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. Although New York State adoption records have been sealed since 1936, the following resources may be helpful in your search.

A guide to historic (pre-1936) Buffalo adoption resources can also be found in the Grosvenor Room and online: [http://www.buffalolib.org/content/grosvenor/guides-publications](http://www.buffalolib.org/content/grosvenor/guides-publications)

Getting Started & Search Tips

- 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: [https://www.nycourts.gov/courts/7jd/courts/surrogates/proceedings/adoption.shtml](https://www.nycourts.gov/courts/7jd/courts/surrogates/proceedings/adoption.shtml)
- 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.

Adapted from Shea’s Search Series online. See website for further information: [http://www.plumsite.com/shea/series.html](http://www.plumsite.com/shea/series.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.buffalolib.org/vufind/](http://www.buffalolib.org/vufind/)

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.


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 19th and early 20th 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). They do not release original birth certificates or adoption records. For more information see: 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:
In 1936, original adoptee records and birth certificates in New York State became sealed. A court order is needed to release the original adoptee records. Birth records are held at the town vital records offices, the NYS Dept of Health, or City Hall if born in Buffalo.

- Buffalo: 1916 to the present are held at Buffalo City Hall, Vital Records, Room 1302, 716-851-5440

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
- NY State: 1881 to 1937 (Except Albany and Yonkers until 1914, and NYC)

NYS will not provide the birth index for 1938 to the present due to adoption privacy concerns.

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. http://www.buffalolib.org/content/grosvenor/guides-publications
Other Local History Resources

Databases:  [http://www.buffalolib.org/content/research](http://www.buffalolib.org/content/research)


- 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: [http://www.buffalolib.org/content/grosvenor/guides-publications](http://www.buffalolib.org/content/grosvenor/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: [http://www.buffalolib.org/content/grosvenor/guides-publications](http://www.buffalolib.org/content/grosvenor/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).

Websites & Organizations

- **Shea's Search Series:** Helpful information for every step of your search. [http://www.plumsite.com/shea/series.html](http://www.plumsite.com/shea/series.html)
  Copy in GRO Adoption Vertical File (Ask at Reference Desk).

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

- **Cyndi's List:** A compiled list of websites, publications, and research services. Scroll down and click on “Adoption.” [http://www.CyndisList.com/](http://www.CyndisList.com/)

- **Child Welfare Information Gateway**
  Information and support for “late discoverers” and others. [https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-people/](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-people/)