

Getting Started with Genealogy & Local History in Essex County, New Jersey

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New Jersey Vital Records

The NJ Bureau of Vital Statistics (www.state.nj.us/health/vital/gen.shtml) explains where various types of records are kept for different years and how to see them or obtain copies.

The NJ Secretary of State holds NJ Genealogical and Colonial court records. (www.nj.gov/state/archives/catgenealogy.html)

The New Jersey State Archives (www.nj.gov/state/archives/index.html) is New Jersey's official research center for public records of enduring historical value. Considering that many vital records, land documents, probate records and military service papers were filed centrally by the Colony and State of New Jersey, the State Archives is a treasure trove for genealogists and historians.

Vital records for United States are available through Passport Services-Vital Records Section, 1111 19th St, NW, Suite 510 Washington, DC, 20522. (www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w/canal_zone.htm)

Birth records

1878+ New Jersey Bureau of Vital Statistics.

1848-1877 New Jersey State Archives.

Or you can contact the local registrar in the town where the birth occurred.

Marriage records

1878+ New Jersey Bureau of Vital Statistics.

1848-1877 New Jersey State Archives.

Pre-1848, research and resources (<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1803976>)

Or you can also contact the local registrar in the town where the marriage occurred.

Divorce decrees

Pre-1900, NJ State Archives

Post-1900, Superior Court Public Information Center PO Box 967, 171 Jersey Street, Trenton, NJ 08625-0967 (http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/superior/copies_court_rec.htm)

Census records

<http://www.census.gov/genealogy/www/>

The U.S. census records contain a wealth of information about people. Useful in learning about family and local social and economic conditions at various times in history.

Naturalization records

The NJ State Archives holds naturalization records. Post-1906, naturalization records will be found in US National Archives repositories. New Jersey records are in the National Archives Northeast Region office, in New York City.

Veterans Records

20th century records are held by the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis.

<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/research/prologue-spotlight-nprc.html>

See also the National Archives & Records Administration (NARA) veteran's web

<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/research> for overall information. For New Jersey: Officers and Men of the Civil War from the New Jersey State Library

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Death Certificates

1901+ New Jersey Bureau of Vital Statistics.

1848-1900 New Jersey State Archives.

Contact the local registrar for the municipality where the death occurred. Additional information for deceased persons who had Social Security numbers may be found in the Social Security Death Index using Ancestry.com (<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=3693>)

Wills

New Jersey wills are filed and probated in the county of residence of the deceased. Members of the public can view them and make copies at the Essex County Surrogate's Office. (<http://www.essex-countynj.org/index.php?section=dir/dir&search=Office%20of%20Surrogate>)

Cemeteries

<http://www.findagrave.com> is another source for grave listings, some which include photos of the tombstones or other information.

<http://www.interment.net> is a partial register of cemeteries around the world. Each cemetery listing begins with a note on how many burials are included in that record.

Family Search/Family History Centers

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints' Family Search database and Family History Library Catalog are both accessible from your computer.

- Family History and Genealogy Records (<http://www.familysearch.org/>) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints provides this site, which lets you search their Ancestral File, International Genealogical Index, Pedigree Resource File, and web sites (by last name only).
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints also provide physical locations for research and assistance, LDS Family History Centers nearby:
 - Caldwell New Jersey Family History Center – 209 Mountain Avenue, North Caldwell, NJ
 - Passaic New Jersey Family History Center – 18 Howe Avenue, Passaic, NJ
 - Short Hills New Jersey Family History Center – 140 White Oak Ridge Road, Short Hills, NJ

Sanborn Maps of New Jersey

Caldwell Public Library has a copy of the 1907 Sanborn Maps for Caldwell and surrounding areas.
Princeton University Library

(<http://library.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbsc/aids/sanborn/mercator/princeton.html>)

The Sanborn Map Company is the oldest mapping company in the United States. Founded in 1866, the company created detailed building maps of cities and towns all across the country, primarily for use by insurance companies. These maps also have been used extensively by local government agencies for over a century in conducting their daily operations efficiently.

Approximately 12,000 American cities and towns are chronicled in the company's collection of over one million maps. As a result of its history, the name "Sanborn" has become synonymous with this kind of map. Genealogists, local history buffs, city planners, architects, and countless others have been drawn to the quality of detail found in them.

Web Sources

The Internet is becoming a vast network of genealogical resources, the trouble is knowing how to navigate all this information. The following websites have been chosen for their quality of information and indexing of links.

