



Genealogy Resource Guide

Genealogy is the study of family origins, tracing a line of descent from one ancestor or family group. Often starting with just a name, professional and amateur genealogists may use vital records, published family histories, church records, newspapers or photographs to attempt building a complete record of an individual's life or family tree.



Family on Easter Sunday, 6th Avenue, 1974. ([RCPO_0103](#))

Many family trees will have roots in Brooklyn, and this guide is intended to provide researchers with a list of genealogy resources available at the Brooklyn Collection and accessible remotely.

For additional information please contact: bceref@bklynlibrary.org

Getting Started

Interested in learning more about your family history but don't know where to begin? A good organizational and research plan will be your most important tools. Here are a few tips to get started:

Gather what you already know: Begin your family tree by recording the names, important dates and places of birth you already know. This is also a good time to select the organizational tools you'll use to build your tree and keep important documents. Whether you choose to gather your research digitally or as a hardcopy will depend on your preferences as a researcher. There are several free and paid templates available.

Interview relatives: If possible, conduct informational interviews with relatives to fill in gaps in your family tree. If they have documents or photos make a copy for your records.

Identify research targets: Select the individual or family you would like to learn more about. You can start with yourself and trace back or select a distant relative and build your tree from the top down. Make note of maiden names and alternative surname spellings.

Begin your research: A great place to start is the census. The census is taken every ten years and will include information on everyone living in a single household. Information such as address, names, occupations, ages and places of birth should be available. You can find census information at [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). Please note, the United States has imposed a 72-year waiting period for the release of census information, which means the most current information will be from 1940.

Use new information to guide further research: Using what you've learned, identify local resources that can provide additional information. Historical societies, local government agencies and public libraries are a good place to start. If your ancestor was from Brooklyn, we hope you'll find answers here at the Brooklyn Collection.

Digital Resources

[Ancestry.com](#)

access from home with a library card

A searchable database of billions of historical records including census, military, birth, marriage, immigration and death records. Records can be downloaded in JPEG or PDF format.

[Brooklyn High School Newspapers](#)

access from home without a library card

This collection contains digitized news publications from Brooklyn high schools. School news receives the most attention in the papers, but community events, as well as matters of national and international interest, are reported on as well. The bulk of the papers in the collection span the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s.

Students, teachers, and administrators can be found by entering a name into the search bar and clicking “text contents.” Researchers can also browse by school or year. A tutorial can be found [here](#).

[Brooklyn Newsstand](#)

access from home without a library card

This collection contains over 30 local newspapers digitized in a partnership with Newspapers.com. Dates range from 1835-1899 and include Brooklyn wide titles such as The Brooklyn Daily Eagle and small neighborhood papers such as Greenpoint Weekly Star and the Bay Ridge Home Reporter. Researchers can use Newsstand to keyword search articles by name, address, organization, and event. A tutorial can be found [here](#).

[City and Telephone Directories](#)

access from home without a library card

Search Brooklyn businesses and residents 1856-1967. Enter a search term or browse each directory alphabetically. Several directories include business advertisements. A tutorial can be found [here](#).

[Digital Collections](#)

access from home without a library card

The Digital Collections portal hosts Brooklyn Public Library's online catalog, offering a selection of more than 20,000 historical photographs from the Brooklyn Collection and audio and video recordings created by the Brooklyn Public library and other sources. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle Photograph Collection (c. 1900-1955) is the source of many of these images.

Within the Digital Collections, researchers can search an individual name or do a broader search through neighborhoods, professions, schools, or sporting events. A tutorial can be found [here](#). Advanced search tips [here](#).

Search terms to try: WORK (advanced search: call number), ARM (advanced search: call number), Classroom, Specific Neighborhoods (example: Red Hook, Greenpoint, Brownsville)

Archival Resources

[Brooklyn Yearbook Collection](#)

access at the Brooklyn Collection

This collection spans over 100 years of Brooklyn educational history. In addition to the class listings and photographs, the yearbooks provide a wealth of information about academics, clubs, athletic groups, and student activities in Brooklyn in the 19th and 20th centuries.

[Photographs from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle](#)

access at the Brooklyn Collection

This collection comprises over 200,000 black and white photographs, almost entirely from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle newspaper's photo morgue. This collection is not digitized and not available in our Digital Collections, however researchers can search the [collection guide](#) for names, businesses, and addresses and contact the Brooklyn Collection for access.

Books

access at the Brooklyn Collection

[Bergen, Teunis G.](#) *Register in alphabetical order, of the early settlers of Kings County, Long Island, N.Y., from its first settlement by Europeans to 1700; with contributions to their biographies and genealogies, compiled from various sources.* S.W. Green's Son, printer, 1881.

[Hamm, Margherita Arlina.](#) *Famous families of New York ; historical and biographical sketches of families which in successive generation have been identified with the development of the nation.* G. P. Putnam's sons, 1902.

[Inskeep, Carolee R.](#) *The graveyard shift : a family historian's guide to New York City cemeteries.* Ancestry, 2000.

Search terms to try: Family, Genealogy, Memoir, Long Island

Vital Records

Vital records are documents or certificates kept by a state or county government to officially recognize a citizen's important life event. Birth, death and marriage certificates are all examples of vital records. For copies of these records, please contact the following New York City departments:

[Bureau of Vital Records Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#)

The Bureau of Vital Records keeps records for births occurring after 1910 and deaths occurring after 1949.

[Marriage Bureau, Office of the City Clerk](#)

The Marriage Bureau has records relating to all marriage licenses issued from 1949 to the present.

[Municipal Archives](#)

The Municipal Archives has records of births reported prior to 1910, deaths reported prior to 1949, and marriages reported prior to 1938.

[Vital Records Outside of New York City](#)

The Center for Disease Control provides links to access vital records for regions outside New York City.