a separate list, *Church Records in Microfilm and Print*. See also these free handouts, which may be useful for your search:

- Cemetery Records for Erie County NY in the Grosvenor Room
- Military History and Records
- **Death Notices and Obituaries: Where to Look in Buffalo & Erie County Newspapers**

Shelf locations are always subject to change. See staff for assistance in locating material.

GENERAL HOW-TO GUIDES	NOTES
GRO Ref. CS16 .B55 1991 Billingsley, Carolyn Earle <b>How to Get the Most out of Death Certificates</b> Conway, AZ: Research Associates, ©1991	How to find a death certificate, what to do if you cannot find a death certificate, how to interpret everything that appears on a death certificate, and more.
GRO Ref. CT214 .J3 Jarboe, Betty M. <b>Obituaries: A Guide to Sources</b> Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1982	A guide to card files and published lists that existed before the computer era.
GRO E169.1 .H94 2000 Hume, Janice <b>Obituaries in American Culture</b> Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, ©2000	A history of how the American obituary developed and changed over time.

BOOKS WITH LISTS OF DEATHS		
Dates	Title & Call Number	Notes
<b>Early 1800's to early 1900's</b>	GRO Ref. F118 .F56, 2 vols. Foley, Janet W. <b>Early Settlers of New York State</b> Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc. ©1993	Includes some cemetery records and gravestone transcriptions. Has a strong focus on Western New York.
<b>1807-1870</b>	WNYGS 974.7 ER Lan Cla Clark, James <b>A Record of Deaths in the Town of Lancaster...1807-1870</b>	
<b>1810-1854</b>	GRO Military Ref. *F127 .E6 M42 Merrow, Leta S. <b>A List of Revolutionary War Soldiers' Graves Located in Erie County New York</b> [Hamburg, NY]: Abigail Fillmore Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, 1989	While no Revolutionary War battles were fought here, some Revolutionary War veterans eventually settled and died here.
<b>1811</b>	Buffalo *F129 .B8 M25 <b>Marriages and Deaths Compiled from Buffalo Gazette: Published 1811 in Village of Buffalo, Niagara County (now Erie Co.), New York...</b> Buffalo, NY: Abigail Fillmore Chapter N.S.D.A.R., date unknown	A 44 page manuscript of names from 1811.
<b>1811-1880</b>	GRO Ref. *F127 .E6 E76 Reamy, Bill and Martha, comp. <b>Erie County, New York Obituaries as Found in the Files of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society</b> Westminster, MD: Willow Bend Books, 2000, ©1992	Covers 1811-1880. Gives date of death but not the newspaper where the obituary might be found.
<b>1817-1902</b>	WNYGS 974.7 ER Chu Cra Cramer, Robert A., comp. <b>Buffalo Baptist Association Excerpts from the Minutes 1817-1902 of Deaths</b>	Includes Baptist churches in towns outside of Buffalo




