



Grosvenor Room, Buffalo & Erie County Public Library  
1 Lafayette Square, Buffalo, NY 14203-1887 ☐ 716-858-8900  
<http://www.buffalolib.org/content/grosvenor>

# Adoption Search

A research guide for adoptees in New York State

## Introduction

This guide is designed to assist persons researching their own adoption, or the adoption of a living/recently deceased relative. New York State adoption records were sealed from 1936-January 15, 2020.

**Currently, adult adoptees (18 and older) can obtain their pre-adoption birth certificates for a fee.** To do so, contact the New York State Department of Vital Records:  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/vital\\_records/preadoption.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/preadoption.htm)

A guide to **historic (pre-1936)** Buffalo adoption resources can also be found in the Grosvenor Room and online: <https://www.buffalolib.org/special-collections/guides-publications#Adoption>

## Getting Started & Search Tips

- **Currently, adult adoptees (18 and older) can obtain their pre-adoption birth certificates for a fee.** To do so, contact the New York State Department of Vital Records: [https://www.health.ny.gov/vital\\_records/preadoption.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/preadoption.htm)
- Write down everything you know in notebook to keep organized.
- Talk to relatives if possible, and gather any family records available to you.
- Read adoption laws for the area in which you were born. NY State law: <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/courts/7jd/courts/surrogates/proceedings/adoption.shtml>
- If you are younger than 18 and were born in New York State, request your birth certificate from the city/town vital office or NY State DOH.  
*(This is the "amended" record, but place of birth and possibly hospital or doctor's information may be present and correct).*
- Register with the New York State Adoption Registry and the International Soundex Reunion Registry.
- Read helpful research guides, including the books and websites suggested below.
- Search local sources such as yearbooks, city directories, and newspapers for possible birth announcements and legal notice on adoption.
- Consider DNA testing.

Adapted from *Shea's Search Series* online. See website for further information:  
<http://www.plumsite.com/sheaseries.html>

## Reference and Search Guides

The books below can be found at the Central Library, in the Grosvenor Room (*reference only*) and the Non-Fiction & Stacks department (*usually circulating*). Please check our online catalog for books at branch and town libraries: <http://www.plumsite.com/shearseries.html>

### Key

Buffalo = In Buffalo Collection in Grosvenor Room, cannot be borrowed.  
GRO Ref = In Grosvenor Room. Reference book, cannot be borrowed.  
Non-Fict = In Central Library Non-fiction section.  
Stacks = Closed Stacks. Ask staff for retrieval.

Stacks CS14 .H56 1999

Hinckley, Kathleen W. **Locating Lost Family Members & Friends**. Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 1999.

GRO Ref CS49 .S65 2006

Szucs, Loretto Dennis & Sandra Hargreaves Luebking. **The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy**. Provo, UT: Ancestry, 2006. Includes a brief section on adoption, pages 294-295.

GRO Ref HV875 .U38 2011

Carangelo, Lori. **The Ultimate Search Book: Worldwide Adoption and Vital Records**. Baltimore, MD: Clearfield, 2011.

GRO Ref HV875 .U38 2015

Carangelo, Lori. **The Ultimate Search Book: U.S. Adoption, Genealogy & other search secrets**. Baltimore, MD: Clearfield, 2015.

GRO Ref HV875.55 .A364 1989

Paul, Ellen. **The Adoption Directory: The Most Comprehensive Guide to Family-Building Options Including State Statutes on Adoption, Public and Private Adoption Agencies, Adoption Exchanges....** New York: Gale Research, Inc., 1989.

GRO Ref HV875.55 .B76 2008

Brown, Teresa. **Adoption records handbook: Birth family searches made easier with self-help tips, registries, search angels, pro se legal forms, etc.** Las Vegas, Nev: Crary Pub., 2008.

Stacks HV875.55 .C38 1998

Carp, E. Wayne. **Family Matters: Secrecy and Disclosure in the History of Adoption**. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Non-Fict HV875.55 .C45 2006

Askeland, Lori. **Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages, and Foster Care: A Historical Handbook and Guide**. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006.

Non-Fict HV875.55 .H57 2008

Herman, Ellen. **Kinship by Design: A History of Adoption in the Modern United States**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Non-Fict HV875.55 .S36 1995

Schooler, Jayne E. **Searching for a Past: the Adopted Adult's Unique Process of Finding Identity**. Colorado Springs, CO: Pinon Press, 1995.

Stacks HV881 .A8 1998

Askin, Jayne. **Search: A Handbook for Adoptees and Birthparents**. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1998.

Stacks HV6762.U5 B49 1997

Berko, Robert L. **Using Public Records to Find and Investigate Anyone**. South Orange, NJ: Consumer Education Research Center, 1997.

Stacks HV6762.U5 J64 2001

Johnson, Richard S. **Find Anyone Fast**. Spartanburg, SC: MIE Pub., 2001.

Stacks JK2445.P82 C85 1996

Culligan, Joseph J. **Adoption Searches Made Easier**. Miami, FL: FJA, Inc., 1996.

## Orphan records - Buffalo

Buffalo F129.B8 C763. Coppola, R. Donald, Mrs. **Records of the Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Orphan Home, Buffalo, Erie County, New York, 1865-1961**. [Buffalo, NY]: DAR, Abigail Fillmore Chapter, 1981. The original roll book for the girls was destroyed by a fire. The original Boys roll and two later rolls are indexed in this work.

