Rochester Adoptions
Research Guide

INTRODUCTION

The books listed below are available at the Rochester Central Library. Please check branch libraries and
town libraries for other materials. It is important to keep in mind that the library does not keep or have
access to the actual records discussed below, and we cannot request these documents for you. These
records can only be accessed through the appropriate town, city, or state government office by the person
seeking information. The library only provides indexes and guides for finding information you are
seeking. For more information on how to obtain actual copies of legal documents, you must contact the
appropriate government office.

Key
L/H = Local History Division (these materials are for in-library use only).
BUS = Business & Social Sciences Division – 4th floor, Bausch & Lomb Public Library
Building (these materials circulate and may be checked out).

GENERAL REFERENCE

L/H Gr929.1
A835s
1992

BUS 362.8298
Bailey, Julie Jarrell. The Adoption Reunion Survival Guide: Preparing Yourself for the
B154a

L/H Gr929.1072
Brown, T. A. Adoption Records Handbook: Birth Family Searches Made Easier with Self-
Help Tips, Registries, Search Angels, Pro Se Legal Forms, Etc. Las Vegas, Nev.: Crary
B881a

L/H Gr362.734 C261a
Carangelo, Lori. The Adoption & Donor Conception Factbook: The Most Comprehensive
Source of U.S. & Global Data on the Invisible Families of Adoption, Foster Care & Donor
VITAL RECORDS (BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DEATHS)

- The New York State Vital Records Index is available for in person research only at the Retrieval Desk, located on the second floor of the Rundel building in the Local History Division. New York City maintains separate records, so that information is not included in this index.
  
  The index for birth records starts in 1881; state law requires 75 years of confidentiality (information is not available for births that occurred within the past 75 years)
  
  The index for death records starts in 1880, with 50 years of confidentiality (information is not available for deaths that occurred within the past 50 years)
  
  The index for marriage records starts 1881 with 50 years of confidentiality (information is not available for marriages that occurred within the past 50 years)
  
Please note: Compliance with the law was not strictly enforced until 1915; therefore, many events were never recorded at the state level. Birth certificates for New York State adoptees are kept in Albany, and are not available at the local registrar.
• Original adoptee birth certificate information is sealed. The birth parents’ names are not listed on the certificate. This original information is not available, even to the adoptee. The adoptee, birth parents, and siblings can register with the New York State Department of Health Adoption and Medical Information Registry. The adoptee can also request non-identifying characteristics. If the Department of Health gets a request that matches another registered applicant (e.g., birth mother – child), they will notify both parties.

• Monroe County birth and death records are filed at the Monroe County Health Department Vital Records Office located at 111 Westfall Road (274-6141).

  ⇒ According to public health laws, birth records must be 75 years old and death records must be 50 years old for information to be released

• Marriage records for the City of Rochester are available at the Rochester City Archives and Records Center. Call 428-7331 for an appointment.

  ⇒ You must make an appointment to gain access to the records. Appointments are available Monday-Friday from 9am to 4pm. The office closes at 5pm.

• For marriages that took place in towns, see the Town Clerk for that town.

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<th>OTHER RESOURCES IN THE LOCAL HISTORY DIVISION</th>
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• City Directories (1827 to present) are available for in-library use. (1827-1930 are also available on our Web site: [http://www3.libraryweb.org/lh.aspx?id=1105](http://www3.libraryweb.org/lh.aspx?id=1105))

• Suburban Directories (1930 to present) are available for in-library use.

• Biography Clippings and Scrapbooks since the late 1930s are available for in-library use.

• Rochester newspapers on microfilm: Newspapers from 1898-1903 have been indexed in a card catalog file available in the Local History Division. A Newspaper Index (1818 to 1903) is available for in-library use. The years 1818-1897 can be searched via our Web site: [http://www3.libraryweb.org/lh.aspx?id=963&ekmensel=e57df7b_12_38_963_9](http://www3.libraryweb.org/lh.aspx?id=963&ekmensel=e57df7b_12_38_963_9)

  Once you know the date of the article you would like, you may order copies of articles via the above Web site.

• Yearbooks from various local schools are available for in-library use. Note: The yearbook collection is not complete.

• The Daily Record (1926-current) is available in the Business Division.

• Life Records index: birth, marriage, and death dates from the local newspapers. These give the dates only, which you can then use to search our microfilm collection. The index is available on our Web site: [http://www3.libraryweb.org/lh.aspx?id=948](http://www3.libraryweb.org/lh.aspx?id=948)

  Once you know the date of the article you would like, you may order copies of articles via the above Web site.
ONLINE RESOURCES

New York State Adoption Service (NYSAS): Provides information on NYS adoption agencies, the adoption process and more. http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/adopt/


AREA GROUPS

ANGELS: Adoption search, support, and research for birth families, adoptees, and adoptive families searching for connections. For more information, contact Kathleen Brush at 585-436-2230 or e-mail her at KSB1951@frontiernet.net or KSB1951@yahoo.com.

On Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/adoptioncoalition

ADOPTION TERMINOLOGY

Non-identifying information: All background data on parties to an adoption, which does not singularly allow direct identification or location. In a nutshell, it is any information which would not allow a searcher to directly identify or locate the person they are looking for (e.g., height, age, educational background, hair color, religious affiliation, etc.).

Relinquishment or surrender: This is the stage during which the birth mother and possibly the birth father signed papers to surrender legal rights and responsibilities to someone else. If yours was an agency adoption, custody was probably transferred to either a state or private agency who became your guardian until a suitable adoptive family was selected. Private adoptions, on the other hand, typically involve an attorney and transfer custody from the birth parents to the adoptive parents.

Placement: The mechanics of how this actually happened depends on whether your adoption occurred privately or through an agency. In an agency adoption, the agency typically selects a suitable family from screened and approved clients. Although agencies are required to keep complete files on both sets of parents and the adoptee, great pains are taken to insure that neither family is given much identifying knowledge about the other. In private adoption, the birthmother may not only know the names of the adoptive parents, but may have even met them.

Petition: This is the last stage before the adoption becomes final. At this point, the adoptive parents formally request custody of the adoptee through the court of jurisdiction. Records of this action are either filed separately or with the remainder of the adoption papers and typically provide some useful information.

Finalization: During this step, the court hands down a final decree granting the adoptive parents full and legal custody of the adoptee. An amended birth certificate is then issued bearing the names of the adoptive parents and the new name of the adoptee. The original birth certificate is sealed in the court records.