

ALE = Ancestry Library Edition

FS = FamilySearch

GR = Grosvenor Room

HQ = HeritageQuest Online

1. **Databases available through BECPL**– *Ancestry Library Edition* (usually in-library only, but temporarily accessible from home with a B&ECPL card through December 31, 2020 due to the pandemic). **From home or in-library:** *HeritageQuest Online*. <http://dbaz.buffalolib.org/dbaz.php>
2. **FamilySearch** – www.familysearch.org – Website of the LDS church. Millions of records online for free.
3. **FamilyTreeNow** – www.familytreenow.com – This is a free people finder website good for finding those living from about 2010-present. If you know a woman's maiden name, but don't know her married name, try searching for her here to see if another name including her given name comes up. You can also try searching for her parents or a brother to see if she comes up as a relative. Do the same thing if you know the married name.
4. **Grosvenor Room Online Genealogy Guides** - <https://www.buffalolib.org/special-collections/guides-publications>
5. **Social Security Claims Index, 1936-2007** – (ALE) – This lists deceased individuals, their birth and death dates, usually their parents' names (including mother's maiden name), and name changes.
6. **Obituaries** – An excellent source for finding a woman's maiden or married name and places of residence. Obtain obituaries for the woman herself, her spouse, parents, siblings, grandparents and in-laws. Obituaries may also define half and step relationships. ALE and HQ include an obituary index.
7. **Marriage Announcements** – These are helpful to find the name of a bride if unknown or the name of a bride or groom's parents. A marriage announcement index is in ALE. A good source for early Buffalo and Western New York marriage

announcements is a B&ECPL digitized manuscript called *The Why of This Book*:

<http://digital.buffalolib.org/document/2038>.

8. **Runaway Wives** – Husbands often sent notice to newspapers if their wife left them and state that they will not be held responsible for any debt their wife may incur. This was common into the 1900s.
9. **Social Columns** – Check for notices about visiting relatives. Important connections may be found.
10. **Probate Notices** – Notices were often put in newspapers by estate executors seeking heirs to the decedent. Be sure to search far and wide for your ancestor's name. You may find family connections, where they used to live, or where they moved.
11. **Online Newspapers and Indexes:**
 - a. The Ancestor Hunt - <https://www.theancestorhunt.com/newspaper-research-links.html> - Directory of online newspapers.
 - b. Chronicling America Historic American Newspapers - <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> - full-text searchable online newspapers.
 - c. Find a Grave - <https://www.findagrave.com/> - A cemetery website. Sometimes transcribed obituaries and family member names are included.
 - d. Fulton History - www.fultonhistory.com – Many full-text newspapers.
 - e. Google News - <https://news.google.com/newspapers>
 - f. Internet search – Search for the person of interest, their date of death and location of death. Sometimes funeral homes post obituaries on their websites.
 - g. Legacy.com - <https://www.legacy.com/> - Obituary index with some full-text obituaries available. Be sure to check the guest books to see if relatives posted important family details.
 - h. NYS Historic Newspapers - <https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/> - Some full-text Buffalo area newspapers.
 - i. Subscription newspaper databases: www.newspapers.com, www.genealogybank.com.
 - j. FamilySearch – “United States, GenealogyBank Obituaries, 1980-2014”
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2333694> - An obituary index with some facts transcribed.

