

Record Selection Table

1. IF YOU NEED	2. LOOK FIRST IN	3. THEN SEARCH
Age	Census – U.S. Federal (1850-1940) and New York State Census (1855-1925) records ask for age.	Military Records – Draft records, discharge papers and enlistment records list age. Military rosters and service records usually list age. Pension records (not index) usually record age of pensioner and sometimes ages of children.
	Vital Records – NY Birth, death and marriage records.	Probate – Generally lists age at death. The ages of the enslaved are often given in a slaveholder's estate papers.
	Cemeteries – Registers often give age at time of death. Headstones generally give a birth and death year and may give birth and death dates.	Taxation – Ages of the enslaved may be given in tax records.
Birth date	Vital – NY birth and death records record birth date. Sometimes marriage records record birth dates.	Cemetery – Tombstones and burial records may list birth date.
	Church – Baptismal records usually include birth dates. Marriage records may record birth dates. Death records rarely record birth dates.	Obituaries/Newspapers – Obits may list birth date. Feature articles on an individual may list birth date. Birth announcements may be recorded in local newspapers.
	SSDI – Birth dates are usually listed. The SSDI starts in 1937, but is more complete 1962-present.	Census – 1900 federal census lists birth month and year. 1870-1885 federal census lists birth month if child was born within the year.
	Bible Records	Military – Military discharge papers, usually draft records. Pension records sometimes list birth date of pensioner and sometimes ages of children.
	Freedman's Bank Records – Former enslaved African-Americans.	
	Naturalization papers – After Sept. 1906.	Immigration – Sometimes passenger lists.
Birthplace	Vital – Birth records list specific town of birth. Marriage and death records may list specific location of birth.	Newspapers – Feature articles on an individual may list place of birth. Sometimes list birth announcements.
	Church – Baptismal and marriage records often list location.	Obituaries – May list place of birth.
	Census Records – List country or state of birth. 1855-1875 NYS Census lists county of NY person was born in.	Military – Draft records often list place of birth. Pension files may list place of birth. Enlistment records may list state or country of birth.
	Social Security Application – Lists place of birth. Social Security started in 1936.	
	Naturalization papers – After Sept. 1906. Will generally also give place of birth of children and spouse.	Passports – Most passports.
	Freedman's Bank Records – Former enslaved African-Americans.	Immigration – Sometimes passenger lists.
City or parish foreign birth	Church Records – Marriage records often list this info and baptismal records of children often list birthplace of parents. Death records rarely list specific birth places.	Vital Records - Usually only lists country name.
	Naturalization papers – After Sept. 1906.	Gravestones - Especially Irish and Scottish
	Immigration – Sometimes passenger lists and border crossing records.	Histories – Of specific ethnic groups for a locality.
	Immigration – Sometimes passenger lists and border crossing records.	Probate – If family members inheriting part of an estate live in a foreign country, their town of

	Passport – Most passports.	residence will be listed. This could be a clue to the deceased's place of birth.
	Obituaries – May list specific locale of birth.	Directories – Of members of an ethnic group.
Country of foreign birth	Emigration & Immigration – Most passenger lists.	Military Records
	Census – US Federal Census 1850-1940. NYS Census 1855-1925. Country of parents' births 1870-1940 US Federal Census.	Vital Records – Marriage and death records usually list this information.
	Naturalization	Obituaries – May list place of birth.
	Passport – Most list this information.	Probate – If family members inheriting part of an estate live in a foreign country, their town of residence will be listed. This could be a clue to the deceased's place of birth.
	Church - Marriage records often list this info and baptismal records of children often list birthplace of parents. Death records rarely list specific birth places.	Histories – Of specific ethnic groups for a locality. Directories – Of members of an ethnic group.
Death	Vital – Birth record may list if a parent is deceased. Marriage records may list if a parent or former spouse is deceased. Death records will list date of death.	Bible Records Newspapers – Accidents, homicides, deaths during wartime.
	Church – Baptismal records may list if a parent is deceased. Marriage records may list if a parent or former spouse is deceased. Death records will list date of death.	Coroner's reports – Autopsies are done for select reasons. Freedman's Bank Records – May list death of family members of former enslaved African-Americans.
	Probate Records – Usually list date of death.	Land Records – Deeds may be conveyed to "the heirs of," which helps narrow a date of death.
	Cemeteries – Year/date of death, maybe place of death.	Directories – City and alumni directories may list death dates. Funeral Home Records (Hard to locate.)
	SSDI – Lists at least month and year of death, after 1988 usually lists specific date of death.	Naturalization Records – May list death of spouse.
	Obituaries – Usually list date of death.	Reports – Some reports of government agencies, clubs, businesses, etc. list deaths of employees and members. Police reports may list homicides.
	Military Records – Pension records will usually list date of death of a pensioner. Service records will list date of death if died while in military service.	
Divorce	Court Records – Divorce records. Name changes may give a clue to a divorce.	Newspapers – May report divorces. Marriage announcements of children may provide clues to the parents' divorce.
	Vital Records – Marriage records may list the name of a former spouse, date and place of divorce.	
Ethnicity	Census – US Federal 1850-1940 and NYS 1855-1875 and 1905-1925 list ethnicity. Sometimes only select ethnic groups were recorded. Sometimes census takers interpreted this themselves and may have been incorrect.	Church Records - Membership may be composed of a particular ethnic group. Baptismal and marriage records often list location of birth. Burials rarely list location of birth.
	Emigration & Immigration – List place of birth.	Vital Records
	Naturalization – List place of birth, may list race.	Ethnic Societies – Look at membership lists to see if your ancestor was a member.
	Passport – Lists place of birth.	
Immigration date	Emigration & Immigration – Passenger lists.	Census – NYS Census 1905-1925 lists number of years in the U.S. US Federal Census lists year of immigration or number of years in the U.S. 1900-1930.
	Naturalization – After September 1906 will list date	Newspapers – Feature articles about an individual

