

**DEATH NOTICES AND OBITUARIES:
FINDING DEATHS IN
BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY NEWSPAPERS**



KEY

*	= Oversized book
Buffalo	= In Buffalo Collection in Grosvenor Room
GRO	= In Grosvenor Room
Ref.	= Reference book, cannot be borrowed
WNYGS	= In collection of Western NY Genealogical Society

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INTRODUCTION

Finding ancestral death notices and obituaries is rewarding but not always easy. Your search will be more successful if you have the full name of the deceased and the month, day and year of death. **Browsing the newspaper(s) for a few days after the death date is a good method for locating the death notice.** Here are some things to keep in mind:

- There is no guarantee that a death notice or obituary exists for every person who ever lived or died in the Buffalo area.
- The Library does not have a comprehensive death or obituary index. However, our *Local History File*, an extensive newspaper index, does cite obituaries, mostly for prominent citizens of the late 19th to mid 20th centuries. The *Local History File* contains only a few death notices.
- A death notice and an obituary are not the same thing:
 - A **death notice** is short, containing basic facts about the deceased: name, date of death, surviving kin, and burial place. Death notices are considered classified ads and are not added to full-text newspaper archives.
 - An **obituary** is a longer article, including a narrative about the person's life and accomplishments, and sometimes a photo. Obituaries are considered news articles and are findable in full-text newspaper archives.
- The Library has Buffalo newspapers on microfilm starting with 1818 to 1821 (the *Niagara Patriot*) and 1842 (the *Commercial Advertiser*, the *Daily Courier*) to the present. We own some 1822-1841 Buffalo newspapers in hard copy, which must be seen by appointment in our Rare Book Room.
- Before 1930, death notices and obituaries are usually at the very beginning (first or second page) or very end (last or second-last page) of the paper.
- Newspapers from before 1900 typically have small print and can be difficult to read.
- See these related free library handouts for additional research ideas and sources:

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

Buffalo, WNY, and NY State Newspapers
Cemetery Records for Erie County, NY in the Grosvenor Room
Church Records in Microfilm and Print
Deaths in Buffalo
Vital Records

If you do not know the death date: Try the **US Social Security Death Index, listing death dates roughly 1962 to present.** Available in the Ancestry Library edition database; see a librarian for access.

DATABASES & DIGITAL COLLECTIONS	DESCRIPTION	ACCESS
B&ECPL Digital Collections	Several Erie County, New York newspapers have been digitized by B&ECPL and are freely available online. Also available is a manuscript titled The Why of This Book. It is a partial index to early Buffalo newspaper marriage and death announcements.	https://www.buffalolib.org/research-resources/digital-collections
HeritageQuest Online	A genealogy subscription database available at every B&ECPL location and from home with a B&ECPL card. This database includes an obituary index. Several Erie County newspapers' obituaries are indexed in this database.	http://dbaz.buffalolib.org/dbaz.php#Genealogy

SELECTED LOCAL NEWSPAPERS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Most of the following newspapers are available only on microfilm. The Library also has short runs of small newspapers not listed here. Microfilms may not be borrowed or removed from the Grosvenor Room. Microfilm copies are \$.10 per page.

Amherst Bee, 1879-1932

In the collection of the Western New York Genealogical Society (WNYGS). Staff has not studied the extent of death notices in this paper.

Aurora Standard, 1835-1838

In the collection of WNYGS. Staff has not studied the extent of death notices in this paper.

Buffalo Catholic Union, 1872-1964

Official newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo. Underwent several name changes. Good source for Irish-Americans in the 19th century.

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser, 1842-1924

1844-1885: Daily issues average 4 pages. There are 1-5 death notices per issue, usually found on the bottom right corner of page 2.

1885-1924: Daily issues expand to 8 pages, and by 1924, to 16 pages. There are 5-10 death notices per issue, usually found on the last or second-last page near the bottom. Obituaries are uncommon.

The *Commercial Advertiser* folded in 1924.

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Buffalo Courier-Express, 1926-1982

The newspaper is a merger of the *Buffalo Morning Express* and the *Buffalo Daily Courier*. See table of contents on the bottom of the first page for a list of the deceased. Obituaries are scattered throughout the paper, but often found near the death notices.

The *Courier-Express* folded in 1982. Its archives are held by Butler Library at Buffalo State College.

Buffalo Criterion, 1957 to 1974

Staff has not studied the extent of death notices in this paper. Good source for African-Americans.

Buffalo Daily Courier, 1842-1926

1842-1880: Mostly a business newspaper with plentiful advertisements. There are 1-3 obituaries and death notices per issue, usually found on pages 2 and 3. No table of contents.

