

Research in Colonial New York: A Genealogist's Primer

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Records in New York's Dutch and British colonial periods contain a wealth of information about some of New York's early inhabitants from 1624 to the start of Revolutionary War. Learn the basic types of records useful to family historians and how to find them—from local, county, and colony records to manuscripts, publications, and online resources.

Key Events and Jurisdictions

- 1624-1664 Colonial Dutch = New Netherland
 - Roman-Dutch law.
 - Colony under governance of West India Company with a director-general and Common Council as executive, legislative, and judicial.
 - 1624 First European settlers arrived. Local Dutch governments/settlements on Manhattan, on Long Island, along the Hudson and Mohawk rivers, on Staten Island, and in New Jersey, with English settlements within New Netherland on western Long Island.
 - 1638 Colony's records in North America begin.
- 1640-1664 Connecticut and New Haven colonies for Eastern Long Island
 - English common law.
 - 1640 Southold settled and joined New Haven Colony.
 - 1640 Southampton settled and 1644 joined Connecticut Colony, plus East Hampton, Huntington, and Setauket.
 - 1650 Boundary with New Netherland settled with treaty of Hartford. English controlled east of Oyster Bay.
- 1664-1783 Colonial British = renamed New York
 - English common law.
 - Under governance of a governor and Colonial Council as executive, legislative, and appellate judicial.
 - 1664 English towns on eastern Long Island became part of New York.
 - 1665 Duke's Laws.
 - 1665-1683 Court of Assizes in NYC, with regional Courts of Session and Mayor's Court in NYC. Succeeded by various colonial, county, and local civil, criminal, and equity courts.
 - 1673-1674 Dutch regained control, renamed New Orange.
 - 1683 General Assembly established. Ten original counties within modern New York formed.
 - 1688-1689 New York in the Dominion of New England with a governor in Boston.
 - 1700s Precincts and districts with governmental records formed within some counties.

Examples of Record Types and Resources

Dutch Colonial 1624--1664

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Colonial Governmental Records at New York State Archives, Albany.

- Provincial Secretary records—Series A0270 Register of the Provincial Secretary, 1642-1660.
- Digital Collections—“Researching New York’s Dutch Heritage.” Digital images, translations, finding aid. archives.nysed.gov/research/research-guide-dutch
- Calendar—Edmund B. O’Callaghan, comp., *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, N.Y. Part I: Dutch Manuscripts, 1630-1664* (Albany, 1865).
- Jane E. Wilcox, *New York State Archives: A Guide—For Family Historians, Biographers, and Historical Research*, (NYG&B, TBD). See chapter on Dutch Colonial Records.

Local Governmental Records

- Deeds—for example, Albany deeds in “State of New York deeds, 1654-1901; index 1630-1966,” Albany County, [FamilySearch.org](https://familysearch.org/search/catalog/247679), familysearch.org/search/catalog/247679
- County archives—for example, Ulster County Clerk, “Dutch Heritage,” database, archives.ulstercountyny.gov/Presto/home/home.aspx
- Town records—for example, Old Town Records at New York City Municipal Archives
For example:
 - Aaron Goodwin, *Guide to New York City Municipal Archives* (NYG&B, 2016).
 - NYC Dept. of Records & Information Services, “Browse New Amsterdam Records,” nycma.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/NYCMA~12~12
 - NYC Dept. of Records & Information Services, “Collection Guides: Old Town Records,” MSS0004 – RG 096, a860-collectionguides.nyc.gov/repositories/2/resources/61
- Published local and county records—for example, Jonathan Pearson, trans., *Early Records of the City and County of Albany and Colony of Rensselaerswyck*, 4 vols. (rev 1918, Albany, 1869-1871). catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000266311

Manuscripts

- Religious records—Dutch Reformed Church. For example:
 - Russell Gassero and Erica McLaughlin, *Guide to Local Church Records in the Archives of the Reformed Church in America and Other Repositories*. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://images.rca.org/docs/archives/churchrecords.pdf
 - “U.S., Dutch Reformed Church Records in Selected States, 1638-1989,” [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com/search/collections/6961/), ancestry.com/search/collections/6961/ (Holland Society abstracts).
- New Netherland Institute—[Guide to Dutch Manuscripts Relating to New Netherland](https://newnetherlandinstitute.org/files/9913/9774/5174/Guide%20to%20Dutch%20Manuscripts.pdf), [newnetherlandinstitute.org/files/9913/9774/5174/Guide to Dutch Manuscripts.pdf](https://newnetherlandinstitute.org/files/9913/9774/5174/Guide%20to%20Dutch%20Manuscripts.pdf)
- Holland Society of New York—Most of the library and manuscripts holdings now at the New York State Library 7th and 11th floors, Albany. Digital copies of vertical files and inventory at NYG&B.

Publications

- NYG&B, *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, since 1870. Online with membership at *New York Family History*, newyorkfamilyhistory.org/.

- *New Netherland Connections*, 1996-2010. Online with membership at *American Ancestors*, americanancestors.org/. Also at NY State Library 7th floor, Albany.

