Introduction to New Jersey Genealogy
Regina Fitzpatrick, Genealogy Librarian
Introduction

• New Jersey is one of the thirteen original colonies, with European settlements dating from the 17th Century.
• New Jersey was the second state in the U.S. to begin consistently collecting civil vital records (Massachusetts first, 1841) in May 1848.
• Today, we’re going to review how to tap into these resources: first reviewing basics of genealogy, then looking at how to prepare to make a repository trip, and finally reviewing a couple of useful resources available at the State Archives and State Library.
Genealogy Basics

• Genealogy is the study of a continuous line of descent from a single individual (in this case, you)
• Goal of Genealogy: to collect birth, marriage, and death records (vital records), starting with yourself and working your way back.
• Sometimes the process of locating these records is a straight-forward as looking at an index
• Other times, you need to narrow down date ranges, locations, bizarre spellings, etc.
• There are two document types that will help you locate vital Records: primary documents and secondary resources
Primary Documents

- Official or private records created within a person’s general lifetime
- These include Vital Records, Estate Documents (wills), Land Records, Naturalizations, Correspondence
- These should be your top priority, because the informant is likely the person themselves or someone who knew them (and thus we assume the information provided is accurate)
- You can find many of these items in records repositories such as State, County, or Municipal Archives and historical societies
- New Jersey State Library (NJSL) has a limited primary document collection including City Directories and Federal and State Census records.
- New Jersey State Archives (NJSA) has most official primary documents for the State of New Jersey
Visual Map of Other Primary Records You Can Use to Find Birth, Marriage, or Death Records
Secondary Resources

- Published items produced a long time after a person’s death
- The source usually did not know the deceased and may or may not have relied on primary documents for research
- Examples: primary document indexes, family histories, and town histories
- Records repositories, libraries, and historical societies may have these
- Many published items are also digitized and available via: Ancestry, HeritageQuest, Google Books, and Archive.org
- Be skeptical about the content of Family/Town histories produced in the late 19th or early 20th century, as they don’t always cite their sources
- In NJ this type of resource may be especially useful for those with ancestors who lived before May 1848.
Planning your repository visit

• Some repositories don’t digitize their records or host them on Ancestry.
• Because you can’t get the records they have anywhere else, don’t waste time on your visit using online subscription sites (Ancestry et al)!
• Determine your goals—whose records do you want to get on this trip?
• Do your homework
• Make a laundry list
Homework to do Before your Visit

• Federal Population Census Records (1790-1940) use this to narrow down timeframes for the events you want to find, especially if you’re looking in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Ancestry.com)
• Check NJ State Censuses as well (1855-1915 NJ Censuses are digitized on Ancestry, 1905 and 1915 on Family Search)
• Check the Repository’s website, online catalog, or digitized collections
• Build a Repository-specific laundry list of records you’d like to collect, including any collection references or call numbers found online
**Laundry List Example** (Create something like this before you go to the repository.)

Repository Name: New Jersey State Archives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record Group</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Births 1904-1923</td>
<td>John Robinson</td>
<td>June 28, 1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births 1904-1923</td>
<td>Ida Johnson</td>
<td>October 3, 1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births 1904-1923</td>
<td>Anna Robinson</td>
<td>May 19, 1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births 1904-1923</td>
<td>Emily McMahon</td>
<td>1905-1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriages 1904-1944</td>
<td>John Robinson and Ida Johnson</td>
<td>April 2, 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths 1904-1955</td>
<td>Paul Johnson</td>
<td>July 6, 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths 1904-1955</td>
<td>Reuben McMahon</td>
<td>November 10, 1918</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Records grouped by type, easy to divide if multiple researchers are working together! These record collections are organized the same way, easy to look up one after another.
Useful Primary Document Collections at the State Archives

- NJ State Vital Records and Estate Records
- I’m highlighting these because they are two of the most far reaching collections.
- Estate Records span from the 17th century through the 20th.
- Vital records include most New Jersey residents for a period of 170 years.
State Vital Records

- Vital Records are probably the most authoritative source for personal information on your ancestors.
- Very likely the person themselves or a close family member was the informant on the document.
- All vital records 100 years old and older (back to May 1848) are available to order remotely from the NJSA. There are searchable indexes on the Archives’ website for Marriages May 1848-May 1878, Deaths May 1848-May 1878, and Deaths June 1878-June 1897. You can check these indexes and order the records straight from there.
- Family Search has searchable indexes for NJ birth, marriage, and death records which include May 1848-December 1900 vital records available at the State Archives.
- Ancestry has digitized NJ State Birth, Marriage, and Death indexes 1901-1903. Reclaim the Records has digitized NJ State Marriage Indexes 1901-2016 on Archive.org and Deaths 1901-2017 (with some gaps), on both Archive.org till 2000, and then in a searchable interface from 2001-2017 on www.newjerseydeathindex.com
Vital Records May 1848-December 1900

