

Introduction to Genealogy at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) 2016 Virtual Genealogy Fair

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Federal Records for Genealogical Research

Laid side to side, pages in our holdings would circle the Earth over 57 times! Only a small percentage is available for research online—or even on microfilm. Our web site offers tools and guides to help locate records that may be useful to you.

Online Access – Digital images of many federal records commonly used for genealogical research can be found online at Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, Fold3.com, and HeritageQuest.com (through public library websites). Here are some of those records.

- 1. Federal Population Census, 1790–1940.** Taken every 10 years, census records are the basic building block for tracing a family through time. For more information, see www.archives.gov/research/census.
- 2. Compiled Military Service Records (CMSRs)** for veterans of conflicts from the Revolutionary War (1775–83) through Philippine Insurrection (1899–1902). Digital images are available online at Fold3.com for Revolutionary War, Civil War (Union—selected states), Civil War (Confederate), and Spanish-American War (Florida only). CMSRs for veterans of the War of 1812, Mexican War, Spanish-American War, and Philippine Insurrection must be ordered from NARA or viewed in the National Archives Building. For more information about Civil War CMSRs and other records, see www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/resources.html. For information about obtaining military records, see www.archives.gov/research/military.
- 3. Military pension records** for veterans of conflicts from the Revolutionary War through Philippine Insurrection. Digital images for Revolutionary War pensions, War of 1812 (selected files), and Civil War (Union—selected files) are online at Fold3.com.
Note: Confederate pensions are held by state archives. For more information, see www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/confederate/pension.html/
- 4. Military draft registration records.**
Civil War. See www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1994/winter/civil-war-draft-records.html for information. Digital images are available at Ancestry.com.
World War I. See www.archives.gov/research/military/ww1/draft-registration for information. Digital images are available at Ancestry.com.
World War II.

1st – 3rd Registrations: Online at Fold3.com as “WWII Draft Registration Cards.”

4th Registration (“Old Men”): See www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/draft-cards-fourth-registration.pdf for more information. Digital images are available on Ancestry.com Ancestry.com as “U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942” database, and on Fold3.com as “WWII “Old Man’s Draft” Registration Cards.”

5. **Immigration records.** Passenger lists of vessels arriving at seaports and lists of persons crossing the U.S.-Canada (1895–1950s) and U.S.-Mexico (1903–1950s) land borders document the arrival of aliens to the United States. See www.archives.gov/research/immigration/passenger-arrival.html for more information.
6. **Naturalization records.** Naturalization is the process by which an alien becomes an American citizen. Depending upon when the record was created, the record may provide a researcher with information such as a person's birth date and location, occupation, immigration year, marital status and spouse information, witnesses' names and addresses, and more. See www.archives.gov/research/naturalization/naturalization.html for more information.
7. **Federal land records** document the transfer of public lands from the U.S. Government to private ownership, whether by cash sale, homestead, or by a military bounty land warrant. See www.archives.gov/research/land/ for more information.
8. **Post Office Records** about the appointment of postmasters and other Post Office Department employee records. Some records are on microfilm, some are not. See www.archives.gov/research/federal-employees/reference-reports/515-post-office-employees.pdf for more information.
9. **Native American records** consist of lists, censuses, school records, and other materials about persons who maintained their affiliation with a Federally recognized tribe. See www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/ for more information.
10. **How Did *Your* Ancestor Interact with the Federal Government?** There may be a record.

Suggestions and Advice for Family History Researchers

1. **Start with yourself.** Organize your knowledge. Fill out a five-generation ancestry chart and a family group sheet for each ancestral couple. Organize and study any family papers you have.

Five-generation chart: archives.gov/research/genealogy/charts-forms/ancestral-chart.pdf

Family group sheet: archives.gov/research/genealogy/charts-forms/family-group-sheet.pdf

2. **Talk with your relatives.** They may know information about your ancestors that you do not know.
3. **Begin your census research with the 1940 census and work your way backwards. Find all members of the extended family for a complete picture of the family.** The more you know about the whole family, the easier it will be to work yourself around “brick walls.”
4. **Use the clues you find in one record to help you locate other records.** For example, the 1920 census might indicate your immigrant ancestor arrived in the U.S. in 1901 and naturalized in 1907. Those are good clues—but do not expect them to be 100% accurate.
5. **Census, military service, military pension, immigration, naturalization, and land records** are some of the most useful Federal Records for genealogical research. Other Federal records may be useful to you depending on what relationships your ancestors had with various federal agencies. Read more on the National Archives website, www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/index.html
6. **Birth and death records** have been kept by state bureaus of vital statistics since “about” 1900. (The year that state registration began varies by state.) Contact the state archives or appropriate state agency. Birth and death records before 1900 may have been kept at county records offices.
7. **Marriage, divorce, land, mortgage, tax, voter registration, and other records** were kept by county records offices. Contact the appropriate office or state or county archives. Some records may also be available on online or by microfilm rental through local Family History Centers. See <https://familysearch.org> for more information (click on “search” then “catalog” then do a place name search for the county).
8. **Libraries have local history and genealogy collections.** You will find published records of all types, compiled genealogies, and local newspapers on microfilm.
9. **Learn... then learn more....** Read books and online articles on how to do genealogical research. Join genealogical societies (national, state, and local, both where you live and where your ancestors lived). Attend your local genealogy society meetings and classes.
10. **The name may not be spelled in various records as you expect it to be spelled.** Be flexible. For example, Hayford might be Heyford, Hafford, Haford, Hefford, Heford, and so forth. Remember that immigrants’ first names may be in their native language, for example: John might be Jan, Ivan, Iwan, Johannes, Johann, and so forth, depending on his native language—or the native language of the person creating the record.
11. **Many people had the same or similar names** so do not assume that the person is your ancestor. Distinguish between same-named people based on all the clues from all the records you find. Does it make sense? If your ancestor “always” lived in Baltimore, he probably did not become naturalized in Nebraska....

