Resources for Genealogists

Are you a genealogist, or interested in researching your family history? The National Archives holds many valuable records that can help you research your family history. These include pension files, Census records, military personnel files, ship passenger lists, naturalization records, and Freedmen’s Bureau materials.

Descriptions of many of these records are available in the Catalog for researchers. We’ve recently updated our Catalog Guide for Genealogists to provide more information about the records available in the Catalog and search tips. Descriptions in the Catalog may not include all individuals’ names found in a record, it may be necessary to closely read records of interest to see if a particular individual is mentioned. Take a look at our search tips and strategies and let us know what you think! What records have you found most helpful when researching family history?
New in the Catalog for Genealogists

We are working hard to add new records to the Catalog each week! Here are a few recently added series of records that are helpful to genealogists:

Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Boston, Massachusetts, 1/10/1944 - 11/30/1954

This series consists of ship passenger forms provided to the Immigration and Naturalization Service by shipmasters, and were normally filled out by the bursar or senior steward. Typical information includes the name of the ship and shipmaster, ports of arrival and embarkation, and dates of arrival (and occasionally of departure). Passenger lists provide the full name, age, sex, marital status, occupation, citizenship (nationality), last place of residence, final destination, and, if an immigrant were going to join a relative, that person's name, address, and relationship to the passenger. Some manifests indicate the cabin number and class. Later lists may include passport numbers and/or types of visas.
Passenger and Crew Manifests of Airplanes Arriving at Boston, Massachusetts, 2/13/1945 - 11/29/1954

This series of airline passenger and crew manifests consists of forms submitted to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) by the captain of each airplane that last departed from a foreign airport and, sometimes, from a U.S. airport. Both the airline passenger and crew manifests contain the aircraft identification, captain's name, date and airport of departure, and date of U.S. arrival (and occasionally of departure). For each alien or citizen passenger, the record usually provides the person's name; citizenship; U.S. address; passport, visa, or other immigration document number; and may note the person's date and place of birth, destination, and baggage details. For each crew member, the record usually provides the person's name; position on the airplane; citizenship; passport, visa, or other immigration document number; and may note age and gender.
Case Files of Approved Pension Applications of Widows and Other Dependents of Civil War and Later Navy Veterans, ("Navy Widows' Certificates"), 1861-1910.
(2 series, Microfilm Publication M1279)

This series consists of approximately 20,000 approved pension application files of widows and other dependents of U.S. Navy veterans who served between 1861 and 1910. An approved pension application file consists of the applications of one or more claimants.
based on the service of a single veteran, documents submitted as evidence of identity and service, and papers showing actions taken by the Government concerning the claim or claims.

Genealogy Fair

Did you know? The National Archives hosts an annual Genealogy Fair, featuring presentations by National Archives staff and experts on researching family history. These presentations are recorded and can be accessed anytime on our Genealogy Fair webpage. View recordings of past presentations and get a jump start on your research!

2017 National Archives Virtual Genealogy Fair

Other Learning Resources:

- More resources for Genealogists
- Videos from our Virtual Genealogy Fair
- Videos from our "Know Your Records" series
- History Hub

Access to Archival Databases
In a recent newsletter, we put a spotlight on electronic records at the National Archives. Have you ever used Access to Archival Databases (AAD) for your genealogical research? AAD is an excellent resource for researching family history. It is free to use and offers online search and retrieval access to a selection of NARA's accessioned electronic records in databases. You can find Passenger List data, military personnel information, records of Prisoners of War, as well as data from the Social Security Administration's Numerical Identification Files (NUMIDENT), which is similar to the data found in the Social Security Death Index.

More records in AAD of interest to genealogists include:

- Some records of passengers who arrived at the ports of Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans, New York, and Philadelphia during the 19th century
- Index to the Gorgas Hospital mortuary records
- World War II Army enlistment records, including for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps
- World War II prisoners of war records
- Records about Japanese Americans relocated during World War II
- World War II duty locations of naval intelligence personnel attached to Naval Group China
- Korean War casualty records, including prisoners of war records
- Vietnam War casualty records, including prisoners of war records
- Records of military operations during the Vietnam War
- Telegrams from the Department of State's Central Foreign Policy File, 1973-1976

Have you used AAD for your genealogical research? Let us know how it’s helped you!

Have a question? Find answers on History Hub!
History Hub is a support community for history enthusiasts, researchers, citizen archivists, family historians, and archival professionals. Visit us at now at history.gov!

Questions or comments? Email us at catalog@nara.gov.