

Genealogical Guide to Monroe County, New York

Vital Records

Most people assume that since New York State was one of the original thirteen colonies that there should be vital records beginning in the 17th century. Unfortunately, New York didn't begin continuous recording of vital records until late 1880.

There was an early attempt to begin vital record registration in 1847 when the clerk of each school district was to collect the birth, marriage, and death records and report them to the town clerk. That system failed as many communities did not bother to comply because there was no enforcement of the law. The entire system was abandoned about 1851. In Monroe County just a few of these early records still exist. In the late 1970s the [Monroe County Department of Health](#) (740 E. Henrietta Road, Rochester, N. Y. 14620) requested that the town clerks send to their office all the birth and death records that began in 1880. Some of these early vital records were also sent to the County Department of Health. The following is the best possible list of the existing early vital records by town:

- Brighton** – 1847 to 1850 – (which include the records of the Monroe County Poorhouse 1847 to 1850) original records at Rochester Public Library, [Local History & Genealogy Division](#). On the Monroe County GenWeb website these records are on two separate web pages. These are links to [Brighton vital records](#) and [Poorhouse vital records](#), as the Poorhouse was then located in Brighton.
- Gates** – 1848 to 1850 – original records at Monroe Co. Dept. of Health and [Gates Town Historian](#) has a transcript.
- Greece** – 1848 to 1849 – original records at Greece Town Clerk and [Greece Town Historian](#) has a transcript.
- Irondequoit** – 1847 to 1850 – all records at Monroe Co. Dept. of Health.
- Parma** – 1847 to 1849 – all records at [Parma Town Clerk](#).
- Perinton** – 1847 to 1850 – [Perinton Town Historian](#) has marriages. Births and deaths are at the Monroe Co. Dept. of Health. Also available on FamilySearch online film #[1437482](#), item 2 but only viewable with a FamilySearch Center connection.

Even though these early vital records are well over a hundred and seventy years old and, in fact, that some other New York State communities have published their early records, the Monroe County Department of Health has not allowed anyone including the Town Historians to see the original records. Their contention is that these records are covered by the same rules as the vital records that began in 1880.

The New York State Public Health Law pertaining to the vital records that begin in 1880 states that birth, marriage, and death records *"on file in the State Department of Health or on file with a local registrar of vital statistics may be provided for genealogical research"* but *"the search of the files may be conducted only by authorized employees."*

The Health Law says that, *"no information shall be issued from a record of birth unless a record has been on file for at least 75 years or more and the person ... is known to be deceased."* Also *"no information*

Genealogical Guide to Monroe County, New York

shall be issued from a record of" marriage or "death unless the record has been on file for at least 50 years or more." Thus those records from the last few decades are not readily available. The New York State Department of Health has relented slightly because of pressure from family genealogists and decided that recent vital records can be obtained for direct line ancestors. The catch is that a copy of a death certificate has to be provided to obtain birth or marriage records. The current fee for each search is \$22 per certificate for a search of up to 3 years (or \$30 for a certified copy). To get a copy of the original vital record after 1880 in upstate New York write to the [New York State Department of Health](#), Vital Records Section, Genealogy Unit, P.O. Box 2602, Albany, NY 12220-2602. On their website you can download the form to order vital records. The time for them to send you the record has varied over the years. Currently it appears that they are over 4 years behind in fulfilling a vital record request.

The [Monroe County Department of Health](#) also has the birth and death records. To visit the office in person, you have to make an appointment from their web page. You can download a form to order records from their web page. They are faster at replying but they send a transcription, not a copy of the original record, as the Monroe County records are in large ledgers with a few records on a page. The price is the same as ordering from Albany, ie. \$22. Also, the birth and death records at the Monroe County Department of Health are still organized by the town. That is why you will have to indicate in which town the event occurred. Each town still has a copy of their original marriage records and you could write to the Town Clerk of the town for a marriage record. You could also write to Albany and wait for a copy of the original marriage certificate.

