

Historical Resources in Saratoga County

Saratoga County offers many resources for researching local history and genealogy. A sampling of those resources were on display at a recent meeting of the Ballston Area History Roundtable at Brookside Museum in Ballston Spa. Five historians presented a brief overview of their collections in repositories in Ballston Spa and Saratoga Springs. The purpose of this blog is to summarize those resources and offer links and contact information for anyone interested in digging deeper into local or family history.

In Ballston Spa

Brookside Museum, the home of the Saratoga County Historical Society holds two of these collections. Heritage Hunters of Saratoga County maintains The Irena Wooten Research Room on the first floor of the Museum. It has a significant collection of resources to help folks research their family, home or business. Early tax records and maps, directories, indexes of probate records, deeds and cemeteries provide data to enhance material found in surname and locality files and published genealogies. The bookshelves in the room contain classic state genealogical compendiums, mainly from New York and the New England states; Journals, Periodicals and Genealogy Society newsletters; as well as books and resources on Saratoga County towns. Filing cabinets contain surname files and folders on local towns and villages. Contact Pat Peck for further information on the Research room at patpeck2@verizon.net or visit the Heritage Hunters on-line resources at <http://saratoganygenweb.com/>

The archives of the Saratoga County Historical Society are located on the second floor of the museum. SCHS cares for over 25,000 historic artifacts that tell Saratoga County's story. The collections are stored on-site in a secure and environmentally controlled environment in an historic building erected in 1792. SCHS is committed to making collections accessible while balancing preservation needs. SCHS strongly encourage historical research using their collections. Collection items are available for viewing by appointment but often the most efficient approach is to search the database first at <http://brookside.pastperfectonline.com>. From there you can use key words to search the archives, library, photos and objects in the Museum collection. To view the material, note the catalogue number and contact Anne Clothier at Brookside Museum 518-885-4000 or e-mail the museum at info@brooksidemuseum.org

Also located in Ballston Spa are the collections maintained by Saratoga County, including the office of the Saratoga County Historian, Lauren Roberts who can be reached at (518)-884-4749 or by e-mail lroberts@saratogacountyny.gov. The Saratoga County Historian's Office is open to the public for research three days a week (Tuesday - Thursday) and also answers inquiries through phone or email requests. If you are planning to visit the office, please make an appointment prior to your arrival. While vital records are not held at the county level, there are several collections in the office that contain genealogical information important to family

history researchers. Some of their most-used collections include our surname files, the Henry C. Ritchie Saratoga County Families Collection and our historic landownership maps. Town files, subject files and our historic map collection are used frequently by visitors. For more information visit <https://www.saratogacountyny.gov/departments/county-historian/>

Other records held by the county are land records dating back to 1791, which are obtainable through the County Clerk's Office and can be accessed online by applying through their website. <https://www.saratogacountyny.gov/saratoga-county-clerk/> Select "on-line records application" to obtain access to Saratoga County Deeds and other court records. You can also view these files in person at the County Clerk's office, 40 McMaster Street, Ballston Spa.

Another important collection, held in Saratoga County Surrogate's Court, is the wills and estate files also dating back to 1791. They are located in Building 3 of the Saratoga County Complex and can be reached by phone (518) 884-4722 for further information on access. The Saratoga County Historian's Office also holds records related to other county institutions including the Saratoga County Homestead and the Saratoga County Poor House.

In Saratoga Springs

The Saratoga Springs City Archives is located at the Visitor's Center across from Congress Park. Under the direction of City Historian Mary Ann Fitzgerald, the archives contains a large collection of public and private records of Saratoga Springs dating back to 1819. The collection includes town board minutes and tax records; civil and criminal court records; election returns, and city department records.

The second floor of the Visitor's Center contains community files on buildings and architecture, local businesses organizations, religion, scrapbooks that include articles on historical event in the city, and a large map collection. The best way to begin research using these records is to consult *A Guide to the Archives* located on the Saratoga Springs web site <http://www.saratoga-springs.org/263/History> For further information, contact Mary Ann Fitzgerald at (518)-587-2358 or by e-mail her at maryann.fitzgerald@saratoga-springs.org

Located on the second floor of Saratoga Springs Public Library, the Saratoga Room houses an extensive collection of books on local and New York State history, pamphlets, clippings, photographs, prints, posters, scrapbooks, maps, audio-visual materials, and other written sources that tell the story of Saratoga Springs' colorful and unique history. Also available are vertical files of materials on subjects such as people, buildings and sites, streets and neighborhoods, businesses, organizations, horse racing, gambling, mineral springs, etc. Access to on-line databases such Ancestry.com, HeritageQuest are available to library members, while New York Heritage, and The Empire Archival Discovery Cooperative collections can be accessed by anyone via the library catalogue. Saratoga Springs City Directories beginning in 1868 and microfilm access to the *Saratogian* from 1856 are also available at the library.

To assist those interested in Genealogy research, the Saratoga Room has indexes to Saratoga County deeds, Surrogate Court files obtainable at the County offices in Ballston Spa, as well as a card catalog of Revolutionary War soldiers, and an index to Durkee's epitaphs from Saratoga County cemeteries.

The Saratoga Room is open six days a week but only evenings on Tuesday and Thursday. Staff is available during their posted public hours to assist visitors with their research. For further information and hours, visit the Library web site https://www.sspl.org/research/local_history/ or contact Lorie Weis at (518) 584-7860 ext. 255, or E-mail the Saratoga Room at sar-history@sals.edu

These resources represent the starting point for the research of local history and genealogy in Saratoga County. Other sources include local libraries throughout the county as well as town historians and town clerk's offices. Any questions concerning the accuracy of the information contained in this article, please contact the BAHR coordinator Jim Richmond at jrichmo1@nycap.rr.com