

A Guide to

GENEALOGICAL MATERIALS

in the holdings of the

BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY

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Introduction

The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society has a wealth of local information for genealogical researchers. This guide is intended to give the researcher, whether novice or professional, an overview of reference materials available in this library. Books and pamphlets on how to do genealogical research, and information on the location of pertinent libraries and archives around the country are available. A librarian will be glad to supply you with a list of local researchers who can be hired, and to make suggestions to aid you in your research. Library staff are unable to provide in-depth research for patron inquiries.

General Catalogs and Indexes

Family names are found a variety of books and other formats. Look for surnames in the following card catalogs:

Newspaper index, organized in broad subject categories, includes citations to articles about individuals, businesses, clubs, residences, streets, and many other topics.

Obituary index is organized alphabetically by surname. Cards usually include name, age at death, a few words about the person's occupation, and a citation to the newspaper where the obituary can be found. Some cards do not include a newspaper citation. We do not know the source of the information on these cards. Sometimes a notice/obituary can be found by searching relevant newspapers for a few days after the death date noted on the card.

On-line catalog provides access to books, pamphlets, and manuscripts of interest to the genealogical researcher. Books include biographies, family histories, and guides on how to conduct family history research. Manuscripts include personal papers of prominent local families, business and institutional records, scrapbooks, and masters' theses. The online catalog is a work in progress. The old book and manuscript card catalogs should also be consulted.

Vertical file contains many self-published genealogies donated by researchers who have used our library collections, as well as information about individuals, manufacturers, and retailers.

Telephone directories

Buffalo Telephone Directory, 1880-1997, excluding 1926, 1935, 1968.

Access by surname. Information includes address and occupation or business address (in earlier volumes). Classified business directory begins in 1881.

Rural Directory of Erie County, New York, 1917.

Includes wife's name in parentheses after husband's; address; number of children, horses and cattle; whether retired; whether a tenant; occupation.

City, Town, and County Directories

Buffalo Village Directory, 1828.

Buffalo City Directory, 1832, 1836, 1837, 1839-1842, 1844, 1847 - 1997 (except years in which no directories were published - 1943, 1944, 1945, 1947, 1949, 1954, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1988, 1994, and 1995).

Information includes name, street address, and occupation. The 1832 directory includes "Names of Colored People." Starting in 1929 wife's name appears in parentheses after husband's, and beginning that same year, includes cross-referencing by street address. Starting in 1930 Kenmore is included.

Erie County Directory, 1927, 1929, 1931.

Buffalo Suburban Directory, 1949.

Includes the townships of Amherst, Tonawanda (except Kenmore), Cheektowaga, West Seneca, and Grand Island; City of Lackawanna; Villages of Snyder, Eggertsville, Depew, Sloan, Blasdell, Woodlawn, Williamsville, Wanakah, and Derby; and other Buffalo suburban sections. Lists wife's name in parentheses after husband's, number of children (with names for those over age 16), and occupation.

Buffalo Northeast Suburban Directory, 1957-1964, 1966-1976.

Includes Amherst, Cheektowaga, Eggertsville, Kenmore, Sloan, Snyder, Tonawanda Township, and Williamsville.

Buffalo North Suburban Directory, 1993.

Includes Amherst, Clarence, Williamsville, Town of Lancaster, and Village of Lancaster.

Buffalo Suburban Directory, 1983-1992, 1996, 1997.

Includes Amherst, Cheektowaga, Depew, Lancaster, Sloan, West Seneca, and Williamsville.

Niagara Falls City Directory, 1972-1975.

Tonawandas Directory, 1960-1971, 1973-1974, 1976-1978, 1989-1990, 1994-1997.

Southeast Suburban Directory, 1963-1966, 1968-1979.

Includes Blasdell, Depew, Lackawanna, Lancaster, West Seneca, and Woodlawn.
Starting in 1966, includes parts of Orchard Park.

Buffalo South Towns Directory, 1989, 1990, 1992-1994.

Includes Aurora, Blasdell, East Aurora, Elma, Hamburg, and Orchard Park.

Buffalo South Suburban Directory, 1993.

Includes Cheektowaga, West Seneca, Depew, and Sloan.

East Aurora-Orchard Park Directory, 1964-1965.

Hamburg City Directory, 1958, 1963-1974, 1977.

Starting in 1967, includes Blasdell and Woodlawn.

Lackawanna City Directory, 1960-1962.

Business Directories

Business directories have both alphabetical and classified listings.

Buffalo Business Directory, 1854-5.

The Buffalo Business Directory, 1855.

Buffalo and Erie County Directory, 1870.

Western New York Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1880-81.

Business Directory of Buffalo and Erie County, 1889, 1895.

Business Directory of Buffalo, 1891.

Buffalo City and Niagara Frontier Business Directory, 1897.

Business Directory for Erie, Genesee and Niagara Counties, 1897-98.