- 12. Write your family history as you go....** Do not wait for someday. Analyzing what you have found and writing it down will help you become a better researcher. Share your writings with other family members. Publish in genealogical society publications.

The National Archives Website—An Overview

Laid side to side, pages in our holdings would circle the Earth over 57 times! Only a small percentage is available for research online—or even on microfilm. Our web site offers tools and guides to help you locate records that may be useful to you. To complete your research and use the records, you should want to visit us.

NARA Home Page at www.archives.gov

Splash page with lots of links to the most popular parts of the website

NARA Genealogy Home Page at www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/index.html

Reference Reports for Genealogical Research

www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/reference-reports.html

Charts and Forms for Genealogy at www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/charts-forms/

NARA 1940 Census Page at 1940census.archives.gov/

NARA 1940 Census Information at www.archives.gov/research/census/1940/

***Guide to Federal Records in the National Archives of the United States* (Washington, DC, 1995), 3 vols., free online version at www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records**

National Archives Catalog at www.archives.gov/research/catalog. Online catalog of NARA's nationwide holdings, with more than 40 million catalog entries, including digital images of records that are not on other websites. The content continues to grow.... Do visit annually....

Access to Archival Databases (AAD) System at www.archives.gov/aad has about 475 data files. AAD gives you:

- * Access to over 85 million historic electronic records created by more than 30 agencies of the U.S. federal government and from collections of donated historical materials.
- * Both free-text and fielded searching options.
- * The ability to retrieve, print, and download records with the specific information that you seek.
- * Information to help you find and understand the records.
- * AAD highlights: Various series regarding military personnel in World War II, Korean Conflict, and Vietnam Conflict; also Irish Famine Immigrants (1840s).

NARA – How to Obtain Copies of Records at www.archives.gov/research/order/#genie

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Tells you your options: online, by mail, in person, by hiring a private researcher....

NARA – Order Online! at <https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline>

“Made to order” reproductions of original records are done in specific response to information you provide during the ordering process for these records:

*Census Pages

*Military Service and Pension Records

*Immigration Records

*Native American Records

*Land Files

Microfilm Catalog: (Order Online) at <https://eservices.archives.gov/orderonline/>

Our microfilm catalog is online. Click on the microfilm tab. Using advanced search, you can search for microfilm by number, title, keyword, record group, and other features. When you find a title of interest, click on the title, then click on important publication details, which will allow you to download a PDF file of the descriptive pamphlet or roll list. Note: You do NOT have to register or buy anything.

New NARA Microfilm Publications Issued from 2000 to 2011, begin on the 2011 page at www.archives.gov/genealogy/microfilm/2011.html and you can go to previous years from there. The current year (and previous years) are updated from time to time. This will help you figure out what is new.

General Information Leaflet 17, Citing Records in the National Archives of the United States, www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/17-citing-records.pdf will help you craft a citation so that you and future researchers find that great nugget again.

Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration is our magazine full of articles featuring records in our custody. Every issue has an article about genealogy. www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/

Prologue Genealogy Notes Page

www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/genealogy-notes.html . If you do not read *Prologue*, you are missing a great deal of useful information about unique and useful records.

NARA Archives Library Information Center (ALIC) at www.archives.gov/research/alic/ is more than a traditional library. ALIC provides access to information on American history and government, archival administration, information management, and government documents. Physical library locations are in the National Archives Buildings in Washington, DC, and in College Park, MD.

Guides to Research by Selected Topic at www.archives.gov/research/topics/index.html

Links to information about selected topics in NARA records. Please note that this represents only a small fraction of possible research topics in the records of the National Archives.

NARA’s Regional Archives Selected Guides and Research Aids at

www.archives.gov/research/guides/regional-resource-aids.html links you to lots of guide to records held by our 13 Regional Archives.

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NARA Publications Home Page at www.archives.gov/publications/
Links you to information about free and fee publications from NARA.

NARA Published In-Print or Online Finding Aids at www.archives.gov/publications/finding-aids.html
Links to available Guides, Inventories, Preliminary Inventories, Reference Information Papers, and Special Lists.

NARA Digital Classroom (Educators and Students) Homepage at www.archives.gov/education/
The Teaching with Documents link gets you to lesson plans on various aspects of U.S. history. Brush up on your own education and see some great historical records here.

NARA Calendar of Events at www.archives.gov/calendar lists upcoming speakers, movies, and more!

NARA Online Exhibit Hall at www.archives.gov/exhibits

Index to the Final Rolls of Citizens and Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory (Dawes Roll) at www.archives.gov/research/arc/native-americans-final-rolls.html

Index to the Applications Submitted for the Eastern Cherokee Roll of 1909 (Guion Miller Roll)
www.archives.gov/research/arc/native-americans-guion-miller.html

World War II Casualty Lists at www.archives.gov/research/arc/ww2/

Blogs about records in various parts of the National Archives
www.archives.gov/social-media/blogs.html

National Archives on.....

Facebook–US National Archives

www.facebook.com/pages/Nationwide/US-National-Archives/128463482993

Facebook–Research at the US National Archives

www.facebook.com/pages/Research-at-the-US-National-Archives/129424269765

Flickr – www.flickr.com/photos/usnationalarchives/

Twitter – twitter.com/archivesnews

YouTube – www.youtube.com/USNationalArchives

What’s on “Partner” sites—(some of the) Microfilm Publications and Original Records Digitized by Our Digitization Partners are listed at www.archives.gov/digitization/digitized-by-partners.html