<b>BOOKS WITH LISTS OF DEATHS</b>		
<b>1819-1820</b>	Buffalo *F118 .M6 <b>Miscellaneous Cemetery Inscriptions and Records in New York State</b> [Buffalo, NY: Abigail Fillmore Chapter N.S.D.A.R, 1931]	Includes 8 pages of marriages and deaths published in the <i>Niagara Journal</i> , 1819-1820
<b>1825-1883</b>	Buffalo F129 .C72 B8 1992, pp. 235-237 Briggs, Erasmus <b>History of the Original Town of Concord: Being the Present Towns of Concord, Collins, N. Collins and Sardinia, Erie County, New York</b> Camden, ME: Picton Press, ©1992 [reprint]	Originally published in 1883. Includes "List of Persons Who Have Met an Accidental Death by Drowning or Otherwise in the Town of Concord," 1825-1883.
<b>1840-1901</b>	Buffalo F129 .E85 J2, pp. 269-281 Jackman, Warren <b>History of the Town of Elma, Erie County, N.Y. 1620-1901</b> Buffalo, NY: G. M. Hausauer & Son, 1902	List deaths of 400 residents
<b>1847-1886</b>	GRO *CS68 .C262 <b>Rev. Campbell's Record Book: Marriages and Funerals</b> [Buffalo, NY?] C.J. McCabe, 1970	Records date from 1847 to 1886. Names are from CT, MA, OH, PA, VT, RI, and NY. Includes a few marriages and funerals from the south towns of Erie County. We do not know what denomination Rev. Campbell was or where he lived.
<b>1850</b>	GRO Census Index Table *F129 .B8 U6 Work Progress Administration, 1939-1940, comp. <b>Index of the 1850 Census, Buffalo, Erie County, New York</b> [S.l., s.n.], 1940	See Addenda for deaths recorded in the 1850 Census
<b>1858-1968</b>	HSS Desk Ref. *CT213 .N47 <b>The New York Times Obituaries Index</b> New York: New York Times, 1970	Covers the years 1858-1968. Includes prominent Buffalonians.
<b>1863</b>	GRO Ref. *F127 .E6 J49 Jewitt, Joyce S. <b>Some Deaths in Erie County, N.Y., 1863</b> Hamburg, NY: Joyce S. Jewitt, ©1984	
<b>1880-2004</b>	WNYGS ERI Buffalo ind Wernicki, Janice, comp. <b>Index to Select Death Notices from Buffalo Area Newspapers—over 5,600 from 1880-2004</b> Janice Wernicki, © 2000-2005	Provides citations for death notices and obituaries from the <i>Buffalo News</i> and <i>Courier Express</i> .
<b>1881-1956</b>	Buffalo HV8378 .B9 A1 1881-1956 Buffalo Police Department <b>Annual Report</b> [title, publishers vary]	Reports published in these years contain narrative descriptions of every homicide in Buffalo, including names of victims and suspects.
<b>1882-1892</b>	Buffalo *F129 .B853 S44 1997 Seegal, Steven, comp. <b>A Necrology Excerpted and Organized from the Buffalo City Directories, 1882-1892</b> Buffalo, NY: Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, 1997	GRO Ref. Desk also has a copy of this necrology. In the Desk copy is an addenda of various necrologies found in the Local History Scrapbooks, vols. 5-8.
<b>1884-1928</b>	Buffalo F129 .B8 B89 Buffalo Historical Society <b>Annual Report of the Board of Managers...</b> Buffalo, NY: The Society	Published annually from 1884 to 1928. Includes names of prominent citizens who died the previous year. Indexed in the <i>Local History File</i> .