For other 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century adoption resources, see our other guide: Adoption & Orphanage Resources for Genealogists and Historians:

<http://www.buffalolib.org/content/grosvenor/guides-publications>

## Adoption Registries

**New York State Health Department's Adoption Information Registry:** For adoptees, biological siblings, and birth parents. It provides non-identifying information (appearance, occupation, and other facts), and identifying and medical information (if both adoptee and birth parent are registered). [www.health.state.ny.us/vital\\_records/adoption.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/vital_records/adoption.htm)

**International Soundex Reunion Registry** is a non-profit mutual consent reunion registry: <http://www.isrr.org/>

## Vital records: Birth, Marriage, and Death

### Births:

Adult (18 and older) adoptees can order their New York State pre-adoption birth certificate through the New York State Department of Health:

[https://www.health.ny.gov/vital\\_records/preadoption.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/preadoption.htm)

**New York State Vital Records Index:** This microfiche index in the Grosvenor Room provides the date and town/city of birth, and the state certificate number. Individuals are listed by their birth name only.

- Buffalo: 1914 to 1937; Available through 1942 in Ancestry Library Edition
- NY State: 1881 to 1937 (Except Albany and Yonkers until 1914, and NYC); Available through 1942 in Ancestry Library Edition

**Birth Announcements in Newspapers:** Names of babies intended for adoption were not usually released to newspapers, but a notice may have mistakenly been published. Look through the

Buffalo News, Courier-Express, and Buffalo Daily Law Journal for a few weeks or even months after the date of birth to learn the names of those born on your birth date. There is no index of local newspaper birth notices. The Vital Records Office of Buffalo City Hall stopped releasing baby names to newspapers in 2006.

**Marriages & Deaths:** Please see our separate research guides *Vital Records in the Grosvenor Room* and *Government Sources of Vital Records*.

<https://www.buffalolib.org/special-collections/guides-publications>

## Other Local History Resources

**Databases:** <http://dbaz.buffalolib.org/dbaz.php#Genealogy>

- Ancestry Library Edition -- Search directories, NY vital records indexes, U.S. Federal Census & NY State Census 1790-1940, immigration, some vital, military, court, church records, and yearbooks. Available at B&ECPL branches; no at-home access.
- HeritageQuest -- Search U.S. Federal Census 1790-1940 from home with your library card.

**City Directories:** The Grosvenor Room has Buffalo city directories (1828-present), Buffalo suburbs & Erie County towns (1940s/1950s to the present), and some directories for locations across the state and country. See our separate Directory guide for more information:

<https://www.buffalolib.org/special-collections/guides-publications>

Ancestry Library database has Buffalo directories, 1861-1960; look for the "U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989" collection.

**Yearbooks** from many Buffalo and suburban schools are available in the Grosvenor Room and in the Ancestry Library database. See our separate yearbook guide for more information:

<https://www.buffalolib.org/special-collections/guides-publications>

**Newspapers:** A legal notice may have been published to notify the birthfather of the impending adoption. See the Buffalo Daily Law Journal: Jan 2, 1932 - June 30, 1970 (microfilm) and 1960-2010 (bound volumes).

## DNA Testing



Non-Fict and GRO Ref CS21 .B48 2016

Bettinger, Blaine T. **The family tree guide to DNA testing and genetic genealogy.** Cincinnati, Ohio: Family Tree Books, [2016].

GRO Ref CS21 .W456 2018

Weinberg, Tamar. **The adoptee's guide to DNA testing: how to use genetic genealogy to discover your long-lost family.**

Cincinnati, OH: Family Tree Books, [2018].

GRO Ref CS21.3 .A37 2019

Wayne, Debbie Parker. **Advanced genetic genealogy: techniques and case studies.**

Cushing, Texas: Wayne Research, 2019.

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Southard, Diahana. "Finding Your Birth Family with DNA." **Family Tree Magazine**, December 2017: 48-53. Print.

### **DNA Adoption**

<http://www.dnaadoption.com/>

Free online instruction on how to use DNA to find biological family members.



### **DNA Detectives**

<https://www.facebook.com/TheDNADetectives/>

Provides advice for those with unknown parents.

#### **DNA Detectives Kits of Kindness**

<http://ddkitsofkindness.blogspot.com/>

Donate or request a free DNA testing kit for finding biological family members.

### **DNA Testing Adviser**

<http://www.dna-testing-adviser.com/>

DNA testing advice for adoptees and others seeking biological family members.

### **Search Angels**

<https://www.searchangels.org>

Request help from a Search Angel, a volunteer genealogist who may help you in your search related to adoption.

## **Websites & Organizations**



**Shea's Search Series:** Helpful information for every step of your search.

<http://www.plumsite.com/sheaseries.html>

Copy in GRO Adoption Vertical File (Ask at Reference Desk).

**New York State Library Search Strategy Materials for Adoptees:** Books, links to helpful organizations, and legal information. <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/genealogy/adopt.htm>

**Cyndi's List:** A compiled list of websites, publications, and research services.

Scroll down and click on "Adoption." <http://www.CyndisList.com/>

**Child Welfare Information Gateway:** Information and support for "late discoverers" and others. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-people/>

**American Adoption Congress:** A group devoted to educating families affected by adoption and promoting legislation which helps adoptees gain access to information about their families and heritage. <https://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/>

**Long Lost Family:** This is a television series that connects biological families separated by adoption. Research strategies are often discussed on the show. Some episodes may be viewable online. <https://www.tlc.com/tv-shows/long-lost-family/>