Online Resources

- New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, "The NYG&B Knowledge Archive," *New York Family History*, newyorkfamilyhistory.org/kb/index. For example:
 - Henry Hoff, "Researching New York Dutch Families: A Checklist Approach," 2011. Originally published in *The NYG&B Newsletter*, Summer 1996.
 - Harry Macy Jr., "The Walloon Index," 2011. Originally published in *The New York Researcher*, Summer 2005.
- "Dutch Genealogy," Facebook group, facebook.com/groups/DutchGenealogy/
- Yvette Hoitink, *Dutch Genealogy* blog, dutchgenealogy.nl/blog/ and "New Netherland research guide," dutchgenealogy.nl/new-netherland-research-guide/

British Colonial

Eastern Long Island 1640--1664

Connecticut Colony—Southampton, East Hampton, Huntington, and Setauket

- Colony records—J. Hammond Trumbull, et al. *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, 1636-1776*, (Hartford, 1850-1890). libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/hg/ctarchives/col
- Town records—for example, William S. Pelletreau, et. al., *Records of the Town of Southampton, Long Island, N.Y.*, 1639-1927, 8 vols. (Sag Harbor, 1874-1928).

New Haven Colony--Southold

- Colony records—Charles J. Hoadly, *Records of the Court or Jurisdiction of New Haven, from May, 1653, to the Union. Together with the New Haven Code of 1656* (Hartford, 1858). libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/hg/ctarchives/col

Connecticut State Library, Hartford, ctstatelibrary.org/

New York 1664--1783

Colonial Governmental Records at New York State Archives, Albany. For example:

- Council Papers—Series A1894 New York Colony Council Papers, 1664-1781.
 - Digital Collections—digitalcollections.archives.nysed.gov/index.php/Detail/objects/10842
 - Census of Slaves—E.B. O'Callaghan, *The Documentary History of the State of New-York*, 4 vols (Albany, 1850), 3:845-868.
 - Calendar—Edmund B. O'Callaghan, comp., *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, N.Y. Part II: English Manuscripts, 1664-1776* (Albany, 1866).
- Patents—Series A0272 Land Papers--Series 1 Applications for Land Grants, 1642-1803.
 - O'Callaghan, E.B. *The Calendar of N.Y. Colonial Manuscripts Indorsed Land Papers; in the Office of the Secretary of State of New York, 1643-1803* (Albany, 1864).

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- Jane E. Wilcox, *New York State Archives: A Guide—For Family Historians, Biographers, and Historical Research*, (NYG&B, TBD). See chapters on Appointments, British Colonial, Census, Citizenship, Courts, Indigenous People/American Indian, Land: Patents and Deeds, Land: Taxes and Tax Sales, Local Records, Loyalists, Military, Miscellaneous, Probate and Estate Matters, and Vital Records.

Local Governmental Records (Precinct, District, County, and City/Town)

- Regional Court of Sessions—for example, Thomas W. Cooper, *The Records of the Court of Sessions of Suffolk County in the Province of New York, 1670-1688* (1993). [East Riding of Yorkshire]
- Precinct meetings—for example, Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Records of Crum Elbow Precinct, Dutchess County, New York 1738-1761*, in Collections of the Dutchess County Historical Society, vol. 7 (1940).
- County taxes—for example, Dutchess County tax lists, 1717-1779, familysearch.org/search/catalog/237293
- County board of supervisors minutes—for example, Ulster County Board of Supervisors Minutes 1710 to 1731, Ulster County Archives, archives.ulstercountyny.gov/Presto/content/AdvancedSearch.aspx?ctID=YWU3NTJkZmMtNzExN00MmY2LTk1NDQtNmQ3NzlmNDcxNzU2
- County courts--Court of Common Pleas (civil) and Court of General Sessions (criminal).
For example:
 - Orange County Court of Common Pleas minutes 1727-1775 (with filed papers at the county clerk's office in Goshen), familysearch.org/search/catalog/167541
 - Westchester County Court of Sessions minutes 1684-1895, series 43, Westchester County Archives, Elmsford, westchestergov.com/county-clerk/s-t
- Town meetings—for example, George Cox and John Cox Jr., *Oyster Bay Town Records*, 1653-1878, 8 vols. (1916-1940).
- Town courts—for example, Kingston town court, Ulster County Archives, Kingston, clerk.ulstercountyny.gov/archives/search-records/descriptions-databases#series-descriptions

Manuscripts

- Religious records—in addition to Dutch Reformed, see Lutheran, Huguenot Reformed, German Reformed, Anglican/Episcopal, Jewish, Quaker, Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist.
For example:
 - Episcopal—St. Peter's Protestant Episcopal Church, Albany, records 1708-1915, SC19680, New York State Library Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany.
 - German Lutheran—Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saint Matthew, NYC, "Church records, 1704-1783," familysearch.org/search/catalog/681331
 - Quaker—James E. Hazard Index: The Records of New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, swarthmore.edu/Library/friends/hazard/index.html
 - Royden Woodward Vosburgh, trans., NYG&B. newyorkfamilyhistory.org/
 - Arthur C.M. Kelly, trans., Kinship Publishing now at NYG&B, kinshipny.com/
- Personal/Family papers—for example, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 14 vols. (U of the State of New York, 1921-1965). www.nysl.nysed.gov/msscfa/sc7005.htm