	and place of immigration.	may list date of immigration.
	Passport – Will list date, place, and ship of immigration.	
Living relatives	Directories – City directories list spouse's names and adult children working outside the home living with parents.	Census – List family member's names in a household. 72 year waiting period before census records become public.
	Probate Records – List living heirs.	Church Records – Family members may be witnesses. Marriage records may list if parents are living or deceased.
	Obituaries – Usually name surviving family members.	
	Freedman's Bank Records – Former enslaved African-Americans. May list parents, siblings, in-laws.	Court Records – Guardianship records, other court records.
Maiden name	Vital – Birth/death/marriage records.	Military Records – May find maiden names in widow's pensions or due to affidavit's of the bride's family members.
	Church Records – Baptismal records and marriage records list maiden names of mother/wife. Rarely death records.	Freedman's Bank Records – Former enslaved African-Americans.
	Newspapers – Marriage/engagement announcements, marriage license listings, feature articles.	Obituaries – May list maiden name.
		Probate Records – May list male family members or parents.
	Bible Records	Social Registers – Sometimes list marriages.
Social Security Application – Of women and of mother.	Naturalization – After Sept. 1906 will list spouse's name.	
Marriage	Vital – Marriage records. Death records will usually list spouse's name. Birth records list parents' names and usually if the child is legitimate.	Military Records – Pension files often list spouse's names. Draft records and military discharge papers may list spouse's name.
	Church – Baptismal records will list parents' names. Marriage records will list parties getting married and parents' names. Death record may list spouse's name.	Probate Records – Will list spouse's name if the spouse is living.
	Newspapers – Marriage announcements, engagement announcements, feature articles. Marriage licenses applied for are often listed.	Cemeteries – Burial registers may list spouse's name. Plot registers may indicate family relationships. Gravestones may indicate family relationships.
	Census – US Federal Census 1880-1940 and NYS Census 1855-1875 lists marital status. 1865 NYS Census lists number of times married. US Federal Census lists age at first marriage or number of years in current marriage in 1900, 1910, 1930. US Federal lists if married within the year 1850-1885.	Land and Property – Deeds often list spouse's name.
	Bible Records	City Directories – Sometimes list wife's first name or deceased husband's first name.
	Freedman's Bank Records – Former enslaved African-Americans. Lists spouse's name.	Naturalization – After September 1906 list spouse's name.
	Alumni Directories – Often list husband, rarely children.	
Occupation	Census – US Federal Census 1850-1940 and NYS Census 1855-1915 lists occupation.	Newspapers – Articles about businesses and institutions may list employee names. Feature articles on individuals.
	Directories – City and alumni often list occupation.	Obituaries – May list occupation.
	Emigration & Immigration – Passenger lists often include occupation.	Military – Military discharge papers, draft papers, and pension files often include occupation.
	Passport/Naturalization – Often list occupation.	Social Security Application – SS started in 1936.

Parents, Children, and other family members	Vital - Births list parents' names and sometimes their place of birth. Deaths may list parents' names including mother's maiden name and spouse's name. Marriages list parents' names including mother's maiden name.	Emigration & Immigration – Passenger lists name those traveling with. May list relative who they will live with in the United States.
	Obituaries – Usually name spouse and children. Sometimes list parents, siblings, grandchildren and others.	Directories and Social Registers – Directories may list adult children who work outside the home. Social registers & family directories may list family members at a residence.
	Church Records – Baptismal and marriage records will usually list parents' names including mother's maiden name. Sometimes death records list parents or spouse.	Passport – May list parents' names.
	Census – 1850-1940 name every person living in a household together. 1880-1940 specify relationship to head of household.	Newspaper – May be a listing searching for relatives after a death for probate.
	Probate Records – List living children, spouse, and sometimes other family members.	Military – Draft registrations and military discharges usually list closest relative. Pension records may list spouse, children, and other relatives.
	Freedman's Bank Records – Former enslaved African-Americans. May list parents, spouse, siblings, others.	Bible Records – A variety of relatives.
Physical description	Military Records – Draft registrations and pension files often include personal descriptions.	Naturalization – After September 1906 often include personal descriptions.
	Biography	Passport – Include personal descriptions, sometimes photos.
Places family has lived	Census, Directories (city and alumni), Land and Property, Social Security Application, Taxation, Obituaries & Newspapers, Military Records, Freedman's Bank Records, Local Histories	
Previous research (compiled genealogy)	Ancestry Family Trees, Family History Books, FamilySearch Family Trees, Periodicals, PERSI, Genealogy Societies, Biographies	
Religion	Church Records	Biography
	Cemeteries – Individuals may be buried in a religious cemetery, or the burial record may list a church the person was associated with. A symbol on a gravestone may indicate religious denomination.	Probate – Funeral/burial expenses may be included which name a church or pastor/priest. Funds may be left to a religious organization.
	Vital Records - Marriage records list the officiant which may be a pastor/priest/rabbi.	Histories – Local and church.
Social Activities	Records – Articles of incorporation for churches list trustees/founders names.	
	Histories (general, club, church, institutions, etc.), Biographies, Obituaries & Newspapers, Club directories, Alumni directories, Yearbooks, City directories (lists club officers), Annual reports (clubs, organizations, institutions)	