- k. HeritageQuest Online / Ancestry Library Edition – “Newspapers.com Obituary Index, 1800s-current” - An obituary index with some facts transcribed.
 - l. Lois and Norwood Barris Collection, Chautauqua County, NY Historian - <https://chggov.com/county-historian/lois-and-norwood-barris> - Abstracts of several Chautauqua Co., NY newspapers.
 - m. Obituary Daily Times - <http://sites.rootsweb.com/~obituary/> - Obituary index.
12. **Wills/Probate/Estate Records** – List heirs (sometimes even foreign heirs), their relationships to the deceased and places of residence. Women had estate files too. FamilySearch has many New York State probate records: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1920234>.
13. **Census Records/Probate** – Pay attention to those who lived nearby. Spouses were often found in the neighborhood. Go through census records for the town that your female ancestor lived in and identify heads of households who are the correct age to be her parent (s). Go through those individual’s estate files to see if they list your female relative under her married name.
14. **New York State Census Records** –
- a. 1855-1875 – List relationship to head of household. The 1850-1870 federal census records do not record this information. They also list the county of birth if an individual was born in NYS. In ALE and FS.
 - b. 1855 – Lists marriages and deaths that occurred within the year before the census day. Individuals are not named, but ages are given. Place of marriage is recorded, so if you have an estimated marriage date and the ages match up with your ancestral couple, you could search for marriage records in the location given. This data is usually found at the end of an election district. In ALE and FS.
 - c. 1865-1875 – Lists marriages and deaths that occurred within the year before the census day. Those married and died are named. Type of marriage ceremony is listed and if the ceremony was religious, the religion is recorded. These are usually mixed in with the general census schedules (every few pages). In ALE and FS.
 - d. Agricultural Schedules - 1855-1875 NYS Census have agricultural schedules mixed in with the general schedules, usually at the end of an election district or a ward. The 1850-1880 U.S. Federal Censuses took a separate schedule for agriculture.

Agricultural schedules include information about land, crops, livestock, and other details. 1855-1875 in ALE. Federal schedules are in ALE and HQ.

15. **Divorce Records** – From 1787-1847 the NYS Chancery Court granted divorces for adultery, separations and annulments. Beginning in 1847, The NYS Supreme Court handled divorces. Each county has a Supreme Court. From 1847-1967 the only grounds for divorce was adultery. Divorce for other reasons required an act of the state legislature (uncommon). The plaintiff was usually granted the right to remarry after the divorce. The adulterer was usually restricted from being married again, but often did remarry in another state. The Couple may have sought a divorce from another state or country. 20th Century – Reno, Nevada was a popular place to get a divorce. Some hired lawyers to file for a divorce in Mexico. Couples may have separated (without legal proceedings). Divorce records can be obtained through county clerk's offices. Sometimes older records are not kept permanently. There is a 100-year waiting period before NYS divorce records are accessible for genealogy research. Genealogists can obtain a certificate of dissolution – provide names, date and type of dissolution (divorce, annulment, separation).
16. **Birth records** – The Grosvenor Room carries Buffalo births 1878-1913 on microfilm (no index). Birth records note parents' names, including mother's maiden name. They usually record the parents' places of birth and how many children the mother has given birth to and how many are still living.
 - a. **Supplemental Report of Given Name of Child** – Many early Buffalo birth returns (1870s-1880s) do not list the given name of the child. Later on, this form may have been registered, which provides the birth name of the child. Usually this occurred when the child was an adult, likely because they needed it for proof of birth, perhaps for Social Security. These are usually directly after the original birth certificate. It is usual for another family member to "vouch" for the person whose birth certificate it was. You may find a sister as the "vouching" family member. This is a possible way to find a sister's married name and address.
 - b. **Delayed Birth Records** – These were created when a person did not have a registered birth and needed proof of birth. Most of these were created in the 1930s, when Social Security started (1936) and when men wanted to join the military, especially for WWII. The GR carries City of Buffalo Delayed Births from

1864-1913 (dates of birth) on microfilm. There is no index, but they are somewhat ordered by surname. These include parents' names, including mother's maiden names and parents' places of birth. These also often have someone "vouching" for the birth, generally a family member. This is a possible way to find a sister's married name and address.