- About.com Guide to Genealogy – The About.com Guide sites organize links to web sites on various topics. (genealogy.about.com/hobbies/genealogy/index.htm)
- American Memory, Library of Congress – American Memory is an Internet-based archive for public domain image resources, as well as audio, video, and archived Web content. (memory.loc.gov/)
- Ancestry – Provides instant access to a wide range of unique resources for genealogical and historical research. Using the library edition provides a wider range of sources and instant access to documents. (www.ancestry.com)
- A Barrel of Genealogy Links – A Barrel of Genealogy Links is a list of links to access various genealogy related WWW resources, sites and homepages. This website also includes a list of Civil War Resource links. (www.genealogytoday.com/barrel/)
- Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet – Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites is one of the most comprehensive list of genealogy websites. (www.cyndislist.com/)
- Daughters of the American Revolution-New Jersey – The NJDAR Library is housed in the Special Collections Department of Rutgers University's Alexander Library, 169 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08903. (www.njdar.org/)
- Ellis Island/Port of New York Immigration Records – Search for free, hundreds of thousands of Ellis Island Records/Port of New York Records. (www.ellisland.org/)
- The Genealogy Home Page – The Genealogy Home Page keeps track of hundreds of genealogy links. (www.genhomepage.com/)
- Google Books – Search and preview millions of books including historical and genealogical from libraries and publishers worldwide. (books.google.com/books)
- HeritageQuest Online – It is a pay database of American genealogical sources, purchase through ProQuest. (www.heritagequestonline.com/hqoweb/library/do/index)
- Internet Archive Texts – Browse and read over 5 million books and items from over 1,500-curated collections. You will find a wide range of literature, historical texts and research materials. Collections were digitized from various media types including microfilm and microfiche, journals and serial publications, and a wide variety of archival material. (archive.org/details/texts)
- Mocavo.com – A mostly free source of online genealogy information. (www.mocavo.com/)
- New Jersey Historical Society – The New Jersey Historical Society's collections include a wide variety of diverse materials. The library collections contain manuscripts, reference books and rare books, photographs, maps, broadsides, pamphlets, mass-produced prints and other materials that document the cultural and historical heritage of New Jersey from the colonial era through the 20th century. (www.jerseyhistory.org/)
- RootsWeb.com – The mission of the RootsWeb project is to "make large volumes of data available to the online genealogical community at minimal cost." (www.rootsweb.com/)
- The U.S. Genealogy Web Project – "The US Gen Web Project is a loosely organized group of volunteers working to create a center for genealogical research for every county in the United States. (www.usgenweb.com/)
- World Vital Records – Digitized and searchable historical records. (www.worldvitalrecords.com)

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Mailing Lists

Mailing Lists and Listservs are also good tools in genealogical research.

- Roots-L Resources Page – The Roots-L Resources Page is the largest mailing list devoted to genealogists with over 8000 members. This free service is part of the RootsWeb Project. (www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/roots-l/) (www.us-roots.org/njpassaic/) (www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~njpchsgc/resources.htm)
- New Jersey History Listserv – H-New-Jersey is open to anyone with an interest in the history of New Jersey, including but not limited to academic researchers, teachers, students, archivists, historic site staff, volunteers, genealogists, archeologists, historic preservationists, and history buffs. (<https://networks.h-net.org/h-new-jersey>)

Library Resources and Special Collections

Libraries are an invaluable source of genealogical research. Start by browsing the Reference collection of your local library. As you begin to find surnames and locations you will want to find libraries, archives and museums that have special collections in your area of interest.

- The Genealogical Society of the State of New Jersey – The Society's manuscript collection is housed at: Special Collections and University Archives, Alexander Library, 169 College Avenue, Rutgers University, New Brunswick. GSNJ's special collection is an invaluable aid to genealogists researching New Jersey families, including cemetery records, family records, and Military Records. (<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~njgsnj/contacts.html>)
- Library of Congress – History & Genealogy Division (<http://www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy>)
- Making of America – Cornell (<http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/m/moa/>)
Making of America – University of Michigan (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagrp/>)
The Making of America Collection is a digital library of primary sources in American social history from the antebellum period through reconstruction. The collection is particularly strong in the subject areas of education, psychology, American history, sociology, religion, and science and technology.
- North Jersey History & Genealogy Center – The North Jersey History & Genealogy Center is a department within the Morristown & Morris Township Library, located in the building's lower level. They carry an exceptional collection of New Jersey and early American histories, genealogies, historic preservation materials, manuscripts, rare books, and fine art and prints. The collection is open to all. (<http://www.jfpl.org/NJHistoryHome.cfm>)
- Essex County Historical Society, 22 Fairview Ave., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, (201) 857-5290
- Historical Society of West Caldwell (<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?db=hswc>) (www.facebook.com/arthistorygirl?rf=117841351575805)