<b>BOOKS WITH LISTS OF DEATHS</b>		
<b>1885-1997</b>	Buffalo TH9505 .B8 A1 Buffalo (N.Y.) Fire Dept <b>Annual Report</b> Buffalo, NY: [various printers]	From 1885 to 1997, almost every volume lists firefighters who died that year, both on the job or from natural causes. From 1989 to 1997, there is a list of civilian fire deaths by address. No civilian names are given. Our collection is missing some years.
<b>1887-1901</b>	Buffalo F129 .B8 B71 <b>Album and Year Book</b> Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Express	Published annually from 1887 to 1901; title varies. Includes names and sometimes pictures of prominent citizens who died the previous year. Indexed in the <i>Local History File</i> .
<b>1890-1963</b>	HSS HV8699 .U5 B68 Bowers, William J. <b>Executions in America</b> Lexington, MA: Lexington Books [1974]	See pp. 296-319 for names of individuals executed in NY State from 1890-1963. Includes 43 names from Erie County.
<b>1899- 50 years ago</b>	GRO Desk Ref. #50 <b>Stephan-Burns Funeral Home Records</b> Buffalo, NY: Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, 2008  A Black Rock area funeral home	Contains name, date of death, address, place of birth, age, birth date, and burial place. Privacy regulations restrict to 50 years before present. <b>Ask for this title at the Information Desk in the Grosvenor Room.</b>
<b>1904-1973</b>	Buffalo *F129 .B8 A195 1904-1973 <b>Social Register, Buffalo</b> New York: Social Register Association	Each volume includes a page listing "society" men and women who died the previous year.
<b>1914-1919</b>	Buffalo D570.85 .N51 B9 L2 <b>Lafayette High School of Buffalo, NY in the World War 1914-1919</b> Buffalo, NY: Baker, Jones, Hausauer Inc. [1920?]	Lists Lafayette alumni who lost their lives in World War I.
<b>1914-1919</b>	GRO Ref. *F129 .B8 S97 Sweeney, Daniel J. <b>History of Buffalo and Erie County 1914-1919</b> [Buffalo, ©1920]	Includes Buffalo-area World War I casualties.
<b>1918-1922</b>	GRO Desk Ref. #26 Pearson, JoAnn, comp. <b>The Arrow: Marriages and Deaths as Reported in the Pierce Arrow Newsletter, 1918-1922</b> Compiled Sept. 2001	Includes deaths of employees and relatives.  <b>Ask for this title at the Information Desk in the Grosvenor Room.</b>
<b>1923-1932</b>	Buffalo F129 .B8 E52, May 1923-March 1932 <b>Ellicott Square Magazine</b> Buffalo, Ellicott Square Co.	Includes occasional obituaries of tenants and employees of the building.
<b>1932-1972</b>	Buffalo AY67 .B9 N4 1932-1972 <b>Buffalo Evening News Almanac and Fact Book</b> Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Evening News	Includes deaths of prominent Buffalonians. See <i>Chronology, Deaths, or Necrology</i> in the index to find the appropriate pages in each edition. Some years have a separate sports necrology.
<b>1939-1945</b>	Ref. F129 .B8 B695 <b>Buffalo and Vicinity Heroes Who Gave Lives for Nation</b> Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Courier-Express, 1945	Names of World War II casualties

<b>BOOKS WITH LISTS OF DEATHS</b>		
<b>1939-1945</b>	Buffalo AY67 .B9 N4 1947 Buffalo Evening News Almanac and Fact Book <b>Names of Buffalo and Western New York Residents Who Gave Their Lives in the Service in World War II</b> Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Evening News, 1947	
<b>1940-1945</b>	GRO Desk Ref. #15 <b>The Bellringer, a Selected Index, Dec. 1940-1945</b> Compiled 2002	A brief list of deaths of employees and relatives at Bell Aircraft Corp.  <b>Ask for this title at the Information Desk in the Grosvenor Room.</b>
<b>1943-1944</b>	GRO Desk Ref. #28 <b>The Curtiss Wright-er, a Selected Index, 1943-1944</b> Compiled Dec 2001	Includes deaths of Curtiss-Wright employees and their relatives and those who died in service.  <b>Ask for this title at the Information Desk in the Grosvenor Room.</b>
<b>1959-1973</b>	Buffalo *F127 .E6 K28 2004 Kavanagh, Patrick Brian, comp. <b>In Remembrance of: Vietnam War Casualties of Western New York</b> New York: [2004]	Photocopies of newspaper clippings and short biographies taken from Internet resources
<b>1969-1978</b>	HSS Desk Ref. *CT213 .N472 1980 <b>The New York Times Obituaries Index II, 1969-1978</b> New York: New York Times, 1980	Covers the years 1969-1978. Includes prominent Buffalonians.
<b>1983-1996</b>	GRO Ref. *AI3 .W4 1983-1996 <b>Western New York Index</b> [Buffalo, NY: The Library]	A name section at the end of each volume includes obituaries. GRO's set is shelved on top of the Local History File.
<b>1998-1999</b>	Buffalo *F127 .E6 D44 1999 Kulp, Suzanne, comp. <b>Index to All of 1998 and 1999 (through Sept. 23) Death Notices, Obituaries and Reports of Deaths as Appeared in the Buffalo News, Buffalo, NY</b> Orchard Park, NY: Suzanne Kulp, [1999]	