• Earliest vital records May 1848-May 1878 are ledger records (person’s official record is a line on a page with several other entries), rather than individual certificate records.
• The records were organized on a May-May fiscal year, rather than a calendar year.
• The Archives has a completed marriage index May 1848-May 1878 and a death index May 1848-May 1878 available online at archives.nj.gov.
• FamilySearch.org has a searchable birth index which includes state records May 1848-December 1900. (Same for marriage and death, but use the Archives’ indexes first.)
• In addition to searching the Family Search index, book indexes for May 1848-May 1878 records are available at the Archives.
• Vital Records June 1878-December 1900 are certificate records on a July-June fiscal year.
• There is a June 1878-June 1897 (so far) death index available on the Archives’ website.
• Book indexes for births and marriages, and microfilmed indexes for deaths are available at the Archives.
From the Archive’s main site, you can reach the Searchable Databases by clicking the “Searchable Databases and Records Request Forms”.
How to find New Jersey Vital Records Databases on Family Search

From the main page, click search and select catalog. In the Place Name type in New Jersey and select United State New Jersey. A long list of records will appear. Scroll down to Vital Records Indexes.
Family Search Index Caveat

- When you’re searching for State Vital Records in Family Search’s online NJ Birth, Marriage, or Death indexes, for events that occurred from January-June the year might be incorrectly listed.
- This is because the included State Records were treated as though they were indexed on a calendar year. (Remember, records May 1848-December 1900 are organized on a fiscal year: May-May 1848-1878, July-June 1878-1900.)
- There is a way to verify the correct year of the event by using the GS Film Number (GSU number), which is described further on.
- Moral of Story #1: If you’re researching a Marriage Record May 1848-May 1878 or a Death Record May 1848-June 1897, visit the searchable databases on the State Archives’ website first, because the year will be correctly listed, you’ll get a citation for the record of interest, and you can order a copy of the record straight from that index.
- Moral of Story #2: If you find the record in the index on Family Search and the month of your event is from January-June, it’s likely that the correct date is one year later than what’s listed.
John S. Applegate on Archives’ Death Index June 1878-June 1897

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Citation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select</td>
<td>Applegate, John E.</td>
<td>8y</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Burlington County: Springfield</td>
<td>19 Jan 1879</td>
<td>1878-79. 10 - A54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select</td>
<td>Applegate, John Stuart</td>
<td>4m</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Union County: Westfield</td>
<td>Jul 1878</td>
<td>1878-79. 90 - A18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select</td>
<td>Applegate, John</td>
<td>4y</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Middlesex County: Sayreville</td>
<td>30 Jan 1882</td>
<td>1881-82. 65 - A78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select</td>
<td>Applegate, John G.</td>
<td>1y</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ocean County: Dover</td>
<td>25 Oct 1881</td>
<td>1881-82. 70 - A4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select</td>
<td>Applegate, John C.</td>
<td>47y</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mercer County: Lawrence</td>
<td>1 May 1883</td>
<td>1882-83. 60 - A7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select</td>
<td>Applegate, John E.</td>
<td>45y</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Middlesex County: East Brunswick</td>
<td>4 Aug 1883</td>
<td>1882-84. 65 - A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select</td>
<td>Applegate, John S.</td>
<td>43y</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monmouth County: Middletown</td>
<td>11 Apr 1885</td>
<td>1884-85. 70 - A21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

John S. Applegate on FamilySearch.org

John S. Applegate: New Jersey Deaths and Burials, 1720-1988
- **Name**: John S. Applegate
- **Death Date**: 11 Apr 1884
- **Death Place**: Middletown, Monmouth, NJ
- **Indexing Project (Batch) Number**: 806592-1
- **System Origin**: New Jersey-Easy
- **GS Film Number**: 589305
- **Reference ID**: v 17 p 105
John S. Applegate died 11 April 1885 (not 1884) based on the dates given on the Index
Vital Records after 1900

