



Millions of Massachusetts Catholic Records to Be Made Searchable Online

The Archdiocese of Boston Partners with the Nation's Leading Genealogical Society to Digitize Church Records for Public Use

January 10, 2017—Boston, Massachusetts—New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston (RCAB) have announced a multi-year collaboration to create an online searchable database of millions of sacramental records from over 100 parishes across greater Boston. This is the first time a significant number of sacramental records from any U.S.-based archdiocese has been made available in an online digital format.

The project spans parish records from 1789 to 1900, a period of significant growth for the Catholic Church in Boston and surrounding towns. The records to be digitized predate the founding of the first Catholic Church in Boston. They document several sacraments of the Catholic Church, including baptism, confirmation, holy communion, marriage, holy orders, and the anointing of the sick.

These historic records contain detailed information about the Catholic parishioners of greater Boston, their relationships with each other, their church, and their community. Historians, genealogists, scholars, and the public at large will now have online access to unique data from the Catholic Church's earliest founding in Boston.

While the project will take several years to complete, images of the oldest records from the earliest parishes are available to browse now—after a free online registration—on [AmericanAncestors.org](https://www.americanancestors.org), the award-winning website for NEHGS. Name-searchable records will be available later in the year, and will be accessible with an NEHGS membership.

NEHGS will also be working with the archdiocese to preserve the physical volumes that contain the records, many of which are crumbling from age.

This historic effort to preserve and make accessible the records of Archdiocese of Boston by digitizing them will take several years to complete, depending upon how quickly the project can be fully funded. The New England Historic Genealogical Society is launching a Historic Catholic Records Fund with a \$1 million goal to enable philanthropy to support this extraordinary project. Information about contributing to this fund can be found at [CatholicRecords.AmericanAncestors.org](https://www.americanancestors.org/catholicrecords).

"The Archdiocese of Boston and New England Historic Genealogical Society understand the significance of these records for Catholics, but also for historians and researchers of all backgrounds," said Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston. "We are grateful for this opportunity to preserve these records for future generations." The Cardinal also noted that the collaboration will provide indispensable assistance to Catholics by consolidating resources and providing a breadth of information unavailable elsewhere.

NEHGS CEO Brenton Simons called the project "a unique opportunity to provide the world with a fascinating and historically important set of records about Boston's Catholic community."

New England Historic Genealogical Society is America's founding genealogical organization and the most respected name in family history. Established in 1845, NEHGS is the nation's leading comprehensive resource for family history research and the largest society of its kind in the world. It provides expert family history research services through a professional genealogical staff, original scholarship, a data-rich website, educational opportunities, and a research center to help family historians of all levels explore their past and understand their families' unique place in history.

The expertise, resources, and services of NEHGS include early American, Irish, English, Italian, Scottish, Atlantic and French Canadian, German, African American, Native American, Chinese American, and Jewish family history research.

“Our founders recognized 172 years ago that family history is an important component of understanding one’s identity irrespective of background,” added Simons. “For that reason, AmericanAncestors.org is a hub and treasure trove for family historians. We really do have something for everyone.”

The NEHGS website, AmericanAncestors.org, is one of the world’s most visited family history websites and it is the most visited genealogical society website in the country—serving more than two million visitors a year. In addition to billions of searchable names, the site offers an online learning center with courses available for genealogists of all levels. The site also features historical content from the vast library and archives of NEHGS, and an online store offering their award-winning publications.

Downloadable Attachments:

[Historic Catholic Records Online Fact Sheet](#)

[Historic Catholic Records Online Website Fact Sheet](#)

[Historic Catholic Records Online Saint Brigid Logo](#)

[New England Historic Genealogical Society \(NEHGS\) Fact Sheet](#)

[Archdiocese of Boston Fact Sheet](#)

[Project Artwork](#)

About New England Historic Genealogical Society

The founding genealogical society in America, New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) was established in 1845. Today it has a national collecting scope and serves more than 220,000 constituents through an award-winning website, AmericanAncestors.org. Since 1845, NEHGS has been the country’s leading comprehensive resource for genealogists and family historians of every skill level. Today, NEHGS provides constituents with worldwide access to some of the most important and valuable research tools anywhere.

NEHGS’s resources, expertise, and service are unmatched in the field, and their leading staff of on-site and online genealogists includes experts in early American, Irish, English, Scottish, Italian, Atlantic and French Canadian, African American, Native American, Chinese, and Jewish research. Expert assistance is available to members and nonmembers in a variety of ways. The NEHGS library and archive, located at 99–101 Newbury Street in downtown Boston, is home to more than 28 million items, including artifacts, documents, records, journals, letters, books, manuscripts, and other items dating back hundreds of years.

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About the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston

The Archdiocese of Boston is the fourth largest archdiocese in the United States and is the spiritual home for more than 1.8 million Catholics. Since July 2003, Cardinal Seán P. O’Malley, OFM Cap., has led the Archdiocese through unprecedented events with a focus on healing and rebuilding the local Church.

Centered in one of the world’s great cities—Boston—and spread across 144 communities in eastern Massachusetts, the Archdiocese of Boston is an ethnically diverse and spiritually enriching faith community consisting of vibrant parishes, well performing Catholic schools that are educating more than 46,000 students annually, and a social service outreach that is helping to assist more than 200,000 individuals each year. Mass is celebrated in more than twenty different languages each week.

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