<b>CARD FILES</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
Local History File	<p>A card index to local newspapers and periodicals that cites articles about people, places, and things in the Buffalo area. The most thorough coverage is from 1930-1982, with hit or miss entries for earlier and later dates. It includes obituaries, but death notices are rare. The <i>Local History File</i> is continued by the <i>Western New York Index</i> (see <i>Books</i>, above). The <i>Local History File</i> may also lead you to an obituary in one of our scrapbooks.</p> <p>Try these headings:  <i>Accidents</i>  <i>Automobiles. Accidents</i>  <i>Deaths</i>  <i>Drowning</i>  <i>Explosions</i>  <i>Fires</i>  <i>Murders</i>  <i>Railroads. Accidents</i></p>

CARD FILES	NOTES
Vital Index of Early Western New York Families	A card file maintained by the Western New York Genealogical Society (WNYGS), which cites names found in their collection and in records held elsewhere.

DATABASES		
<a href="http://multisearch.buffalolib.org/buffalo.asp">http://multisearch.buffalolib.org/buffalo.asp</a>		
Name	Description	Access
	Includes the Social Security Death Index (SSDI). Offers collections of death records from all over the US but none that specifically focus on Buffalo or Erie County.	Available for walk-in users at every public library in Erie County. No at-home use.
	Try searching PERSI (Periodical Source Index) or Online Books for an obituary.	Available for walk-in users at every public library in Erie County. Also available from home with a valid Buffalo and Erie County Public Library card. Sign in at address above.
	Full text of articles from 1851-2003. The <i>New York Times</i> often ran obituaries of prominent Buffalonians.	Available on all public workstations in the Central Library only. No at-home use. The NYT is also available on microfilm in GRO.

NEWSPAPERS: <i>BUFFALO NEWS &amp; COURIER EXPRESS</i>
<p><b><i>Buffalo (Evening) News on Microfilm, 1881 to present</i></b></p> <p><b><i>(Buffalo) Courier Express on Microfilm, 1926-1982</i></b></p> <p>The microfilms contain 100% of every issue, including but not limited to obituaries or death notices. If you know the exact date of death, you can go directly to the newspaper microfilms and look for a death notice or obituary. Microfilms may be copied for \$.20 per page.</p> <p>When the <i>Courier-Express</i> folded in 1982, its archives went to the Butler Library at <b>Buffalo State College</b>. According to the archive inventory, there are local and national obituaries from 1956-1982 in their collection.</p> <p>For a complete list of other daily newspapers in Buffalo, see our free handout:  <b>Death Notices and Obituaries: Where to look in Buffalo &amp; Erie County Newspapers.</b></p>
<p><b><i>Buffalo News Death Notices on Microfilm, 1962-1976</i></b></p> <p>The Western New York Genealogical Society (WNYGS) has special microfilms of the death notices from the <i>Buffalo News</i> from 1962 to 1976. Staff at the Grosvenor Room Microfilm Desk can help you find them.</p>

## NEWSPAPERS: *BUFFALO NEWS & COURIER EXPRESS*

### **Buffalo News Database, obituaries from 1989 to present**

This database offers full-text of articles from the *Buffalo News*, 1989 to the present. It includes obituaries, which are narrative articles about someone of prominence. **It does not include death notices**, which are considered classified ads and give only basic facts about the deceased and the funeral or burial. The *Buffalo News* database also does not include pictures or advertisements.

Researchers may use the *Buffalo News* database at every public library in Erie County on a walk-in basis. No library card or appointment is necessary. There is no at-home access. Obituaries and articles may be printed for \$.10 per page, saved to a disk, or emailed.