Social Directories

Social registers:

Social Register, Buffalo, 1903-1937, 1940-1946, 1948-1972, 1974.

Notes wife's first and maiden name in parentheses after husband's name, and children's names. Includes lists of marriages and deaths. Alphabetical cross-referencing of women's maiden names to married names.

Social Register (National), 1978-1981, 1983, 1985.

Social Register Locator, 1929-1936.

Gives city only for residents of New York, Washington, Philadelphia, Wilmington, Chicago, Boston, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dayton, San Francisco, Baltimore, and Buffalo.

Social Register Summer (All cities), 1918, 1925, 1928-1931, 1933-1935, 1941, 1945-1946, 1948-1953, 1977, 1981.

Blue books:

Buffalo Elite Directory, 1882-83.

Alphabetical list of names, cross-referenced by street address. List of clubs and societies.

Dau's Official Society Blue Book, 1898, 1900, 1903-10, 1914, 1916, 1918, 1920, 1922.

Street and alphabetical name indexes. Includes suburban listings, club memberships, and women's maiden names.

Buffalo Blue Book, 1923, 1926, 1928, 1931, 1934, 1937, 1940.

Alphabetical listing cross-referenced by street address.

Buffalo Address Book and Family Directory, 1883, 1885, 1887, 1888-9, 1890, 1892-3, 1894-5, 1896-7, 1898-9, 1901, 1904, 1909-10, 1911-12, 1915-16.

Listing by street address and cross-referenced alphabetically by surname. Memberships of clubs, societies; list of public school teachers and principals.

The Directoire of Directors of Buffalo and the Niagara Frontier, 1934-5.

Alphabetical listing by surname, business and residence addresses of people serving in an official capacity (such as on boards of directors), with a list of the corporations with which they are affiliated.

Local Histories

The following books are histories of Buffalo, Erie County, and New York State containing biographical information and name indexes. Most are located in the reference area in the library reading room.

Johnson, Crisfield. Centennial History of Erie County, New York, 1876.

Smith, H. Perry, ed. History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County, 1884.
2 v., plus separate name index.

The Germans of Buffalo, 1896.

Devoy, John. A History of the City of Buffalo and Niagara Falls, 1896.
Includes biographical sketches.

White, Truman C., ed. Our County and its People: a Descriptive Work on Erie County, N.Y., 1898.
2 v.

A History of the City of Buffalo: Its Men and Institutions: Biographical Sketches of Leading Citizens, 1908.

Memorial and Family History of Erie County, N.Y., 1908.
2 v.

Larned, Josephus N. A History of Buffalo: Delineating the Evolution of the City, 1911.
2 v.

Cutter, William R. Genealogical and Family History of Western New York: a Record of the Achievements of Her People in the Making of a Commonwealth and the Building of a Nation, 1912.

Hill, Henry Wayland, ed. Municipality of Buffalo, New York: a History 1720-1923, 1923.
4 v., including biographical volume.

Sullivan, James, ed. History of New York State 1523-1927, 1927.
6 v., including biographical volume.

Wilner, Merton M. History of Niagara Frontier, 1931.
4 v., including 2 biographical volumes.

Horton, James T. History of Northwestern New York: Erie, Niagara, Wyoming, Genesee and Orleans Counties, 1947.

3 v., including biographical volume.

Dunn, Walter S., Jr., ed. History of Erie County 1870-1970, 1971.

Niagara Frontier Biographical Collection

Biographical information provided by prominent local citizens documenting their achievements and lineage. Some include photographs and additional information such as newspaper clippings. The surveys were conducted in 1896 and 1954. Names are listed in the obituary index card catalog.

Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society and Niagara Frontier

The Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society began in 1879 and continued at irregular intervals under that name until 1947. The first volume states its purpose "to publish, by subscription, a selection from the historical documents and papers communicated to, or read before, the Buffalo Historical Society, since its organization in 1862." In 1953 publication began again under the name Niagara Frontier, and continued until 1983. Indexes for these volumes are in the card catalog labeled "B.H.S. Index" and "Niagara Frontier Index."

Federal Census Records

Records of the decennial (every ten years) census are available from 1790-1920 on microfilm. All are film copies of the original handwritten bound volumes; thus the legibility of the handwriting varies from page to page. Families are recorded in the order in which the census taker visited them. This means for earlier records you must look through all the names on the chance that you will find your ancestor. Beginning in 1840 records for the City of Buffalo were divided by ward. To determine the ward in which your family lived, look up the street address in a city directory, then use ward maps and atlases to find the ward for the year you want. Ask a librarian for assistance.

Note that Erie County was not formed until 1821. Buffalo and surrounding towns will be listed under Ontario County in the 1790 and 1800 censuses, and under Niagara County in the 1810 and 1820 censuses.

