

An Update from NJSL's Genealogy Librarian, Regina Fitzpatrick

About NJSL Services for Libraries

Julia Giantomasi January 6, 2025

Increase in Genealogy Research Assistance Requests at the New Jersey State Library

A message from Genealogy Research
Librarian, Regina Fitzpatrick:

The Increase

We took a look back over the past year, and found that there was a spike in Genealogy Research during the Summer months. From July-September 2024, I was delighted to assist several researchers exploring their family histories. From very basic requests for specific record types or contact information for a repository, to complex questions that required a good deal of research, I responded to a total of 47 Genealogy requests over the course of these three months. I had an almost daily streak of researching or responding to these questions. My number of Genealogy requests October-December 2024 is 30, by contrast.

Types of Questions

The time periods covered by my July-September questions ranged from the 1600's to the present day. Most questions related to individuals who were from New Jersey and lived here during the 1800's or very early 1900's. Many of the researchers were looking for ways to identify parents of an individual ancestor,

so that they could trace the line further back. For the record, the best way to do this if your ancestor lived after May 1848, is to check their death certificate, which may list parents' names. If your ancestor died before May 1848, estate papers or deed records or court cases may also provide this information.

Interesting Examples

I want to close with three examples of the interesting questions I got during this time period. I hope this will give you an idea of the range of topics I covered, and some of the ways I can assist in connecting you to resources that may help answer your family history questions!

Example 1:

Half hour in person research consultation with patron looking for a family who lived in Sussex County in 1830 and hoping to determine how land was divided between two sisters. I also sent the patron an e-mail with resources they could access from home including digitized tax ratables, Early Land Records Database, Sussex Co Deeds on FamilySearch.org, and a history of Sussex County on Internet Archive. Also sent her two book lists relating to the family surnames of interest in our collection. I advised the patron to check the Genealogy Collection here for: our Tax Ratable index, Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey index, and Sussex County Genealogy Books. Also pulled a bound 1860 (reprint 1984) property map for them.

Example 2:

Patron researching great grandmother's father, who was part of a circus visiting Jersey City in 1913. I was not able to find any information on him, other than his name on the great grandmother's marriage certificate. Patron was also able to confirm that a circus with his surname was in Jersey City at the right time. Great Grandmother's mother may have died giving birth to her, and it's unclear whether or not she was married. I gave several research suggestions, including checking city directories, 1915 state census, WWI draft registrations, marriages, divorces, birth, and death records, both in NJ and NYC. Also suggested doing newspaper research via the Jersey Journal Archive.

Example 3:

I conducted an in-depth consultation with a researcher looking for the daughter and wife of Thomas Bloomfield, the founder of Woodbridge, NJ. The patron had information from Find a Grave and other internet resources that said he possibly settled in Massachusetts prior to coming to NJ. I was hoping to find proof of his wife's name and their marriage and confirm that her known

ancestor was their daughter. I gave the researcher a strategy for finding information about Thomas Bloomfield in our collection and four additional resources: Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey, Calendar of NJ Wills, Settlers of the Plantation of Piscataway and Woodbridge, and family histories to start with. Also gave the patron a brief tour of the genealogy collection, focusing on areas that would be useful for them to browse. I explained New Jersey State Archives' Early Land Records and Colonial Marriage Bonds databases and how to navigate to these from home, plus how to use the State Library's catalog to find family histories.

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