



NYC Historical Vital Records Online

Finding the Big Apple on the Family Tree

BY JOE GRANDINETTI

THE NEW YORK CITY MUNICIPAL ARCHIVES RECENTLY UNVEILED an online (and freely accessible!) resource of historical NYC birth, marriage, and death records. The current release has over 9 million digitized records and will eventually expand to 13.3 million when the project is complete, covering the wide timespan of 1760-1949. The bulk of material starts in the mid-1800s, naturally there are some gaps, and birth records cutoff at 1909. Go to <https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/> to check it all out. The Archives are a division of the City's Department of Records and Information Services, and their main purpose is to preserve, conserve, and digitize – music to a family historian's ears! On the website, you can also learn about other collections and galleries, and read their blog.

Scrollers can use the “browse” option for viewing the records on the website. For those preferring a more strategic approach, the absolute best way to search the platform is by the vital record's certificate number. The search function section is housed at <https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/search> and offers a concise overview with tips and explains that the eventual search-by-name feature is in Beta mode (as of the time of this writing). You can look for your chosen ancestor's certificate number in a few spots. One is at Familysearch.org, via their compilation of NYC vital record databases at www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/New_York_City,_New_York,_Online_Genealogy_Records. Ancestry.com subscribers should go to www.ancestry.com/search/categories/34/ to locate certificate numbers by way of their vast collection of extracted indexes. To make things even easier, Stephen Morse has “One Step” utilities to efficiently access these:

Births: <https://stevemorse.org/vital/nybirth-igg.html>

Marriages: <https://stevemorse.org/vital/nymarriages-igg.html>

Deaths: <https://stevemorse.org/vital/nydeath-igg.html>

New York City comprises five boroughs: Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island. In the online collection, Brooklyn and Staten Island are also referred to by their county names, Kings and Richmond, respectively. The boroughs have a small geographic

footprint – about 320 square miles – but there may be genealogic footprints of your ancestors within. The overwhelming majority of immigrants arriving in the U.S. during the era of the online vital records, stepped off at NYC ports – sometimes in hurried transit to ultimate destinations, and other times not. Add to these, the waves who stepped through NYC, residing, short- or long-term, in city limits for school, work, love, wanderlust, etc. Births, marriages, and deaths (and vital records) ensued.

I read the news of this online release and initially didn't think my research would benefit much from it. I come from long lines of rural dwellers, with recent generations of suburbanites. What could I possibly find in this metropolis-centered database?

Among the nagging “hints” in the family tree I keep between Family Tree Maker and Ancestry.com, was the 1925 death (in Brooklyn?) of Maria Concetta Grandinetti LaPiana, a sister of my great grandfather, Vito. Maria and her husband Francesco arrived in the U.S. in 1890 and settled in Danbury, Connecticut. I'd always assumed that they remained in the area, based on their children's Connecticut residencies/deaths