1880-1885: There are 4-5 obituaries and death notices per issue, usually found on pages 2 and 4. The death notices start to name surviving kin and ancestry. Obituaries include more biographical information.

1885-1890: Daily issues now average 8 pages, with 8-10 obituaries and death notices per day. See Saturday issues for announcements of births, marriages, and deaths.

1890-1920: Paper expands to 10-14 pages per day and the Sunday issue averages 40 pages. There are 10-15 death notices and obituaries per issue but they are scattered, usually found on page 1 or 2.

1920-1926: Paper expands to 14-16 pages per day. Death notices and obituaries are usually found on or near the last page.

In 1926, the *Buffalo Daily Courier* merged with the *Buffalo Morning Express* to form the *Buffalo Courier-Express*.

Buffalo (Daily) Law Journal, 1931-present

Carried a Vital Statistics page with births, wedding licenses, and deaths in the 1960s-1990s, possibly also earlier and later. Published daily until 1978, when it went to twice a week and shortened its name.

1932-1970: On microfilm in GRO. Missing Jan-June 1939.

1960-2010: Bound volumes in Closed Stacks, call number *K2 .U34. Staff will retrieve for you.

Current issues: On open shelf in Non-Fiction.

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Buffalo Enquirer, 1891-1924

1891-1905: Death notices are usually found on page 1.

1905-1924: After 1905 or so, death notices are usually found on the last or second last page.

The *Buffalo Enquirer* folded in 1924.

Buffalo (Evening) News, 1881 to present

1881-1920: Daily issues are about 4 pages long. By the 1920s, it grows to about 16 pages. There are 10-15 brief death notices per issue, usually found on page 1-2. Obituaries are usually found on page 1. Not published on Sundays until after 1915.

1920-1930: Death notices are at the end of the paper. Obituaries can be at the beginning or end. Sometimes vital statistics appear near the end.

1930-present: See the table of contents on the bottom of the first page for a list of the deceased. Most obituaries are found near the death notices. Births and marriages sometimes appear near the death notices.

1962-1976: WNYGS has death notices from the *Buffalo News* for these years on 6 rolls of microfilm, shelved in Grosvenor Room

1982: The *Buffalo Evening News* shortens its name to the *Buffalo News*.

1983-1996: For these years, use the *Western New York Index* (bound volumes in Grosvenor Room). See back of volumes for articles about individuals, which include the name, date, and page number of the newspaper containing the obituary. You can then copy from the microfilm. See Print Sources, p. 6.

1989-present: In-person visitors to any Buffalo and Erie County Public Library branch or town library can search the *Buffalo News* full-text database. It contains obituaries but not death notices. Due to licensing restrictions, at-home access is not permitted.

1997-present: The *Buffalo News* has death notices online in full text from 11 September 1997 to the present. See Selected Websites (last page) for address.

Buffalo Evening Post, 1852-1925

Almost no death notices, occasional obituaries. The *Buffalo Evening Post* folded in 1925.

Buffalo Jewish Review, 1953 to present

Staff has not studied the extent of death notices in this paper. Stored with boxed newspapers in Stacks; ask librarian to retrieve.

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Buffalo Morning Express, 1846-1926

1846-1880: Issues average 4 pages, with no index or list of the deceased. Death notices are few and are usually found on the bottom right corner of page 2 or the last page. Obituaries are rare.

1880-1900: Daily issues expand to 8-12 pages. Death notices are usually found on the last page, near the bottom. Obituaries can be scattered anywhere in the paper.

1900-1926: Death notices are usually found towards the end or on the last page.

In 1926, the *Buffalo Morning Express* merged with the *Buffalo Daily Courier* to form the *Buffalo Courier-Express*.

Buffalo Republic (and subsequent name changes), 1847-1886

Death notices are few and infrequent. Obituaries are uncommon. Heading will say either DEATHS or DIED in bold text. Several days may be published at one time. Paper is always 4 pages long.

1847-1863: Death notices can usually be found on the right side of page 2.

1865-1876: No pattern: Notices may be published anywhere on any page.

1877-1884: Many more notices appear during this time, usually on page 1 or 4. Obituaries of noteworthy people may be found anywhere in the paper.

1885-1886: The few notices may be found on page 4, under the heading VITAL STATISTICS.

Buffalo Sunday News, 1894-1915

Published only on Sundays. Death notices and obituaries can be found anywhere in the paper.

Buffalo Times, 1883-1939

1883-1895: Daily issues average 8-12 pages. Death notices are usually found on the last page. Obituaries are uncommon.

1895-1920: Death notices are usually found on page 1 in the bottom right corner.

1920-1939: The weekday issues expand to 24 pages and the Sunday *Times* averages 50 pages. Death notices are usually found on page 1. Vital statistics might be found in the middle of the paper.

The *Buffalo Times* folded in 1939.

