

[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 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 to 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](#) (111 Westfall Road, Rochester, N. Y. 14692) 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 1859 - (which include the records of the Monroe County Poorhouse 1847 to 1850) original records at Rochester Public Library, [Local History & Genealogy Division](#). On GenWeb of Monroe County these records are on separate web pages. These are links to [Brighton vital records](#) and [Poorhouse vital records](#).
- 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 from FamilySearch on film #[1437482](#), item 2

Even though these early vital records are well over a hundred and forty 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 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

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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). The best place to write for any vital record after 1880 in upstate New York is 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 from 6 months to a year. The Monroe County Department of Health also has the birth and death records, but by writing to Albany they can search the records of more than just Monroe County. That way the genealogist may be able to find that elusive certificate that was thought to be in Monroe County but in fact occurred in a town adjoining Monroe County. Also, the birth and death records at the Monroe County Department of Health are still filed by the town. It might be a waste of money to request a search for a record from the Monroe County Department of Health if an individual's place of death is not positively known.

For many years the New York State Bureau of Vital Records 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 many locations 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. The indexes are available for public use, but there are still limitations. The available records include only births at least 75 years old, and marriages and deaths at least 50 years old. Viewing the indexes in person can be of help in that many names and many spellings of a single name can be checked at one time. Also, 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. There are also professional genealogists in the Albany area who will search the indexes for a fee. Also you can try asking for help from someone on your favorite social website.

The City of Rochester was slightly ahead of the times and began collecting birth records in 1875, death records in 1873, and marriage records in 1876. Even these records from before 1880 when statewide registration began, can be found in the records at the Bureau of Vital Records in Albany and on the microfiche indexes for 1880.

The vital records indexes are available to search in person at these locations around NY State:

1. [New York State Archives](#), Cultural Education Center, Empire State Plaza, Albany 12230.
2. [Broome County Public Library](#), 185 Court Street, Binghamton, NY 13901.
3. [Buffalo & Erie County Public Library](#), Grosvenor Room, 1 Lafayette Square, Buffalo, NY 14203.
4. [Steele Memorial Library](#), 101 East Church Street, Elmira, NY 14901.
5. [Crandall Public Library](#), Center for Folklife, History & Cultural Programs, 251 Glen Street, Glens Falls, NY 12801.
6. [National Archives at New York City](#), One Bowling Green, New York, NY 10004.
7. [Patchogue-Medford Library](#), 54 E. Main Street, Patchogue, NY 11772
8. [Rochester Public Library](#), 115 South Avenue, Rochester, NY 14604.
9. [Onondaga County Public Library](#), 447 South Salina Street, Syracuse, NY 13202.
10. [Utica Public Library](#), 303 Genesee Street, Utica, NY 13501
11. [Flower Memorial Library](#), 229 Washington Street, Watertown, NY 13601.

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In 2013 the NY State Department of Health created a [web page with a death index](#). That index has records beginning Jan. 1, 1957 and up to the cut off of 50 years old. I would imagine that 1957 was the first year that the Department put the index in to a computer so that is why they start in that year. This web page has been updated every year with newer records. You can do a search on those records by using the “filter” on the right of the screen. This index 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 FamilySearch. The [web page for these records](#) says that they currently only have records from 1957 – 1963. There are a couple advantages of searching on FamilySearch. First it gives results of similar spellings. It also gives the actual place of death instead of just a code.

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. There are about 170,000 marriage records dating from 1876 through 1943 that can be searched by whole name or just a surname. Then you can view the record online from the search results. Note that the amount of information is better for the records from 1876 to 1907 while the later records are more of an index The website 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.

The original marriage records for the towns of Monroe County are with the Town Clerks. These records can be obtained from either the Town Clerk or from the Department of Health in Albany as previously discussed.

There was a duplicate copy made of the Rochester and Town marriage records for the years 1908 to 1935. Those records are 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 searched online on [this web page](#). To search for just marriage records within Monroe click on “Marriage” under “Search with Life Event” and enter “Monroe, New York.” Within your search results, click on “Image” to view the original marriage record.

There are some death records 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 on 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.