17. **Bastardy Records** - These are records found mainly in the South. If a child was born out of wedlock, a man could be charged with the "maintenance" of the child. The father would have to pay a certain amount of money. Both parents are listed on this document, but the child's name is not necessarily listed. African Americans were often noted as "colored." Check FS for these as well as county clerk offices for these, but they may be kept with courts such as surrogate, supreme/superior courts.
18. **Cemetery Plots** - Cemetery plot registers list date of death or burial, and often record how the persons buried in the plot are related to the plot owner. The Library carries the records of several cemeteries:
<https://www.buffalolib.org/sites/default/files/special-collections/guides/CemeteryRecords2014.pdf>
19. **Gravestones** - Be sure to check gravestones for maiden names.
<https://www.findagrave.com/>
20. **Deeds** - Obtain deeds for your female relative's husband. Land was often bought/sold/transferred to family members. You may find that a woman's father or brother sold land to the husband. A good way to find potential maiden names. Many NYS deeds are in FS. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2078654>
21. **Witnesses** - Pay attention to witnesses on records associated with your female ancestor. Family members are often witnesses.
22. **Naturalization Records, Women and Children** - 1855-1922 - Women and minor children (under 21) became naturalized through the male head of family. Late Sept. 1922 - present, alien minor children became naturalized through parents. After late Sept. 1922 alien women had to naturalize themselves. **March 2, 1907 - Sept. 22, 1922 - Women who were American citizens lost their citizenship if they married an alien.** Also: Sept 22 1922-March 3 1931 - a woman who was an American citizen lost her citizenship if she married an alien who wasn't eligible to naturalize (Asian men). Because these American born women lost their citizenship,

you may find naturalization records for them.

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/summer/women-and-naturalization-1.html>

- a. **Accessing Naturalization Records** - Erie County Clerk's Office has many records through 1929. Beginning late 1906, if naturalized at a U.S. District Court, obtain through the National Archives. Some WNY naturalization records are available online through FS. Some of Erie County's are located here:
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/321898>;
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/17698>.
23. **Passports** - Passports are a good resource for finding photos and physical descriptions. They also usually list place of birth and the name of at least one parent. Passports from 1795-1925 are in ALE and FS.
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2185145>
24. **Military Records** - Seek out male relative's military records to find out about their female relatives. Muster abstracts and compiled service records may list the soldier's place of birth (which may be indicative of a mother or sister's place of birth) and parents' names, including mother's maiden name. Pension files are usually very detailed and may include affidavits of female relatives, widow's birth date, marriage date and place, deceased spouse's names, children's names, parents' names and more.
 - a. **ALE** - Has many military pension indexes. ALE and HQ include complete Revolutionary War Pension files. Fold3 has some full War of 1812 pension files online for free: www.fold3.com.
25. **Bible Records** - Bible records may be found in pension files for proof of birth or marriage. The Western New York Genealogical Society has a collection of transcribed bible records. They are available in the GR. If a transcription is found, a photocopy of the record may be obtained for a small fee from the society. There are some bible transcriptions on the Daughters of the American Revolution website. If a record is found, a copy of the record can be obtained for a fee.
<https://www.dar.org/library/collections/dar-digital-resources-genealogical-research>.
Try searching WorldCat (a union of library catalogs from all over the world) for bible records using the terms 'bible records' and either the state of interest, or surname of interest. www.worldcat.org.

26. **Freedman's Bank Records** – A bank set-up after the Civil War for freed persons and African American soldiers. Those joining had to fill out a very detailed application. The applications often list immediate family member names, where born and brought up, and sometimes the former slaveholder's name. These are in HQ and FS. <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1417695>
<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/freedmans-savings-and-trust.html>
27. **Freedmen's Bureau Records** – Many of these are keyword searchable in FamilySearch: <https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2721171>.
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/African_American_Freedmen%27s_Bureau_Records
- a. **Ration Records** – Both whites and African Americans may be listed in these documents. Ration requests list the name of the requestor, residence, supplies requested, and remarks which may include details as to why assistance is needed (i.e. husband passed away, number of children supporting, etc.)
- b. **Register of Freedmen** – Similar to census records. May list name, age, color, gender, occupation, residence, former owner and former residence.
- c. **Freedmen's Contracts** – These are often labor contracts. Family members may be on the same contract. Those that freedmen are contracting with may be their former slaveholder.
28. **Southern Claims Commission** – Southerners whose goods/livestock/etc. were taken by the Union during the Civil War, and who were loyal to the Union during the war, could apply to be paid back for those items that were taken. Both men and women could apply, and this included African Americans. Testimony from the claimant and generally two witnesses were included. The relationship of the witnesses was given. These are in ALE and FS.
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/452638>
<https://www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/southern-claims-commission>
29. **Family and Local Histories** – Usually include details such as birth, marriage and death dates and places; family member names; occupations; important accomplishments; and places of residence. HQ and FS have a large collection of these books. Remember to look for family reunion publications. These often have an account of who attended the reunion and may help you find the married name of a woman or where she lived. <https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/>

