

# NARA MYTHBUSTERS

## YOUR FAMILY IS IN THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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**Introduction:** “All the military records were burned in the fire.” “There isn’t any birth, marriage or death information in federal records.” “There aren’t any details about ordinary families at the National Archives.” These kinds of myth-statements stop genealogists from breaking down all kinds of brick walls using the wealth of information in NARA records.

### OUR ANCESTORS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The myth-conceptions about our ancestors and the records of the federal government are pervasive. We hear it over and over: “There’s nothing for me at the National Archives.” And nothing could be further from the truth.

Because of the myriad ways in which every family interacts with government at all levels, we need to become NARA Mythbusters and go after all kinds of records held at the National Archives and Records Administration — NARA, for short. And when we do, we discover that the truth is that information that’s critical to us as genealogists about your family, my family, and **every** family, really **is** in the National Archives.



First, use the NARA catalog: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

Also check *Guide to Federal Records in the National Archives of the United States*, online at <https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/>

### CHECKLIST: WAYS OUR ANCESTORS GOT INTO FEDERAL RECORDS

Consider these time periods and these types of activities and see all the different ways your ancestors might have gotten themselves into federal records:

#### 18<sup>th</sup> Century (from the Revolution to 1799)

- ❖ Revolutionary War service records and muster rolls
- ❖ Revolutionary War bounty land records

- ❖ Revolutionary War pension applications (including for widows and orphans of Revolutionary War soldiers)
- ❖ Navy Personnel Records
- ❖ Piracy cases

### **19<sup>th</sup> Century (1800-1899)**

- ❖ War of 1812 service records
- ❖ War of 1812 bounty land records
- ❖ War of 1812 pension records
- ❖ Mexican War records
- ❖ Indian bounty land records
- ❖ Land records [cash and credit sales, homesteads, etc.]
- ❖ Civil War draft and service records
- ❖ Civil War medical records
- ❖ Civil War pension records
- ❖ Civil War tax records
- ❖ Records of the Confederacy
- ❖ Freedmen's Bureau Records for former slaves and slaveowners alike
- ❖ Southern Claims Commission files
- ❖ Spanish-American War records
- ❖ Spanish-American War pensions

### **20<sup>th</sup> Century (since 1900)**

- ❖ Boxer Rebellion records
- ❖ World War I draft registrations
- ❖ World War I service records [*No, not everything burned in the fire!*]
- ❖ World War I Gold Star Mothers program
- ❖ Civilian Conservation Corps records
- ❖ Tennessee Valley Authority records
- ❖ U.S. Army service records and burial records
- ❖ World War II selective service records
- ❖ World War II Army Enlistment Records Files
- ❖ World War II service records [*No, not everything burned in the fire!*]
- ❖ Railroad Retirement Board records

### **Any time in American history**

- ❖ Birth, marriage or death overseas
- ❖ Passport applications
- ❖ Claims against the Government
- ❖ Civilian employment by the government
- ❖ Legislative petitions and records of private laws
- ❖ Federal Copyright Act filings
- ❖ Federal Patent Act filings
- ❖ Bankruptcy case files
- ❖ Prosecutions for federal crimes
- ❖ Postmaster records
- ❖ Records of post roads and post office locations
- ❖ Weather reports

## FINDING FEDERAL RECORDS

### NARA'S LIST OF KEY RECORD GROUPS FOR GENEALOGISTS

<b>NARA RG</b>	<b>Subject</b>
15	Veterans Administration
28	Post Office Department
29	Bureau of the Census
49	Bureau of Land Management
59	General Records of the Department of State
85	Immigration and Naturalization Service
117	American Battle Monuments Commission
147	Selective Service System, 1940-
163	Selective Service System (World War I)
210	War Relocation Authority
231	U.S. Soldiers' Home

### OTHER RECORD GROUPS NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED

<b>NARA RG</b>	<b>Subject</b>
21	District Courts of the United States
24	Bureau of Naval Personnel
27	Weather Bureau
35	Civilian Conservation Corps
36	U.S. Customs Service
38	Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
46	U.S. Senate
58	Internal Revenue Service
60	General Records, U.S. Department of Justice
65	Federal Bureau of Investigation
75	Bureau of Indian Affairs
93	War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records
94	Adjutant General's Office
105	Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands
109	War Department Collection of Confederate Records
110	Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau
118	U.S. Attorneys & Marshals
123	U.S. Court of Claims
129	U.S. Bureau of Prisons
142	Tennessee Valley Authority
184	Railroad Retirement Board
204	Office of the Pardon Attorney
205	Court of Claims Section (Justice)
233	U.S. House of Representatives
241	Patent and Trademark Office
267	Supreme Court of the United States
276	U.S. Courts of Appeals

See also the new <https://www.archives.gov/findingaid/record-group-explorer>

## WHERE THE RECORDS ARE HELD TODAY

<b>NARA Facility</b>	<b>Address, Website</b>
Archives I	700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20408 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/washington/">https://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/washington/</a>
Archives II	8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/">https://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/</a>
Atlanta	5780 Jonesboro Road, Morrow, GA 30260 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/atlanta/">https://www.archives.gov/atlanta/</a>
Boston	380 Trapelo Road Waltham, Massachusetts 02452-6399 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/boston/">https://www.archives.gov/boston/</a>
Chicago	7358 South Pulaski Road, Chicago, IL 60629-5898 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/chicago/">https://www.archives.gov/chicago/</a>
Denver	17101 Huron Street, Broomfield, CO 80023 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/denver/">https://www.archives.gov/denver/</a>
Fort Worth	1400 John Burgess Drive, Fort Worth, Texas 76140 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/fort-worth/">https://www.archives.gov/fort-worth/</a>
Kansas City	400 West Pershing Road, Kansas City, MO 64108-4306 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/kansas-city/">https://www.archives.gov/kansas-city/</a>
Philadelphia	14700 Townsend Road, Philadelphia, PA 19154-1096 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/philadelphia/">https://www.archives.gov/philadelphia/</a>
Riverside	23123 Cajalco Road, Perris, CA 92570 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/riverside/">https://www.archives.gov/riverside/</a>
San Francisco	1000 Commodore Drive, San Bruno, CA 94066-2350 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/san-francisco/">https://www.archives.gov/san-francisco/</a>
Seattle	6125 Sand Point Way, NE., Seattle, WA 98115-7999 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/seattle/">https://www.archives.gov/seattle/</a>
St. Louis	1 Archives Drive, St Louis, MO 63138 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/st-louis/">https://www.archives.gov/st-louis/</a>
NPRC (Civilian)	P.O. Box 38757, St. Louis, MO 63138 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/st-louis/opf">https://www.archives.gov/st-louis/opf</a>
NPRC (Military)	1 Archives Drive, St. Louis, MO 63138 <a href="https://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/">https://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/</a>

And don't forget the Presidential Libraries:

<https://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries> and  
<https://www.archives.gov/findingaid/presidential-library-explorer>

**NARA Forms page:** <https://www.archives.gov/forms>

***URLs verified as of 1 January 2025***