



National Archives Website For Genealogists

www.archives.gov

The easiest way for genealogists to gain access to the most useful features of the National Archives website is to select the **Genealogists** link in the lower left corner of the National Archives homepage (www.archives.gov).

The resulting **Resources for Genealogists Page** contains most of the useful links to research tools, resource lists, explanations of resources, and descriptions of records available on the website and they are grouped for your convenience.

Information About Universal Genealogical Sources and Other Topics

On the **Resources for Genealogists Page** locate the section entitled **Most Requested**. Here you will find links to explanatory articles describing what are sometimes referred to as Universal Genealogical Sources such as Census Records, Military Service Records, Immigration Records, Naturalization Records and Federal Land Records.

Guide to Federal Records

The Guide to Federal Records is a narrative general overview of the records held by the National Archives and reflects the organization of the records in the National Archives (see the National Archives Sample Records Organization Diagram). On the **Resources for Genealogists Page** click on the link entitled **Online Research Tools**. On the Resulting **Forms, Tools and Aids Page** select **Federal Records Guide**. On the resulting screen you can search by subject terms or names that appear in the index by clicking the link **Alphabetical Index to the Guide** and selecting a letter of the alphabet. You can also jump to the portion of the Guide that describes the records of a single agency, branch or department by typing in a record group number in the search box in the section entitled **Search the Guide** and clicking **GO**. If you click the link **Statistical Summary of Holdings by Record Group Number** you will see a list of the Agency, Branch, or Department names (with their assigned record group numbers) and also which National Archives unit holds what amount of records of that agency, branch or department. The Guide to Federal Records only

describes records in the National Archives in a general way (all record groups, many subgroups, and a large number of record series descriptions but no file unit or individual item descriptions). The Archival Research Catalog (ARC) provides much more detailed descriptions.

Microfilm Catalog

The Microfilm Catalog is the primary tool to assist you in locating specific microfilm publications of the National Archives, to learn more about the records in a microfilm publication, and to find out which repositories in the National Archives system hold which microfilm publications. On the **Resources for Genealogists Page** click on the link entitled **Online Research Tools**. On the resulting **Forms, Tools and Aids Page** select **Microfilm Catalog**.

If you wish to browse the Microfilm Catalog you should click the link **Browse NARA's Microfilm Catalog**. This will select all of the more than 3,000 microfilm publications and display them 100 publication titles per page.

If you wish to search the Microfilm Catalog you may enter a publication number in the search box and click **Search**. The system will return only the title of that particular publication. Similarly, you can also enter key words in the search box to describe the publication(s) you wish to locate. If needed, you can click on **Advanced Search** and the resulting search box will give additional search options.

Once you have arrived at a search results screen, either through a search or by browsing, the title of the publication or publications will be colored blue. If you click on your selected publication title you will be taken to the **Microfilm Publication Summary Page** for that publication title. On the right side of this page the National Archives repositories that hold this particular microfilm publication are listed. Above the list of repositories you will see the link **View Important Publication Details**. If you click on this link a new window will open to display a copy of the finding aid for this publication. Generally, this finding aid will provide background information about the records and list the contents of each roll in the microfilm publication.

Archival Research Catalog

The Archival Research Catalog (ARC) is the primary search tool to locate records held by the National Archives. ARC contains record group descriptions, subgroup descriptions, records series descriptions, file unit descriptions, and item level descriptions (see the National Archives Sample Records Organization Diagram). The Archival Research Catalog provides more detailed descriptions than the Guide to Federal Records. At present, about 65% of the holdings of the National Archives are described to the records series level in the Archival Research Catalog. It is growing rapidly but, as yet, it does not describe all of the records in the National Archives. On the **Resources for Genealogists Page** click on the link entitled **Online Research Tools**. On the resulting **Forms, Tools and Aids Page** select **Archival Research Catalog (ARC)**. This will bring you to the **Basic ARC Search Page** where you can initiate basic searches of the Archival Research Catalog using key words or phrases.