For many years the New York State Department of Health had the only copy of indexes for state vital records (but not including New York City). In 1992, they placed the indexes in the [New York State Archives](#) (Cultural Archives Center, Albany, NY 12230). In 2001 the Rochester Public Library became the first place outside of Albany to have the vital record indexes. Since then the indexes have also been made available to about 10 other libraries around the State. The indexes are on microfiche and only show the name, date of the event, place of the event and the file number. These indexes are available for public use, but there are still some restrictions on use. The available indexes include only births at least 75 years old, and marriages and deaths at least 50 years old. In a case where the year is known and only the month, day or place is needed, it can be found without paying the fee for a copy of the original certificate.

Starting in 2017 a group called [Reclaim the Records](#) was able to free up the vital record indexes for births, marriages and deaths beginning in 1880. Those records are the same as the ones that are microfiche (above). Reclaim the Records has put the entire collection on Archive.org where they can be viewed for free. The [NY Birth Index](#) collection has the indexes for 1881 – 1942. The [NY Marriage Index](#) collection has the indexes for 1881 – 1964. Then the [NY Death Index](#) collection has index for 1880 – 1956. Those records can only be searched by browsing pages.

Those same NY State indexes have also been placed on Ancestry.com but you have to be a subscriber to see those indexes. Ancestry has also scanned the indexes so that you can search for a

| | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Kleir | Jacob | | |
| | 28 Jun | Rch. | 7478 |
| Klen | George A. | | |
| | 21 Jan | Rch. | 750 |
| Klemm | Annie L. | | |
| | 28 Dec | Flushing | 16203 |
| Klepser | George | | |
| | 28 Apr | Seneca Falls | 5094 |
| Klice | James F. | | |
| | 27 Feb | Buf. | 2325 |
| Klincke | George | | |
| | 15 Apr | Newtown | 4589 |
| Kline | John M. | | |
| | 17 Dec | Long Id. City | 15700 |
| | Nicholas | | |
| | 12 Jan | Rch. | 417 |
| | Wesley | | |
| | 25 Nov | Central Bridge | 14707 |
| Klingler | Frank J. | | |
| | 30 Mar | Rch. | 3782 |

Part of a page from the 1882 death index.

Genealogical Guide to Monroe County, New York

name. Some of the index pages are of bad quality so a name may not show up by searching. In that case, you can you can browse the indexes page by page and see if the name was misinterpreted.

These are the links to Ancestry's NY Indexes:

- [NY Birth Index; 1881 – 1942.](#)
- [NY Marriage Index; 1881 – 1967.](#)
- [NY Death Index; 1880 – 1956.](#)

If browsing the indexes on either Archive.org or Ancestry, it should be noted that the indexes from 1880 to 1939 are arranged alphabetically. In the indexes from 1940 to 1956 the records are arranged by the Soundex system which is a method that puts similar sounding names together. [This web page](#) will convert a name to the Soundex code. Note that in the earliest indexes Rochester is abbreviated as "Rch. (see example on previous page).

All the indexes give a certificate number. That number is only good for ordering from the New York State Department of Health. That certificate number is not needed nor useful if ordering from the Monroe County Department of Health (births and deaths) nor from a Town (marriages).

In 2013 the NY State Department of Health created a [web page with a death index](#). That index currently has records beginning Jan. 1, 1957 and up Dec. 31, 1972. It is probable that 1957 was the first year that the Department put the index into a computer so that is why they started in that year. The web page had been updated every year with newer records until a couple of years ago. It has over 1,600,000 records from the State excluding New York City. This web-based database is different than most others. First click on "Data" in the upper right corner. Then use the search box for a surname. This results will show the decedent's name, date of death, record number and a code for the place of death. To find out the meaning of the code, you have to open [this large online PDF file](#) and search for the code number.

The same online death index from the NY State Department of Health has been put on Ancestry.com. On [this web page](#) you can search for a name if you have a subscription. It is much easier to find a person on Ancestry than on the NY State Department of Health web page. Ancestry gives the actual place of death instead of just a code. They also can give results of similar spellings.

FamilySearch has some, but not all, the deaths in this group. Their [web page for these death](#) says that they currently only have records from 1957 – 1963. FamilySearch also gives the actual place of death instead of just a code.