- Records after December 1900 are organized by Calendar year (YAY!!!)
- Records after 1903 (except for Deaths 1949-1957, which have an index by certificate number) are organized alphabetically by last name (marriages by groom’s) within the calendar year.
- The Archives currently owns vital records 1904-1918 (each January when all vital records in a calendar year turn 100, the Archives assumes ownership), which can be ordered by mail or online.
- The Archives has additional records owned by the NJ Dept. of Health, Office of Vital Statistics and Registry which researchers can use in person for unofficial purposes (including Genealogy): through 1923 for births, 1948 for marriage (with Brides’ Index), and 1957 for Deaths.
- There is also a microfilmed Brides’ Index (by her last name) starting in 1901. This is great to use if you’re not sure when the marriage took place (the indexes are mostly organized in 5 year chunks. 1901-1903 has its own Bride’s Index, 1920-1929 is a ten year chunk, and starting in 1936 indexes are single year) or if the groom has an easy to misspell last name and the bride does not.
- Ancestry has the searchable versions of the above marriage indexes, plus births 1901-1903
Estate Records ca. 1670-December 1952

- The State Archives has Secretary of State’s Wills dating from the mid-1600’s to 1900 and 20th Century Wills (filed with the Superior Court) from 1901-1952.
- Probated Estate Records include Wills, Inventories, Administrations, and Guardianships.
- Wills are especially useful in identifying family members, but all Estate Records give you a date when the estate was probated.
- The year of probate is generally the same as when the person died, which may help you find a death record if the person died after May 1848.
- In the 20th Century, some Estate Records will give you an exact date of death.
- For relatives who died pre-May 1848, this may be your starting point to discover their exact date of death.
Estate Records ca. 1670-December 1952

- The Secretary of State’s Wills are indexed and abstracted in two publications: The Index of New Jersey Wills (all records through 1900) and the New Jersey Archives Series Calendar of New Jersey Wills (ca. 1670-1817). The State Library and State Archives both have these publications. In addition, they are digitized on Ancestry and on Google Books and Archive.org.

- There is a card catalog index for 1901-1952 wills available for in person use at the State Archives.

- If you can’t find anything in the state documents and your relative died after 1790, check the County Surrogate’s Index (name of this index varies county to county).
Useful Print Resources here at the Library

We have an extensive family history section, which makes up about a third of our book collection, plus secondary resources for several other states and countries. In addition, we have newspapers and City Directories available on microfilm. You may search the library catalog online for newspapers and books (City Directories have a separate catalog) at www.njstatelib.org, or through the Genealogy Research Guide. The publications below are mostly indexes to primary resources or transcriptions

- Our Brothers Gone Before (A973.7 E1921)-genealogical information taken from NJ Civil War Soldier’s Graves
- White’s Genealogical Abstracts of Revolutionary War Pension Files (A973.33 W588)-genealogical information taken from Revolutionary War Patriot soldiers, also give pension number
- Index to New Jersey Wills-Index to Secretary of State’s wills ca. 1670-1900 over at the Archives, excellent to check if someone died pre-1900
- Index to the Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey (A974.9 G323 Index)-contains transcribed historical records recorded by Members of the Genealogical Society of New Jersey. These are awesome resources for researchers looking for ancestors prior to May 1848.
How to Search for Print Materials from www.njstatelib.org

On the main page, scroll down to Catalog Searches and Tools. Click “NJSL Catalog” (this will restrict to library owned materials only). Enter search terms and click “search”). Click Advanced Search to enter the catalog proper and use additional search terms.
Useful State Library E-Resources

Any of these databases may be accessed here at the library with your state library card, or if you are a state employee, remotely with your state library card (except Ancestry, which is in-house use only). FamilySearch.org can be accessed for free anywhere.

- Heritage Quest has scanned Revolutionary War pensions and searchable town and family history books
- FamilySearch has (and is currently adding) digitized NJ County Records (including marriages), State Census Records (1905, 1915), and NJ vital records indexes (including May 1848-December 1900 State vital records)
- Ancestry has numerous useful primary document collections. If you are looking to see if the site has a particular record group, use the New Collections function (collection does not have to be new) to look for it. Particularly useful are the censuses and the Social Security Death Index (1935-2014).
- NewsBank has the Historic Trenton Times database, if the ancestor of interest was from this area. Great for searching obituaries
- The Library’s City Directory collection is listed in its own catalog (not in the library catalog), which you may access either from the library’s homepage (select dropdowns: Research Library, About our Collections, Genealogy and History, City Directories) or the Genealogy Research Guide.
How to Access Databases from www.njstatelib.org

From the main page, click “Research Library”, “Electronic Resources”, and “Databases”. From the Database page, you may browse databases by title or select a subject. For Ancestry, HeritageQuest, and FamilySearch, select Genealogy. For NewsBank, select Newspapers.
Useful Research Guides

• The Genealogy Research Guide has all of the information I’ve provided here, plus more.
• Includes information about library’s holdings, NJSA’s holdings, and County holdings and searchable online indexes, plus handouts and information sheets
• The Newspaper Research Guide has our complete newspaper holdings for both modern and historic newspapers, with breakdowns by county
• In addition, the guide links to our Newspaper databases, other online resources, and reference materials online or here at the library
How to access Research Guides from www.njstatelib.org

Click “Research Library” and select “Research Guides”. An alphabetical listing of the guides will appear.
Genealogy Research Guide

Genealogy: Home

Welcome! My name is Regina, I'm the Genealogy Librarian at the New Jersey State Library. Researching your family history can be a lot of fun, but it can also be hard work and overwhelming, especially when you're just starting out. My goal is to make you feel comfortable and confident in understanding the resources available to you here at the Library, and also at the State Archives and other New Jersey Repositories!