To perform an advanced search, click on **Search Options** from the **Basic ARC Search Page**. Then click on **Advanced Search** on the resulting page. This brings you to the **Advanced ARC Search**

Page. On this page you have a large number of options for your search. You can search by key words, exact phrases, ARC identifier number if you know it, types of records (such as photographs), or level of description. You can also limit the search to only specific years or only to specific archives repositories in the National Archives system (such as the National Archives at Riverside). Once you have entered your search criteria simply click **Search**. This will produce a **Search Results Summary Page(s)** listing the names of record descriptions. Unless you have specified the level of description you want, you could see the names of record group descriptions, subgroup descriptions, record series descriptions, file unit descriptions, and even descriptions of individual items.

When you click on one of these description names on the **Search Results Summary Page** you will see the detailed descriptive information related to these particular records. There are four main tabs for each record description (**Details, Scope and Content, Archived Copies, and Hierarchy**). If you click on each tab in turn you will see additional information about the records in question. In cases where all, or some, of the records pertaining to the selected description have been digitized, and the image has been linked to the description, there will also be a **Digital Copies** tab.

Records Digitized by Ancestry.com or Footnote.com

On the National Archives homepage (www.archives.gov) click on the link **Research Our Records**. Next, click the link **More** under the heading **News and Notices**. On the resulting page click on the link **List of NARA Microfilm Publications and Original Records Digitized by NARA's Digitization Partners**. When you click on this link you will see a list of National Archives microfilm publications and original records that have been digitized by Ancestry and Footnote.

Access to Archival Databases (AAD)

Access to Archival Databases (AAD) is the gateway to use of electronic records held by the National Archives. The National Archives holds over 200,000 data files containing an estimated 10 billion records. Only 475 of these data files have been mounted and are currently available to be used on the website. Some of these databases contain records that were originally created as computer files rather than paper. Some of these databases are indexes created to assist researchers locate specific information in original paper records and other traditional media. From the **Resources for Genealogists Page** click on the link entitled **Online Research Tools**. On the resulting **Forms, Tools and Aids Page** select **Access to Archival Databases (AAD)**. This will bring you to the **Database Selection and Search Page** where you can search for the database you need by key words or exact phrases, browse by the categories provided, or browse by subject. Once you locate the database you need you can then search that database for the information you seek.

National Personnel Records Center

Military Personnel Files dating from World War I to the present are housed at the Military Personnel Records (MPR) facility of the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri. This is a unit of the National Archives. There is a tremendous amount of information describing their holdings, procedures, and contact information at their portion of the National Archives website (www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel).

Civilian Personnel Files dating from 1900 to the present are housed at the Civilian Personnel Records (CPR) facility of the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri. This is a unit of the National Archives. Information describing their holdings, procedures, and contact information can be found at their portion of the National Archives website (www.archives.gov/st-louis/civilian-personnel).

Genealogy Support Pages

On the **Resources for Genealogists Page** locate the link entitled **Start Your Genealogy Research**. When you click on this link you will find information on how to get started with your research.

Locate the **Genealogy Related Articles** link in the lower center area of the **Resources for Genealogists Page**. When you click on this link you will find numerous links for research subject areas where you may find an article that will help you locate information that you seek.

Locate the link on the **Resources for Genealogists Page** entitled **Genealogy Workshops Nationwide**. When you click on this link you will find a calendar of genealogical workshops presented at National Archives facilities nationwide.

If You Have Questions About Federal Records,
Or Questions Relating to Your Research, You May
Send an Email to the National Archives at Riverside

riverside.archives@nara.gov



Join the National Archives at Riverside on Facebook! Join us to discuss the records of the National Archives and Records Administration. We look forward to sharing with you stories of individual people documented in our records and how to access them. We invite you to accompany us in this exploration of the documentary treasures preserved in the National Archives.