New York State Census Records

The State census contains information similar to that of the federal census for the City of Buffalo and towns of Erie County. Records are available on microfilm for 1855 (towns only); 1860, 1865, 1870, 1875, 1880, 1892, 1905, 1915 and 1925.

Cemetery Records

Microfilmed records of handwritten volumes from various cemeteries in Erie County. Pages are organized by grave number and include name of deceased and date of death. Some records include other information, such as person's age at death, or notation of body's removal to another location.

Church Records

Microfilmed records of many Buffalo and Erie County churches containing baptisms, marriages, and deaths. Some include communion and confirmation dates.

Marriage index

Microfilmed index to marriage notices published in Buffalo newspapers from 1811-1888, cross-referenced by husband's surname and wife's maiden name. Includes date of marriage and citation to newspaper where the notice may be found. There is also a bound volume of marriage notices organized by date, 1885-1887.

Military History

Civil War Enlistees Card Index.

Information copied from the Annual Reports of the Adjutant-General of the State of New York. The cards are filed alphabetically by the person's last name, and include age at enlistment; place of enlistment; muster-in details (rank, unit, date and term of service); and muster-out details (rank, date and location). If the soldier was transferred to another unit, wounded, captured or killed-in-action, this is also noted on the card. The file includes men who enlisted in Buffalo and Erie County.

Annual Reports of the Adjutant-General of the State of New York, 1893-1903.

Organized by regiment within the divisions Cavalry, Veteran Infantry, Engineers, Sharpshooters, Mounted Rifles, and Infantry (up to, and including 139th Regiment). Same information on Union soldiers as above card index.

Official Army Register of the Volunteer Force of the United States Army for the Years 1861, '62, '63, '64, '65.

This 8-volume set includes the troops of the 37 states and 10 U.S. territories, as well as the federal troops which took part in the Civil War. Information includes regimental organization and muster-out details; official list of battles in which the regiment fought; officers of the regiment; and lists of those who resigned, were discharged, whose terms expired, were promoted, dismissed or transferred, and those who died. The only enlisted men included are those who received medals of honor. Part (vol.) 2 includes the troops of both New York and New Jersey. African-American regiments can be found in Part (vol.) 8.

Phisterer, Frederick, comp. New York in the War of the Rebellion 1861 to 1865.

6-volume comprehensive history of New York in the Civil War. Synonyms, battles, subjects, and names of individuals are indexed. Only officers are listed, however, not enlisted men.

A Record of the Commissioned Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Privates of the Regiments Which Were Organized in the State of New York and Called into the Service of the United States to Assist in Suppressing the Rebellion, 1864.

Muster roll in 8 volumes, organized by regiment, listing name, rank, age, and enlistment details.

Sweeney, Daniel J., comp. History of Buffalo and Erie County 1914-1919.

Comprehensive history of local involvement in World War I, with roster of those killed and service rolls of men from Buffalo and Erie County.

World War II Scrapbooks and Casualty Card Files. (Mss C65-3)

Scrapbooks of articles from the Buffalo Evening News and Buffalo Courier-Express about local units and servicemen, casualties, and homefront news; card files listing Buffalo and Erie County wounded and prisoners of war, and those killed and missing in action, 1941-1947.

Other Sources

Bolek, Francis. Who's Who in Polish America: a Biographical Directory of Polish-American Leaders and Distinguished Poles Resident in the Americas, 1943 (3rd ed.)

Buffalo Orphan Asylum Records. (B82-1)

Includes volumes listing children who entered, 1836-1939, and departed, 1882-1939. There is also a volume of family records and a visitor register, 1861-1866. Ask to see the inventory before requesting materials.

Erie County Vital Statistics, 1847-1848. (A67-27)

Returns of the town clerks of Alden, Amherst, Aurora, Boston, Brant, Clarence, Colden, Eden, Evans, Hamburg, Lancaster, Newstead, and Wales recording births, marriages, and deaths.

Ethnic Groups Index.

Card file organized by ethnic group, then alphabetically by individual's surname, leading to newspaper articles and books.

Foley, Janet Wethy. Early Settlers of New York State: Their Ancestors and Descendants, 1934-1942.

Ingleside Home Records. (C78-1)

Includes daily records from 1882-1905, and matron's journals from 1904-1920. Ask to see the inventory before requesting materials.

National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution Lineage Book, 1895-1934. 151 v. with index to the "Rolls of Honor" (Ancestor's Index).

Williamsville Hospital Records

Card file organized by regiment, then alphabetically by individual's surname, of War of 1812 soldiers who received treatment at the Williamsville Hospital. Includes Connecticut, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Virginia regiments, with a separate section for the men who died.

Witmer, Tobias. Deed Tables Showing the Number of Acres, Date of Deed, and Grantee's Name, of Each Lot, and Part of Lot, in the County of Erie, N.Y. as Sold by the Holland Land Company..., 1859, reprinted 1981.

Can be used in conjunction with the 1859 Erie County Deed Atlas.