### **Buffalo News Website, death notices from 1997 to present**

Not to be confused with the *Buffalo News* database is the *Buffalo News* commercial website, which anyone may access on the internet. It has an archive of death notices from Sept. 11, 1997 to the present. Death notices are available for free at the *Buffalo News* website for 90 days. After 90 days, they may be retrieved for a small fee. For death notices, see:

<http://www.legacy.com/buffalonews/DeathNotices.asp?Page=ArchiveSearch>

SCRAPBOOKS	NOTES
<p>The Buffalo scrapbooks in GRO were compiled roughly from 1900 to 1960, and are comprised largely of local newspaper clippings and ephemera. All are indexed in the <i>Local History File</i>. The following volumes are of particular interest to obituary researchers:</p>	
<p>GRO *F129 .B8 B58  <b>Scrap-book of Local Obituary Notices and Biographical Sketches 1861-1864</b>                      [1921?]</p>	<p>Mostly Civil War casualties</p>
<p>GRO *F129 .B8 B692414 v.10, pp. 158-171  <b>Buffalo Military Affairs</b></p>	<p>Vietnam War casualties from Western New York published on May 30, 1968</p>
<p>GRO *F129 .B8 B69265  <b>Local Biographies</b></p>	<p>There are about 100 volumes in this set, which includes obituaries of prominent residents. All are indexed in the <i>Local History File</i>. Within the set are multiple series numbers, which can be confusing. Don't hesitate to ask for help.</p>
<p>GRO *F129 .B8 B6928, vols.5-8  <b>Local History</b>                      [1901-1908, 1925-1926, 1928, 1941, 1944]</p>	<p>Various necrologies are scattered throughout these volumes. A list was appended to the GRO Ref. Desk copy of the <i>Necrology</i> by Steven Seegal (see <i>Books</i>, above).</p>

SELECTED WEBSITES	NOTES
<a href="http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/Home/City_Departments/City_Clerk/BirthDeathMarriageRecords">http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/Home/City_Departments/City_Clerk/BirthDeathMarriageRecords</a> <b>City of Buffalo Death Records</b>	Instructions and downloadable application form for requesting vital records from Buffalo's City Hall
<a href="http://www.wnygs.org/erie-vr.html">http://www.wnygs.org/erie-vr.html</a> <b>Dates of First Vital Statistics Records, Towns and Villages of Erie County</b>	Gives the dates of the earliest known vital records, including deaths, for every town and village in Erie County
<a href="http://directories.erie.gov/officialdir/">http://directories.erie.gov/officialdir/</a> <b>Erie County Directory of Public Officials</b>	Gives names, addresses, and contact information for every town and village clerk in Erie County.
<a href="http://www.health.state.ny.us/vital_records/death.htm">http://www.health.state.ny.us/vital_records/death.htm</a> <b>New York State Department of Health: Death Certificates</b>	Instructions and downloadable forms. Death certificates may be ordered by telephone, mail, fax, or online.
<a href="http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~obituary/">http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~obituary/</a> <b>Obituary Daily Times</b>	A daily index of published obituaries. It is distributed freely, often twice a day by email, and usually has over 2,500 entries a day from all over North America.
<a href="http://www.deathindexes.com/newyork/">http://www.deathindexes.com/newyork/</a> <b>Online New York Death Records, Indexes &amp; Obituaries</b>	Offers dozens of links to websites and databases with names and dates of people who died in New York State.
<a href="http://ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com/">http://ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com/</a> <b>U.S. Social Security Death Index (SSDI)</b>	Free database of over 80 million Americans who died from 1962 to the present, and a tiny number who died before 1962. Searchable by name. Gives first name, last name, birth date, death date, Social Security number, and town, county, and zip code at time of death.

VERTICAL FILES
Vertical files are loose articles and pamphlets collected in folders. The following folders have some lists of war casualties. Additional obituaries are filed by occupation (Authors, Architects, etc.).
<i>Civil War</i> <i>Middle East Wars and Western New York</i> <i>War of 1812</i>