30. **Homestead Records** – If your ancestor moved West, she may have been a homesteader. Individuals applied for free public, federal land. Homesteaders had to improve the land and live on it for a certain number of years before they could own it. Detailed applications were made after they fulfilled the requirements. The applications may include family information, property details, and character statements of the homesteaders by their neighbors. If a male homesteader died, leaving a widow, his widow often took over the claim and completed the process, though single women could also homestead. To see if your ancestor was a homesteader search here: <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/>. Completed applications (which include much more detail) are available in ALE.
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Homestead_Records
31. **Alumni Publications** – Often list married names, husband's and children's names, accomplishments, education, employment, and place of residence.
<https://www.buffalolib.org/sites/default/files/special-collections/guides/Yearbooks.pdf>
32. **Lineage Society Applications and Publications** – Many Sons of American Revolution applications are in ALE. Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) applications can be downloaded for a fee from their website. These often include direct lineage of the applicant to the Revolutionary War soldier and a list of all of the soldier's children. The DAR Magazine is online in Google Books.
<https://books.google.com/>
33. **Religious Records** – Religious records almost always pre-date civil birth, death, and marriage records. Remember that some people were baptized as adults. The Library carries many church records on microfilm:
<https://www.buffalolib.org/sites/default/files/special-collections/guides/ChurchRecords.pdf>
34. **Court Records** – Civil or criminal records may be available about your ancestor. Check with county clerk's offices and state archives. FS often has court records too.
35. **Court Reporters** – These are published judicial opinions on court cases. Many historic court reporters can be found in legal databases. B&ECPL has access to HeinOnline. It can be used at every B&ECPL location.
36. **Letters/Diaries/Scrapbooks** – Check local libraries, historical societies, colleges, and archives for these items. B&ECPL has a digital collection including two diaries by local women. <https://www.buffalolib.org/research-resources/digital->

[collections](#). Check ArchiveGrid, a union catalog of archival collections for all over the U.S. <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid>.

37. **Scrapbooks** – The GR has numerous scrapbooks including clippings on people, clubs, and many other topics. <https://www.buffalolib.org/sites/default/files/special-collections/guides/ScrapbookWeb.pdf>
38. **Bibliographies** - *Women's History Sources: A Guide to Archives and Manuscript Collections in the United States* (available at the Central Library.)
39. **Club Publications** – The GR has many club annual reports or periodicals, which may name your ancestor. These publications may also contain social columns.
40. **Institutional Records** – Your ancestor may have been a resident in a poorhouse, prison, asylum, orphanage or other institution. The GR carries Erie County Poorhouse records from the 1840s into the 1950s. The GR carries Thomas Indian School annual reports (1881-1942) which list children attending the school, their tribal affiliation, and sometimes reports on graduated students. The GR carries Buffalo Central High School registers from 1865-1909. They often list student's names, guardians, where they attended school previously, age, place of residence, honors, and exams passed. Poorhouse records: <http://digital.buffalolib.org/collections/show/5>
41. **Middle Names or Given Names** – if your ancestor has an unusual middle name or given name, investigate that name, it may be a family surname. Children were often given their grandmother's surname as a middle name.

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