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

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
- 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
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/shea/series.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

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
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). 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

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

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### Other Local History Resources

**Databases:** [http://dbaz.buffalolib.org/dbaz.php#Genealogy](http://dbaz.buffalolib.org/dbaz.php#Genealogy)


- 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).

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### 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](#)

- [GRO Ref CS21.3 .A37 2019](#)
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/shea/series.html
Copy in GRO Adoption Vertical File (Ask at Reference Desk).


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/

Revised January 2020