In December 2025 Reclaim the Records won a lawsuit against the NY State Department of Health. They got an index of deaths from 1880 to 2017 and put them on a newly created web page [The New York State Death Index](#). Again, these records do not include New York City but all the rest of the State. There are two ways to search these records. You can do a text search on the main page or you can click on "Advanced Search" and fill in fields of data that you want to search on.

This new massive collection of deaths from Reclaim the Records has a total of more than 10 million records. It is made up of two databases. The records from 1880 to 1956 were indexed by Ancestry and then given to the Department of Health. That made that early database public records that could be obtained through Freedom of Information laws. The second part with records from 1957 to 2017 were a database created by the Department of Health to help them find records. The Department of Health fought hard to not have the indexes released but lost in the end in court.

[Genealogical Guide to Monroe County, New York](#)

On the Monroe County GenWeb there are some death records that occurred at the Monroe County Poorhouse (also called Alms House) that were found in printed volumes of records of the Monroe County Legislature. Those death records were extracted and put on three web pages for years; [1873 – 1880](#), [1880 – 1890](#) and [1890 – 1903](#). Similarly, there were death records from the [County Insane Asylum from 1873 – 1890](#) that were found in the record volumes of the Legislature.

For more recent deaths from all of the US try searching on [Legacy.com](#) for obit starting in 1998. You will probably get too many results but you can refine the search by filtering those results. It appears that there are currently over 50 million obits on the website.

Marriage records for Rochester begin in March 1876. Both the records and the indexes for them have been placed in the [Rochester Municipal Archives and Records Center](#) (414 Andrews Street, Rochester, N. Y. 14614). That office is an archive for all kinds of records for the City of Rochester. Barely referenced on the bottom of that web page there are about 180,000 marriage records dating from 1876 through 1962 that can be searched by first name or surname. Then for those records from 1876 to 1910 you can click on “Details” and it will give you all the marriage details. After 1910 you only get the names of the wife and husband, a volume number and certificate number. The web page also gives instruction on how to order copies of the Rochester marriage records. They charge less for a copy than the NY State Department of Health.

| First Name | MI | Last Name | Year of Marriage | Spouse First Name | MI | Spouse Last Name |
|-------------|----|-----------|------------------|-------------------|----|------------------|
| Ellen | | Allen | 1962 | Leonard | | Burt |
| Francis | | Aiken | 1962 | Ethel | | Banks |
| Raymond | | Alves | 1962 | Regina | | Barosiewicz |
| Charlotte | M | Alaimo | 1962 | Timothy | | Burgess |
| Susan | R | Adams | 1962 | Gordon | R | Brown |
| Sandra | E | Allen | 1962 | Gordon | E | Billings |
| Christopher | | Alfano | 1962 | Sue | C | Benfante |

Some Marriages from 1962 from the index at Rochester Municipal Archives

There was a duplicate copy made of the Rochester and Town marriage records for the years 1908 to 1935. Those records were located in the Monroe County Courthouse but because of restrictions on vital records they haven't been available to the public for many years. Some years ago, prior to the stringent state regulations on vital records, FamilySearch filmed that set of marriage records. Those records have also been indexed and can be searched online on [this web page](#). The web page searches the entire state. To search for just marriage records within Monroe County click on “More Options” under “Place” and enter “Monroe, New York.” Within your search results, click on camera icon to view the original marriage record.

The Rochester Genealogical Society has scanned marriage records from the Clerk of the Town of Perinton. On [this web page](#) are two sets of records. On the bottom of that page is a searchable PDF file with marriages from the Village of Fairport from 1887 to 1908 and 11 marriages from the Village of East Rochester from the year 1907. Then on the top of that web page are 4 files of marriages from the Town of Perinton that cover from 1937 to 1942.

[Genealogical Guide to Monroe County, New York](#)

A place to find some birth dates for New York State residents is [Voter Records](#) on a web page by Stephen P. Morse. It gives both birth date and recent home address. This database would only include people 18 and over and they would have to be a registered voter.

