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

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
- 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/sheas/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/

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

GRO Ref CS49 .S65 2006

GRO Ref HV875 .U38 2011

GRO Ref HV875 .U38 2015

GRO Ref HV875.55 .A364 1989

GRO Ref HV875.55 .B76 2008

Stacks HV875.55 .C38 1998

Non-Fict HV875.55 .C45 2006

Non-Fict HV875.55 .H57 2008

Non-Fict HV875.55 .S36 1995

Stacks HV881 .A8 1998

Stacks HV6762.U5 B49 1997

Stacks HV6762.U5 J64 2001
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


- 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
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

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


GRO Ref CS21 .Y682 2014
Southard, Diahan. Autosomal DNA for the Genealogist. [California]: Genealogy Gems Publications, [2014].

GRO Ref CS21 .Y683 2014
Southard, Diahan. Mitochondrial DNA for the genealogist. [California]: Genealogy Gems Publications, [2014].

GRO Ref CS21 .Y684 2014

GRO Ref CS21 .Y685 2014
Y Chromosome DNA for the genealogist: YDNA. [Place of publication not identified: Genealogy Gems Publication, 2014]. Y-DNA can be useful for adoptees trying to find their birth father/surname.

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

**DNA Detectives**
[https://www.facebook.com/TheDNADetectives/](https://www.facebook.com/TheDNADetectives/)
Provides advice for those with unknown parents.

**DNA Detectives Kits of Kindness**
[http://ddkitsofkindness.blogspot.com/](http://ddkitsofkindness.blogspot.com/)
Donate or request a free DNA testing kit for finding biological family members.

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

**Search Angels**
[https://www.searchangels.com/](https://www.searchangels.com/)
Request help from a Search Angel, a volunteer genealogist who may help you in your search related to adoption.

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**Websites & Organizations**

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

**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/](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/](https://www.tlc.com/tv-shows/long-lost-family/)

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