

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

Surrogate Court Records

The court that settles an estate after a person has died is called Surrogate Court in New York State. This court is called Probate Court in most other states. In Monroe County, the Surrogate Court records are available from the [Surrogate Court office](#) in room 541 on the fifth floor of the Hall of Justice in the County Civic Center (99 Exchange Blvd., Rochester, NY 14614). All index volumes and file packets have been moved to a private storage company. They have been replaced with computer terminals. On the computers are indexes to all the records from 1821 to present. Also about 90% of the court files are also available to be viewed on the computers. You can email a link to the file to yourself and it can be viewed or downloaded when you get home. If there is a court file that is not yet on the computer, you can fill out a form and the office will have it scanned and make it available in a week or so.



Entrance to Monroe County Civic Center

On the [Monroe County Surrogate Court website](#) are indexes of decedents for the year of 2012 to the last month. Those indexes are by year and then alphabetical.

In December 2021 the Surrogate Court added a link “Public Online Record,” on the bottom of their web page. On that search form you can search through the records. The files from the beginning of the county to the mid 1980s can be searched on the “Old Index Search” tab. That will give only the basic information on if they have a file for the decedent. The Surrogate office says they are trying to put the old files online but have to make some changes and also get permission from the New York State Unified Court System before that can happen. Files from the mid 1980s to present can be searched using the “Name Search” tab. For the files up to Feb. 2014 the results will show a detailed list of the documents in the file but no access to those documents. For files beginning Feb. 19, 2014 most of the documents are online. Certain documents were not allowed to be put online like the death certificate and any financial records.

If writing to the Surrogate Court office, their price for researching a file is **\$90** per file plus charges for copies. That price is set by the New York State Unified Court System. Instead of paying the outrageous fee, either go to the office in person or use a professional genealogical researcher to go there for you.

The size of the original estate files vary greatly, some being a single sheet, while others are hundreds of pages. There is an estate file for a man that died in 1879 that is 454 pages and it probably is not the largest file. There are two kinds estate files. The first is a testate estate, that is an estate with a will. The second is called an intestate estate and that is an estate without a will. In either kind of estate, the most important document is usually the petition for probate. That document gives a list of all heirs, their relationship to the decedent, their residences and sometimes heir’s ages. Others kinds of documents that may be found in estate files are; an inventory of personal property, administration papers and guardianship papers. Sometime about 1990 NY State started requiring a death certificate to be filed with each estate. Although a copy of a death certificate might not be available from the County Health Department, it may be included in with those recent estates.

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FamilySearch filmed indexes and some other record volumes in the Surrogate Court office in the early 1970s. Those [record volumes for Monroe County](#) are now online. The place to start is the five volumes labeled “General Index” and with a range of letters of the alphabet. Then you can see if there is an estate for the person you are looking for. Those indexes are not strictly alphabetical. The system used is to group names by the first three letters of the surname and then by the first letter of the given name. There are pages at the beginning of the index volume that shows the coding and tell which page a name would be on (see example on top of next page). Once you find a name in the index, write down the file number (year plus a number after that) and the book number and page. The column before the book number tells what kind of estate records it is. “Will” is an estate with a will. “Adm” is an administration or an estate without a will. “Gdn” is a guardianship. “T.T.” is a tax transfer; which is a very small estate.

First Part of Corporate Names.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	R	S	V	W
K	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page	Page
Kaa Kab Kac Kad	488	488	488	488	488	488	488	488	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1
Kac Kaf Kag Kah	488	488	488	488	488	488	488	488	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1	488-1
Kai Kaj Kak Kal	489	489	489	489	489	489	489	489	489-1	489-1	489-1	489-1	489-1	489-1	489-1	489-1	489-1	489-1	489-1
Kam Kan Kao Kap Kaq	490	490	490-1	490-1	490-1	490-1	490-1	491	491	491	491	491	491	491-1	491-1	491-1	491-1	491-1	491-1
Kar Kas Kat Kau	492	492	492-1	492-1	493	493	493	493	494	494	494	494	494	494	494	494-1	494-1	494-1	494-1
Kav Kaw Kax Kay Kaz	492	492	492-1	492-1	493	493	493	493	494	494	494	494	494	494	494	494-1	494-1	494-1	494-1
Kea Keb Kec Ked	495	495	495	495	495	495	495	495	495-1	495-1	495-1	495-1	495-1	495-1	495-1	495-1	495-1	495-1	495-1
Kee Kef Keg Keh	496	496	496-1	496-1	496-1	496-1	496-1	497	497	497	497	497	497	497-1	497-1	497-1	497-1	497-1	497-1