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Most of the following newspapers are available only on microfilm. The Library also has short runs of small newspapers not listed here. Microfilms may not be borrowed or removed from the Grosvenor Room. Microfilm copies are \$.10 per page.

Buffalo Tribune--Freie Presse, 1886-1914

In German. Few death notices or obituaries. Watch for *Die Wiege, Der Altar, und Das Grab* ("Births, Marriages, and Deaths/Burials"). List of deaths is published every 3-4 days, usually bottom half of second to last page.

Buffalo Volksfreund, 1891-1969

In German. Death notices and obituaries are scattered throughout the paper. Watch for *Die Todeschiene* ("List of Death Certificates") or *Todesanzeige* ("Obituaries").

Challenger, 1963 to 1974

A few obituaries in each issue. Good source for African-Americans.

Der Buffalo Demokrat, 1890-1918

Few obituaries of notable people, not death notices.

Empire Star, 1946-1961

Staff has not studied the extent of death notices in this paper. Good source for African-Americans.

Erie County Independent, 1875-1944

Published in Hamburg, NY. In the collection of WNYGS. Staff has not studied the extent of death notices in this paper.

Dziennik dla Wszystkich, 1930-1957

In Polish. Death notices are being indexed by volunteers of the Polish Genealogical Society of New York State. See Online Sources, p. 5.

Niagara Patriot, 1818-1821

Staff has not studied the extent of death notices in this paper. The *Niagara Patriot* later became the *[Buffalo] Commercial Advertiser*. One reel is shelved in drawer labeled Niagara Newspapers.

Fredonia Censor, 1823-1928

Staff has not studied the extent of death notices in this paper.

Kenmore Record Advertiser, 1916-1970

Staff has not studied the extent of death notices in this paper.

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Springville Journal, 1867-2003

Staff has not studied the extent of death notices in this paper.

SELECTED WEBSITES	NOTES
http://www.buffalonews.com/ Buffalo News	Home page has link to Deaths at the top banner. Obituaries are online for free for two weeks. After that, obituaries are retrievable from the archives for a small fee. Searchable archives go back to 1989.
https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/local/new-york/buffalo-obituaries Buffalo News Death Notices, Sept. 11, 1997 to present	Death notices are online for free for 90 days. After that, they are retrievable from the archives for a small fee. Note: appear to be free as of Nov 2011.
http://www.buffaloresearch.com/obit.html Death Notices & Obituaries in Buffalo and Erie County, NY	A guide to existing print and online sources, with links to lesser-known sites
http://pgsnys.org/databases/ Dziennik dla Wszystkich Project, 1911-1957 Polish Genealogical Society of New York State	Volunteers are indexing local Polish death notices into an offline database and will do look-ups for no charge.
https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2333694 Family Search, Search GenealogyBank Obituaries, 1980-2014	Brief information abstracted from obits from the Buffalo News, 1989-present; town "Bee" newspapers, Tonawanda News.
http://www.fultonhistory.com [Upstate New York Newspapers]	Millions of searchable scanned newspaper pages from about 1870-1940, including some early Buffalo papers. Occasionally weak search engine and image quality. A unique resource.
https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/ New York State Historic Newspapers	Many New York public libraries and other institutions have archived their digitized newspapers on this site.
http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/nysnp/ New York State Newspaper Project	Want to go beyond what BECPL owns? Click on the county where a paper was published to see a master list of surviving newspapers and who owns them.

SELECTED PRINT SOURCES	NOTES
These are the most frequently consulted obituary sources in the Grosvenor Room. For a more comprehensive list, see our guide <i>Deaths in Buffalo</i>.	
[Card File in Grosvenor Room] Local History File	Indexes the <i>Buffalo (Evening) News</i> and the <i>Courier Express</i> . Dates back to late 19 th century, but most comprehensive for roughly 1930 to 1982. Includes obituaries but few death notices. Not digitized or online.

SELECTED PRINT SOURCES	NOTES
Ref. *A13 .W4 1983-1996 The Western New York Index [Buffalo, NY]: The Library	See back pages for obituaries and other biographical articles about local individuals. Covers 1983-1996.
Ref. *F127 .E6 E76 1992 Reamy, Bill & Martha Erie County, New York Obituaries, as Found in the Files of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society Finksburg, MD: Pipe Creek Publishing, 1992	Index of obituaries from 1811 to 1880. Gives name and date of death but not newspaper where obituary or death notices was printed.
*F129 .B853 S44 1997 Seegel, Steven J., comp. A Necrology Excerpted and Organized from the Buffalo City Directories, 1882-1892 [Buffalo, NY]: Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, 1997	Gives names and death dates for adults (age 16 and over) who passed away in the city of Buffalo for the years 1882-1892.