VITAL RECORDS INDEX
<p>The Buffalo and Erie County Public Library is a designated repository for New York State Vital Records Index on microfiche. There is a 50-year privacy restriction for death records, meaning that the fiche do not include deaths that occurred less than 50 years ago.</p> <p>New York State Department of Health laws require us to ask for a B&amp;ECPL library card or a picture ID from each researcher. Printing copies from the fiche is not permitted. Researchers may use one fiche at a time.</p> <p>This index gives names and dates of death. To get a copy of the actual death certificate, you must contact the Department of Health in Albany or the city/town in which the death occurred. The Library does not have any actual death certificates, but librarians can help you find addresses for the appropriate offices that do.</p>

## VITAL RECORDS INDEX

1881 to 1913	Fiche includes all of New York State <u>except</u> Albany, Buffalo, New York City, and Yonkers
1914 to fifty years ago	Fiche includes all of New York State <u>including</u> Albany, Buffalo, and Yonkers, but still excludes New York City

## WEB2: THE ONLINE CATALOG OF THE BECPL

<http://web2.buffalolib.org/>

WEB2 is a database showing the books, magazines, CDs, videos, maps, and manuscripts owned by the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library. It includes the Grosvenor Room, all departments in the Central Library, and every town and branch library. Access the catalog at the web address above.

To find sources in our collection beyond those listed in this guide, try these **Subject** searches:

BUFFALO N Y GENEALOGY  
DEATH NOTICES NEW YORK STATE BUFFALO  
DEATH NOTICES NEW YORK STATE ERIE COUNTY  
ERIE COUNTY N Y GENEALOGY  
OBITUARIES INDEXES  
OBITUARIES NEW YORK STATE ERIE COUNTY  
OBITUARIES NEW YORK STATE WESTERN  
REGISTERS OF BIRTHS ETC NEW YORK STATE BUFFALO  
REGISTERS OF BIRTHS ETC NEW YORK STATE ERIE COUNTY

## WHAT ABOUT FUNERAL HOME RECORDS?

The Grosvenor Room only has records of the **Stephan-Burns Funeral Home (See Books With Lists of Deaths, p. 5)**. Other funeral homes should be contacted directly for the whereabouts of records. For those that no longer exist, check Buffalo City directories and *Local History File* to determine when the funeral home went out of business.

According to the Erie-Niagara Funeral Directors Association (<http://www.enfda.org/index.html>), there are four things that could happen to the records when a funeral home closes:

1. They could go to a nearby mortuary
2. They could go to the local historical society
3. They could remain in the family who operated the original funeral home
4. They could be discarded

WHERE ELSE CAN I LOOK UP DEATHS?	NOTES
<p><b>Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society</b>            Research Library            25 Nottingham Court            Buffalo, NY 14216            (716) 873-9644, ext. 306            Hours: Wednesday through Saturday, 1 PM to 5 PM  <a href="http://www.bechs.org/research.htm">http://www.bechs.org/research.htm</a></p>	<p>Has in index to obituaries in Buffalo newspapers, alphabetical by last name. For the 1800s, death notices are included. For the 1900s, only actual obituaries are listed.</p> <p>Admission is \$6 for non-members. Free for members and high school students with a valid ID card. Children under 9 are not admitted to the Library.</p>
<p><b>Butler Library</b>            Archives and Special Collections            Buffalo State College            1300 Elmwood Avenue            Buffalo, NY 14222            (716) 878-6308            Hours: Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 4 PM  <a href="http://www.buffalostate.edu/library/archives/collections/courier.html">http://www.buffalostate.edu/library/archives/collections/courier.html</a></p>	<p>Has local and national obituaries from 1956-1982 in the <i>Courier-Express</i> collection. Appointments are necessary.</p>
<p><b>City of Buffalo Inactive Records Center</b>            85 River Rock Drive, Suite 301            Buffalo, NY 14207            (716) 874-6401, (716) 570-8721            Hours: Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 4 PM  <a href="http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/Home/City_Departments/City_Clerk/RecordsManagement">http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/Home/City_Departments/City_Clerk/RecordsManagement</a></p>	<p>Has an index of City of Buffalo deaths, 1852-1944, on CD-ROM. Walk-ins are welcome but researchers should call ahead to be sure the office is staffed before arriving.</p>