

# Genealogy Guide

Whether you are a novice or expert genealogist our staff is here to help you explore your family roots! This page is meant to provide an overview of our collections that will be most valuable to you and a few tricks to making the most of our resources.

## Sacramental Records

Our sacramental record collection contains baptism, first communion, confirmation, marriage, holy orders, sick call and death records.

### What records can I access?

Our current access policy follows the most recent United States Census release. At present, the most recent census data available dates to 1940, so our sacramental records are likewise available from 1789 through 1940. When the 1950 US Census is released so too will our records become available through 1950.

There is a continuous effort to collect all records within the current access policy from parishes and make them accessible to researchers. You can find a complete list of our current sacramental record inventory by clicking the following links:

- [Boston Proper](#)
- [Boston Neighborhoods](#)
- [Towns, A-G](#)
- [Towns, H-Z](#)
- [Missions and Institutions](#)

If the records you are seeking are not listed in our inventory, please [contact us](#) and we will be glad to direct you to the appropriate parish.

### What can I expect to find?

Information varies greatly depending on the time period and parish; below is an overview of the information one might expect to find:

**Baptism** – Includes name of recipient, date of birth, date of baptism, parents, sponsors (godparents), and officiant. May include current address or place of origin of parents and/or abbreviated records of other sacraments received.

**First Communion** – Most early first communion records are simply a list of recipients with the date, the officiant is not always listed but it can be assumed to be a pastor or priest assigned to

the parish. More recent records may include abbreviated baptismal information, age, residence and/or parents of each recipient.

**Confirmation** – Most early confirmation records are simply a list of recipients with the date, officiant and sponsor. More recent records may include abbreviated baptismal information, age, residence and/or parents of each recipient.

**Marriage** – Name of bride, name of groom, date of marriage, witnesses, officiant. May include parents, residence, age, place of origin and/or baptismal information for bride and groom.

**Sick Calls** – Includes name of sick individual, date of visit, attending priest, sacraments or services received.

**Deaths** – Includes name of deceased, age and date of death. May include attending priest, last rites or other sacraments received, age, residence, place of death, date of burial, place of burial, funeral home and/or closest living relative.

### *How can I access sacramental records?*

#### **Online Access**

Sacramental records from 1789 through 1920 have been made available online, for free, through our partnership with the New England Historic Genealogical Society and their website, AmericanAncestors.org.

[The Massachusetts: \(Image only\) Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Records, 1789-1920](#) collection is available to browse after completing a [free](#) guest registration which you can find [here](#). This will allow access to all original records from 1789 through 1920, including handwritten indices of surnames which were created at the beginning of some volumes.

[The Massachusetts: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Records, 1789-1920](#) collection and is available to full members of AmericanAncestors.org (membership information [here](#)). This collection has been fully indexed rendering it searchable by name, date (range), city, etc. and provides typed transcripts in addition to images of the original records. This database is unique in that you can also search for parents, sponsors/godparents and witnesses to marriages.

*(Please note:* Benefits of a full membership are not exclusive to our collection and will provide a range of benefits including access to all other content on AmericanAncestors.org).

For those who have an Ancestry.com membership, you can search the index to the collection on that website, but records can only be viewed on AmericanAncestors.org and so registering for a free guest account will still be necessary.

## Submit a Request

Researchers may contact archive staff using the [contact form](#) on our website or emailing [archive@rcab.org](mailto:archive@rcab.org) to request one of our staff members conduct research for them. We will recommend a donation for this service, the amount varies depending on the number of records requested, how much detail is provided, and other factors. Any contribution will directly benefit the archive and its mission to collect, preserve and make available records of the Archdiocese of Boston.

## Visit the Library

Our research library is open to the public by appointment only, Monday through Friday, 9a to 3:30p. This affords researchers an opportunity to receive in-person assistance from a staff member and work with the original record books. To schedule an appointment please send a request using our [contact form](#) or email [archive@rcab.org](mailto:archive@rcab.org) directly.

You can also find more information on the [“Visit the Library”](#) page on our website.

## *What can I do to prepare before searching sacramental records?*

Whether using our online collection, submitting a request to the archive staff or visiting the research library, there are a few details you may want to locate beforehand to make the most of the sacramental record collection. For each record, we recommend having the following:

- Name of individual who received the sacrament.
- (Approximate) date.
- Parish where sacrament was received.
  - If you do not know the parish, a few alternatives include:
    - Family’s address at/around the time of the event. You can then enter this into our [Parish Boundary Map Tool](#) to determine the parish the individual most likely attended.

*Note:* For marriages, couples are traditionally married at the bride’s parish.

- For marriages, the officiating priest. We have available in our library Catholic directories dating from 1833 to the present, and those through 1923 can be found in various locations online. For any given year, these can be used to find which parish the officiant was assigned to, which will determine the parish where a marriage most likely took place.

Not certain of a date of birth or where the family lived at the time of baptism? If marriage information is available, marriage records (more commonly post-1900) can contain baptismal information. It is sometimes beneficial to work backward from more recent or known records.

## **Cemetery Records**

Please click here to view our [Cemetery Record Guide](#).

## **Other Resources**

Though they do not contain vital information about individuals, researchers may nonetheless find it useful to consult the following for contextual information about neighborhoods, parishes and/or ethnic groups in the archdiocese:

- [Parish Establishment Dates](#) (Chronological)
- [Parish Establishment Dates](#) (By City/Town)
- [Ethnic Parishes](#)
- [Common Phrases and Names](#) (Latin, French and Italian)
- Parish History Collection – Available in the research library, may include anniversary booklets, event booklets, special event programs or parish histories. Organized by city/town and parish.
- Institution History Collection – The same as above, only for schools, charities, religious orders and other non-parish entities.
- *History of the Archdiocese of Boston* (3 vols.) – Available in the library or online, [here](#). The third volume contains an index for all three volumes, or you can enter a full-text search using the online version. Provides a brief overview of various topics including the founding of each parish through the date of publication, ca. 1945, and a timeline and factors prompting the arrival of various immigrant groups primarily from Europe.