

Researching in Chautauqua County

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Vital Records – New York began statewide registration of births, marriages, and deaths in 1880-81 under supervision of the State and local boards of health. Compliance with the law was incomplete until 1913 or even later; therefore certificates are lacking for many events. There are no vital records in NYS prior to 1880 and since 1880 they are in the custody of the town, village or city clerk where the event occurred. Birth records are made available after 75 years, marriage and death records after 50 years. County government has never been involved in vital records registration, but we do have copies of the towns' marriage records from 1908 through April 1935. These records are indexed and available in the County Historian's office.

Many town and village clerks in Chautauqua County work part-time, and some still maintain offices in their homes. Their daily work load may not allow time to learn about their historical records, so it is incumbent upon you, the researcher, to know when the state began requiring vital records to be registered. Other historical records held by towns and villages (minutes, justice dockets, election returns, poor master ledgers etc.) probably exist but may not be easily accessible.

An 1847 law required the school districts in each town to collect vital statistics. They ceased doing so after a few years and very few of them survive.

Surrogate Court - Probate Records. 1811-present. Indexed. Wills, estate accounts & inventories, intestate filings, guardianships. Researchers should contact: Surrogate Clerk, 3 N. Erie St., Mayville.

County Archives – At the courthouse in Mayville, we maintain records from 1811 when county government was established, including many of the earliest court and legal records. The archives includes only those records that have been created by county government itself or by persons closely associated with it, or with documents that we are legally required to record/file. We do not collect or seek out documents, photographs, or publications from private collections.

Access and Hours – The Chautauqua County Historian manages the County Archives and offers a research area for the public to access historical records during regular business hours, Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM. Appointments are appreciated so that we can prepare for your research needs and be available to assist you. The Historian's office and research room are located on the first floor of the courthouse, 1 N. Erie St., Mayville. Phone: 716-753-4857

Records Frequently Requested from the County Archives/Historian's Department

Board of Supervisors Annual Reports –1846-present. Published annual reports of meetings of boards of supervisors; include department head reports, budgets, resolutions, local laws, memorials.

Census Records – 1810-1925. State and federal census records. CCGS published census extractions for 1855-1875 censuses.

Marriage Records –The only vital records at the courthouse are *copies of marriage records filed with each town* in the county from 1908 through April 1935. We maintain a comprehensive index for the records by both bride and groom.

Naturalization –1811-1972. Includes a comprehensive index for Declarations of Intention, Petitions, Repatriations. All documents are on microfilm. Some declarations include photographs.

Miscellaneous Records –1811- ca1930. Series includes adoptions, divorces, changes of name, petitions for plank roads, incorporations, releases of imprisoned debtors, testimonies, acts to establish towns and villages, appointments, powers of attorney, etc.

Predecessor Courts minute books –1811-1878. Minute books for courts that no longer exist in NYS, including General Sessions, Circuit Court, Oyer & Terminer, Common Pleas, General Jail Delivery. The minute books are not indexed. May include names of plaintiff, defendant, attorneys, judge, petit jurors, and decision/order.

Professional Registers – Historian's office. Dates vary, not indexed. Registers for many professions, which list name, date & place of birth, date & place of education, license number. Professions include physicians, surgeons, dentists (1874-1951), dental hygienists (1919-1945), practical nurses (1940-1946), professional nurses (1941-1946), registered nurses (1904-1940), attorneys (1899-1905), chiropodists (1912-1951), optometrists (1909-1955), trained attendants (1921), veterinarians (1886-1951), insurance agents (1923-1939), architects (1918-1946), osteopaths (1907-1941), professional engineers & land surveyors (1932-1951)

Religious Societies –1834-1891. Pursuant to an act passed Apr 5, 1833, religious societies had to incorporate, giving names of trustees, meeting dates, official name of society.

Records Frequently Requested from the County Clerk's Department

Assumed Business Name/DBA –1901-present. Certificate filed with Clerk to operate a business in the county, discontinuances. Includes name of business & owner(s), address.

Civil/Criminal court records –1811-present. Indexed in Clerk's Register by defendant only until 1997 when computer system was implemented. For cases heard in Supreme and County courts.

Deeds, Mortgages, Discharges –1811-present. Records of official acquisition, sale, transfer, or mortgage of real property. Indexed by grantee, grantor, mortgagee, mortgagor. Not all transfers of property were recorded at the courthouse, especially in the 19th century.

Divorce/Separation/Annulment Records –Indexed in the Clerk's Register from 1811 to 1997 by defendant's name only. These records are sealed for 100 years, so only the party names and date of final judgment can be released from 1916 to present.

Incorporations –1880-present. Indexed by name of corporation; includes name, location, purpose, amount of stock, directors' names & addresses, dissolutions. Includes churches, granges, historical societies, and other not-for-profit organizations.

Maps – Indexed by town and alphabetically by map name, 1821-present. Almost all of the maps filed have been scanned and are available on the public access computers in the Clerk's office.

Military Discharge –1811-present. Indexed. Sealed by Gov. Pataki so these are now only available to the veteran and/or his/her power of attorney. County Historian has some other veteran files pre-dating WWII that can be searched for genealogical information.