



Guide for Accessing Family Records

This guide provides resources and steps to assist in accessing government-related family records.

Note: Helpful research resources such as Ancestry.com do require a paid subscription, however there is no need to purchase this database. This guide aims to provide ways for individuals to access their family's information for free.

- 1** List all of the names for each family member.
 - The easiest way to begin this step is with your own immediate parents. Make sure to include maiden names, middle names, and nicknames.
 - The next step is to list any relatives' names. This includes aunts, uncles, sisters, and brothers. This is a way to check to ensure the records are accurate and describe the individuals you are searching for.
- 2** Begin searching using the National Archives and Records Administration Access to Archival Database available at:
<https://aad.archives.gov/aad/fielded-search.jsp?dt=3099&cat=WR26&tf=F&bc=,sl>

According to the National Archives, the following information is recommended for your search, though not required:

 - name
 - confinement site
 - address before the war
 - parent's birthplace & father's occupation
 - education level & military service
 - age, sex, and marital status
 - foreign residence
 - birthplace, year of birth, and parent's birthplace
 - Alien Registration and/or Social Security Number
 - language proficiency and whether the individual attended Japanese language school
 - religion
- 3** If your family member was incarcerated at a Department of Justice camp, you can search for the Index Card for an individual who was incarcerated here:
<https://www.archives.gov/research/japanese-americans/internment-files>

These files are organized alphabetically and contain the individual's:

 - name and aliases
 - date of birth
 - address prior to arrest and removal
 - case file number
 - dates of salient actions
 - remarks on the individual's case.

Ordering Camp Files from the National Archives and Records Administration

Ordering your family's camp files is done through the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). To view their official recommendations on how to order your family's records, visit: <https://www.archives.gov/research/japanese-americans/order>. However, since this can be confusing, this guide breaks down the easiest and most efficient way to order a physical copy of available camp files.

1 Identify the records you wish to order. NARA offers the following:

- War Relocation Authority case files
- World War II Alien Enemy Detention and Internment case files
- Compensation and Reparation case files for the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Please note:

- For privacy reasons, NARA requires a signed statement from each relative whose files you are requesting, authorizing NARA to provide the files to you. (Individual case files cannot be copied without proof that your request does not violate another's privacy).
- NARA also requests that you provide the information to locate the case file. The more information provided, the quicker NARA is able to locate the file and provide your request.

2 Gather the required information.

For War Relocation Authority case file requests, the following is required:

- name of individual (including any other names the individual may have used)
- name of head of family
- date of birth (day if possible, but the year is required)
- name of the War Relocation Authority confinement site

For World War II Alien Enemy Detention and Internment Case Files requests, the following is required:

- name of individual (including any other names the individual may have used)
- Department of Justice case file number

For Compensation and Reparation case files requests, the following is required:

- name of individual (including any other names the individual may have used)
- Department of Justice case file number
- the act that the claim was made under

NARA also provides files relating to the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians for Public Hearings and Testimony. For this, the only required information is:

- name of witness
- location of testimony
- date of testimony

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NARA also asks that each file request be done separately to avoid confusion and duplication. The following links direct you to the forms required to request files:

- War Relocation Authority Evacuee case file requests:
<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/japanese-americans/wra-request.pdf>
- World War II Alien Enemy Internment case file requests:
<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/japanese-americans/alien-enemy-request.pdf>
- Compensation and Reparation case files for the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II: <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/japanese-americans/commission-case-file.pdf>
- Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians for Public Hearings and Testimony (CWRIC):
<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/japanese-americans/cwric-file.pdf>

Obtaining Koseki Records

Koseki records are a vital tool to allow you to understand your family's history. Accessing and obtaining Koseki records can be challenging, but with the right information and tools, you will be able to access and request your own family's Koseki.

1 Determine the family name.

- Prior to 1947, the records were kept in using a head-of household system, so extended family members who were considered part of the household were included on this record. The Koseki also serves as a certificate of citizenship so non-Japanese individuals may be noted on the Koseki as the spouse or parent of a citizen, but they are listed differently than those who are citizens.
- Remember Kosekis were not mandated until 1872, so if your ancestor passed away prior to 1872, other records will be needed to research your family history.

2 Locate your ancestor's hometown City Hall of Record (honseki chi), which provides your ancestor's records.

This can be challenging as the more specific you are, the more likely you will be able to gather these records. However, this information isn't always readily available. The following resources provide some information about where your ancestors lived:

- World War I draft registration cards
- passports & old letters
- Familysearch.org
- naturalization applications records
- War Relocation Authority Final Accountability Report

3 Gather the documents to request the Koseki. This process sometimes requires time because of language barriers and international record-keeping regulations and requirements.

You'll need to include the following:

- photo ID of a direct descendant of the individual's whose files you are requesting.
- birth certificates of the direct line ancestor, the parent of the direct descendant and the direct line grandparents
- a self-addressed envelope
- US Post Office international money order for each request
- pedigree chart filled out with family names and information

Suggestions:

- If you know katakana/kanji or know someone who does, it helps to translate these documents to speed up the process. Have each translated copy notarized.
- Each city hall has their own Koseki request form. You will need to likely translate this document prior to filling in the information.
- When requesting a family Koseki, make sure to request a Koseki Tohon, which is a complete copy of the original record. Also request the old form version.