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- Manorial land/tenant papers—for example, Livingston Papers in the Johnston Redmond Collection 1637-1850, Gilder-Lehrman Library, NYC. Also microfilms at the New-York Historical Society, NYC, and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park.
- Store ledgers—for example, Robert Adems Daybook 1768-1773, MV503, Syracuse University Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse.
- Newspapers—for example, Kenneth Scott, *Genealogical Data from the New York Post-Boy 1743-1773*, National Genealogical Society Special Publication No. 35 (1970).
- Local historical societies and sites—for example:
 - Raynham Hall, Oyster Bay, Suffolk Co., raynhamhallmuseum.org/
 - Schenectady County Historical Society Grems-Doolittle Library, Schenectady, schenectadyhistorical.org/
 - Digital collections—New York Heritage, nyheritage.org/organizations/schenectady-county-historical-society
- Libraries—the big three for colonial manuscripts:
 - New-York Historical Society, NYC, nyhistory.org/
 - New York Public Library Archives & Manuscripts, NYC, archives.nypl.org/
 - New York State Library Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, nysl.nysed.gov/mssc/

Publications

- Edmund B. O’Callaghan, *The Documentary History of the State of New-York*, 4 vols. (Albany, 1849).
- John Romeyn Brodhead, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, 10 vols. (1856–1858), with a general index as volume 11 (Albany, 1861).
- Berthold Fernow, *Documents Relating to the History of the Dutch and Swedish Settlements on the Delaware River* (Albany, 1877), *Documents relating to the History and Settlements of the Towns along the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers (with the exception of Albany) from 1630 to 1684, and also illustrating the Relations of the Settlers with the Indians* (Albany, 1881), and *Documents relating to the History of the Early Colonial Settlements principally on Long Island, with a map of its western part, made in 1666, from New York Secy of State and State Library* (Albany, 1883). (Continues Brodhead’s 11 volumes.)
- County histories—for example, David Cole, *History of Rockland County, New York* (NY, 1884)
- Compendiums—for example,
 - Hank Z Jones, Palatine Families in New York series, www.hankjones.com/palny.htm
 - Florence Christoph, *Compendium of Early Mohawk Valley Families*, 2 vols. (Genealogical Publishing Co., 1990).

Online Resources

- NYG&B, Online records database, newyorkfamilyhistory.org/ and “The NYG&B Knowledge Archive,” *New York Family History*, newyorkfamilyhistory.org/kb/index
See for example,
 - Henry Hoff, “Pre-1750 New York Lists: Censuses, Assessment Rolls, Oaths of Allegiance, and Other Lists,” *The NYG&B Newsletter*, (Fall 1992).
 - Harry Macy Jr., “Kings County Colonial Church Records,” *The NYG&B Newsletter*

- Frank Doherty, *Settlers of the Beekman Patent*, 13 vols. so far, settlers-of-the-beekman-patent.myshopify.com/
 - Vols. 1-11 digitized on *American Ancestors*, <https://www.americanancestors.org/>
- Joseph Thomas Ross, *Early American Sources*, (accessed 18 July 2023)
 - “New York Published Sources,” earlyamericansources.org/new-york-published-sources
 - “New York Digital Collections,” earlyamericansources.org/new-york-digital-collections
- “New York Colonial Records,” *FamilySearch.org*, familysearch.org/en/wiki/New_York_Colonial_Records
- “United States>New York,” *Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet*, cyndislist.com/us/ny/

Additional Authors/Compilers/Abstractors/Transcribers/Translators for Colonial Records

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Peter Christoph | Herbert F. Seversmith |
| • Josephine C. Frost | Kenn Stryker-Rodda |
| • Charles Gehring (Dutch) | Arnold J.F. Van Laer (Dutch) |
| • Sung Bok Kim (manors) | Janny Venema (Dutch) |

General Resources

- New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, *The New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer* (NYG&B, 2017 revised). See chapters on:
 - Colonial Era
 - Vital Records
 - Census
 - Immigration, Migration, and Naturalization
 - Court Records
 - Probate Records
 - Land Records and Maps
 - Military Records
 - Cemetery Records
 - Business, Institutional, and Organization Records
 - Newspapers
 - Tax Records
 - Religious Records of New York
 - Peoples of New York: African-American, American Indian, Dutch, English, French and French-Speaking, German, Hispanic, Irish, Jewish, Scandinavian, and Scots and Ulster Scots.
- Claude Joseph Sauthier and William Faden, “A chorographical map of the Province of New-York in North America, divided into counties, manors, patents and townships; exhibiting likewise all the private grants of land made and located in that Province” 1779. davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~229213~5508000:Chorographical-Map-Of-The-Province-

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