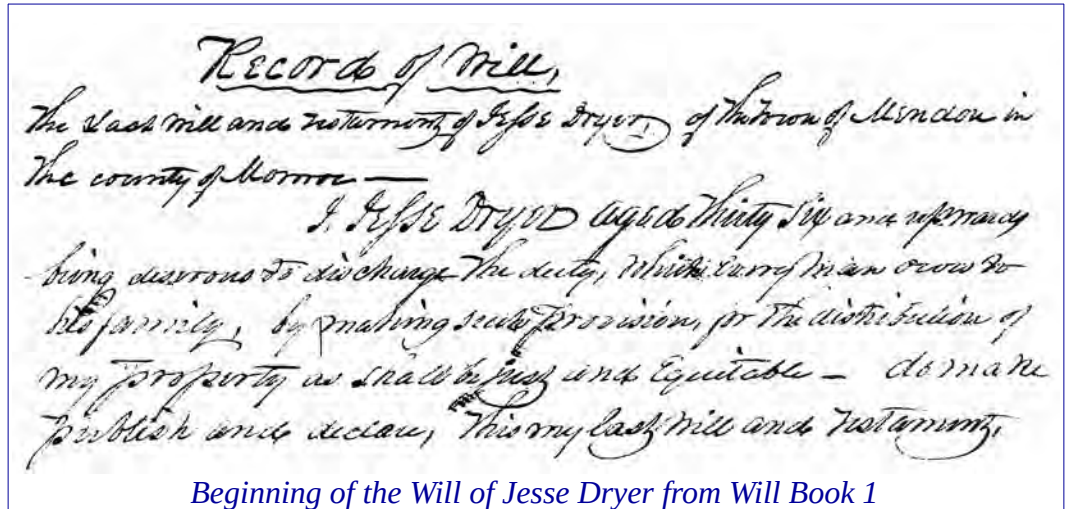
Coding used in Surrogate Court Indexes

Next you will have to look in the other index volumes that have the number that corresponds to the book number you wrote down in the first index. On the page that you wrote down, you should see the name and file number. Under that are lines of reference to individual record volumes. A line labeled “Will” (or W. B.) will give you the will book and page to find the decedent’s will. That is a transcribed will and not the original will which is in Surrogate Court office file. A line may give you a reference to a Letters of Testamentary book (sometimes abbreviated L.T. or to a Letters of Administration book. For some unknown reason, early guardianship estates are usually referenced to as “L.B.” to the guardianship books. Remember that a person under the age of 21 is considered a minor and would need a guardian if a parent is deceased. There are other reference lines in the second indexes that don’t correspond to anything that FamilySearch has online. Using this method of using the records on FamilySearch should give you the most important documents of an estate.

The internet firm [Sampubco](#) has an index of to approximately the first eighty years of Monroe County wills online. Plus you can also do a search of their website. You can order copies of the wills from Sampubco who gets their copies from FamilySearch. You can also write down the book and page number and then go to the view the [record volumes for Monroe County](#) that are online at FamilySearch. Sampubco asks that if you order a will that you transcribe it and place that transcription on the [Monroe County section](#) of the NYGebWeb Archives. Currently there are about 100 wills that have been transcribed.

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Some of the early records from the Monroe County Surrogate Court have been transcribed. Gertrude Barber published a two volume set called *Abstracts of Wills of Monroe County, N.Y.* Although Ms. Barber labeled her work as volumes 1 and 2, it actually contained information from Will Books A, 1, 2, and 3. Will



Book "A" was the earliest volume of wills. For some unknown reason volume "A" was not filmed by FamilySearch. Transcriptions from [Will book A](#), [Will Book 1](#), [Will Book 2](#) and [Will Book 3](#) can be viewed on the GenWeb of Monroe County website.

The Irondequoit Chapter of the Daughters of American Revolution published a multi-volume set of transcripts of both estates with wills and intestate estates (without a will) from 1821 to 1874. The Rochester Public Library has put these volumes online. The Cross Indexes are lists of heirs and they will help to find the names of parents that have died.

- [Wills of Monroe County, NY; 1821 – 1863](#) (surnames: A–L).
- [Wills of Monroe County, NY; 1821 – 1863](#) (surnames: M–Z).
- [Cross Index to Wills of Monroe County, NY; 1821 – 1863](#).
- [Wills of Monroe County, NY; 1863 – 1874](#).
- [Cross Index to Wills of Monroe County, NY; 1863 – 1874](#).
- [Intestate Estates of Monroe County; 1821–1863](#).
- [Intestate Estates of Monroe County; 1863–1874](#).
- [Cross Index of Intestate Estates of Monroe County, NY; 1863 – 1874](#).
- [Index to Married Daughters](#) in both intestate estates (without a will) and those with wills from 1821 to 1874.

If you have a subscription to [American Ancestors](#) or can get free access through a local library, they have a database that includes early will and estates of Monroe County and other counties. "Abstracts of Wills, Admins. and Guardianships in NY State, 1787–1835" seems to contain estates up to 1850 despite it's name. This database has handwritten extracts of wills by William A. D. Eardeley in the 1920s. You can search for a name on the website or view records page by page. These records only contain very basic information.

Another transcript is [Monroe County Surrogate Records 1824 - 1879](#) compiled by Lester L. Card. That is only available online if at the Family History Library (in Salt Lake City) or one of the worldwide branches.

The [Central New York Genealogical Society](#) has published some Monroe County wills from approximately 1822 to 1841 on pages 1 – 32 of the Monroe County section of their newsletter [Tree Talks](#). This publication is available at many libraries in NY State and elsewhere. For a full list of locations available check on [WorldCat](#).

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