Basic Advice

- Your main focus should be to locate a birth, marriage, and death record for each family member.
- Always start with yourself and work backwards (birth-death) for each previous generation.
- If you can't find a vital record, use other primary documents (official or private records produced during a person's lifetime) such as census records to help you narrow down a time period. Records repositories are most likely to have these types of documents.
- Secondary resources, such as family or town histories, may also be used to help you in your search. The New Jersey State Library has a limited collection of primary documents, and a large collection of secondary resources.

Genealogy Librarian

Regina Fitzpatrick

Primary Document Example

Quit Claim by Bennie [Cowen] to Benjamin Hull June 16, 1701 New Jersey State Archives Early Land Records volume AAA p.29

The document names Bennie's father as Joshua and mentions a prior land transaction between the

Newspapers: Home

Guide to NJSL's print newspaper subscriptions, historic newspapers on microfilm, and newspaper databases.

About the Newspaper Collection at the New Jersey State Library

Welcome to the New Jersey State Library Newspaper Research Guide.

- Newspapers and microfilm are located on the 4th floor of the library.
- The NJ State Library currently receives about 10 NJ newspapers representing a wide range of geographic regions throughout the state. We also receive 4 national papers.
- About 70 other newspapers are available on microfilm.
- NJ State Library Newspapers Organized by County.

- Find a subject index to the Newspaper Caption File covering the 1950s to the 1960s for several major NJ papers. More information about the clipping file can be found in the latest Current Newspapers section.
- Please note that there are some missing newspaper issues/microfilm rolls in the collection. Please call ahead to verify that a newspaper or microfilm you need is available before traveling to the library.

New Jersey Newspapers Currently in Print

- Asbury Park Press / January 1988 - current
- Cape May County Herald Times / most recent 4 months
- Courier-Press (Camden) / most recent 4 months
- Daily Journal (Glenweb) / most recent 4 months
- Daily Record (Morristown) / most recent 4 months
- Herald News (Passaic County) / most recent 4 months
- Home News Tribune (Middlesex County) / most recent 4 months
- Hunterdon County Democrat / most recent 4 months
- Jersey Journal (Hudson County) / most recent 4 months
- Trenton Evening Times / most recent 4 months

New Jersey Digital Newspaper Project

An index of all known digitized newspapers published in New Jersey. Search by county or map to find newspapers that have been digitized and those in process.

Martha Sullivan
Major Takeaways

- Always start with yourself and find vital records (birth, marriage, and death) for each prior generation in order (You, Parents, Grandparents, etc.)
- For your first NJSA visit, focus your research on Vital Records starting in 1904 (these are the ones that are in alphabetical order by last name within the calendar year)
- Use the online indexes or digital collections (Ancestry, Family Search, etc.) at home or at your local public library if a Repository’s records are not available online (like the State Archives)
- Remember, the State Archives has digitized searchable indexes for Marriages May 1848-May 1878, Deaths May 1848-May 1878, and Deaths June 1878-June 1897. If you have a marriage or death within these timeframes, use these indexes over the May 1848-December 1900 Family Search indexes, because the year will be accurate (and you can order the record straight from the index!).
- Ancestry has NJ Vital Records Indexes, Federal Population Census Records (1790-1940), the SSDI (for deaths after 1934), and the 1855-1915 NJ State Censuses
- HeritageQuest has Rev War Pensions and digitized family and town histories
- Family Search has an index which includes NJ Vital Records May 1848-December 1900, plus the NJ State Censuses
- Before visiting a repository, check their website, digital collections, and catalog. Build a laundry list of records you’d like to get with any relevant information
- If you need help or instruction from staff members, please ask. Both the Library and Archives staff are extremely nice and knowledgeable. We are here to help you 😊
Thank You!

• Questions? Contact me at 609-278-2640 x162 or by e-mail rfitzpatrick@njstatelib.org

• I welcome your feedback for both this presentation and the Genealogy Research Guide

• Please feel free to stop by the Reference Department on the 4th Floor, I look forward to helping you research your ancestors!