

Ontario County - The Way We Were

Established in 1789, Ontario County encompassed all of western New York State from the Pre-emption line to Lake Erie and from Lake Ontario to the Pennsylvania border. Now fourteen separate counties, the early history of this vast area is retained in the records of the parent County.

The Hartford Treaty of 1786 settled the conflicting claims of Massachusetts and New York, awarding political sovereignty to New York and the right of pre-empting and selling the Iroquois-controlled land to Massachusetts. In 1787, Massachusetts sold its rights to the six-million acre tract to Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham. The 1788 Buffalo Creek Treaty, negotiated by Phelps, eliminated the native American claim to the 2,250,000 acre eastern portion. The western part reverted to Massachusetts ownership and was later sold to Pennsylvania financier Robert Morris.

Phelps and Gorham surveyed the Purchase into ranges and townships, establishing the first land office of its kind in Canandaigua. Settlers from eastern New York and New England poured into the County, attracted by fertile soil, temperate climate and low prices. As the population increased, the New York State Legislature subdivided the land and created new counties. Thus Steuben was taken off in 1796, Genesee in 1802, Livingston and Monroe in 1821, and Wayne and Yates in 1823.

The history of the Ontario County pioneers may be found in the holdings of the Ontario County Records and Archives Center. Assessment records for Genesee in 1800 and Boyle in 1813, the deed of Mary Jemison from the Seneca Nation, and the 1809 petition for dowry restoration by widow Triphena Stewart are examples of County records.

DIRECTIONS TO THE ONTARIO COUNTY RECORDS AND ARCHIVES CENTER

The Ontario County Records and Archives Center is located in the County Complex at Hopewell off of County Road #46.

From the Thruway:

Take the Canandaigua Exit (Route 332). Follow Route 332 to Canandaigua (Main Street). Turn left on Phelps Street (by the Fire House). Phelps Street will become County Road #46. After crossing Smith Road, watch on the right for the entrance to the County Complex in Hopewell (about three miles from Canandaigua Main Street). Follow the signs to the Records and Archives Center.

From Geneva:

Take Route #5 and 20 West toward Canandaigua. Turn right on Freshour Road. Turn left at County Road #46. Turn left into the County Complex in Hopewell. Follow the signs to the Records and Archives Center.

Telephone #: (585) 396-4376

FAX #: (585) 396-4390

E-Mail Address:

hans.finke@co.ontario.ny.us

Web Site Address:

<http://raims.com/>

The Ontario County Records and Archives Center

3051 County Complex Drive
County Complex at Hopewell
Canandaigua, New York 14424
(585) 396-4376

A Researcher's Guide

*To the archival holdings of the
Records and Archives Center of
Ontario County, New York*

Holdings of the Ontario County Records and Archives Center

Deeds to Real Estate Properties (1789 - 2002)

An important historical research source, particularly for the early years when Ontario County included all of western New York. The Deeds include the original divisions of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase.

Mortgages (1789 - 1947)

A significant source for socio-economic and family history.

Assessment Rolls (1790 - 1993)

The very early holdings are spotty. However, these records, combined with Deeds and Mortgages, permit a study of economic growth and government functions. Sometimes Assessment Rolls give clues in family history that cannot be found in other sources. For instance, a rise in assessment usually means that a house was built.

Surrogate Court Records (1789 - 1975)

This is a treasure trove of information for virtually all aspects of social, economic and family history. Files often include inventories of personal property and debts. The wills and associated papers permit a study of family relationships. These records are indexed by name.

Guardianship Records (1789 - 1929)

Records usually associated with the administration of estates on behalf of minors.

Naturalization Records (1803 - 1956)

Holdings include Declarations of Intent, Petitions for Citizenship, and Naturalization Certificates. This is a very important series for the study of immigration, ethnic, as well as family history. Index on Internet.

Military Records

Holdings include Revolutionary War pension records, some early militia records, and 1862, 1864 and 1917 draft lists. Most of these indexes can be seen on the Internet home page.

County Court Records

An interesting series that includes litigations as well as other court actions. These records are only partially accessible through indexes, and work is in progress by the staff.

Marriage Records (1908 - 1935)

A relatively short run of marriage records, indexed by bride and groom. Records from other years are held by municipalities, not the County.

Federal Census Records (1790 - 1930)

The Records and Archives Center has various volumes in hard copy, but all enumerations for Ontario County are available on microfilm. 1790 - 1820, 1850, 1860, and 1870 are indexed. 1820, 1850, 1860, and 1870 are available on the Internet.

New York State Census Records

Available for 1845 (Canandaigua heads of household), 1855, 1865, 1875, 1892, 1905, 1915, and 1925. 1845, 1855, 1865, and part of 1875 are indexed and available on the Internet.

Maps

A variety of maps is available, including the 1874 and 1904 Ontario County Atlas, that show lot numbers, school districts, and landowners; a 1859 wall map showing landowners, and 1851, 1889 and 1908 maps of Canandaigua with street names and owners. An 1856 map of the Town of Seneca and Geneva Village shows owners. NY State and vicinity in 1822 indicates migration routes.

Jury Lists

Various indexed Jury lists are available for the 19th century. Often, these lists show occupations. Index available on the Internet.

Poor House Indentures

This 19th and early 20th century series is a list of children indentured to families in Ontario County. Index available on the Internet.

Records Not Held by the County

New York State did not require vital records until 1880. Ontario County Records and Archives DOES NOT hold birth and death records, and has marriage records only for the years listed. These records are held by the individual municipalities. The Records and Archives Center is a government department and does not collect private records such as newspapers, cemetery lists, diaries or letters. Contact the appropriate historical societies for these records.

Restricted Records

The Records and Archives Center is the depository of inactive records from all County departments. The departments retain ownership and individuals have to apply to the appropriate departments for access permission. Some records, such as adoptions, are severely restricted and opened only by court order.

-
- Copying Service available for \$.50 per page.
 - Research services available for \$40.00 per hour.
 - Subject to change without notice.