

How to Find and Browse Unindexed Records at Ancestry – [The Better Browsing Checklist](#)

By Lisa Louise Cooke

Browse-only collections at Ancestry and other genealogy websites are sometimes viewed as inaccessible, but they are actually a hidden treasure. Learn how to access these browse-only collections at Ancestry and expand your family history research.



In the past we've written about [how to access browse-only content at FamilySearch.org](#). Many readers said it opened a whole new world of genealogy records to them that they didn't know they were missing.

The good news is that FamilySearch is not alone in offering browse-only content. Ancestry.com also has browse-only collections of digitized records.

Knowing how to search and browse records effectively is critical because you shouldn't just rely on hints. Ancestry, for example, only provides hints from about the top 10% of their most popular databases. That means if you only spend time on reviewing hints, you're missing a massive amount of genealogical information available in all of the other records.

Typically, you'll be using the search feature to find those other records. However not all records are searchable. That's because after the long process of acquiring the rights to digitize and publish a genealogy record collection, it takes even longer to get them indexed for a variety of reasons. Thankfully, Ancestry doesn't always make us wait to gain access to them

until the indexing is complete.

The digital images are published without an index. This means they are not searchable by names and other keywords. Therefore, it can take some time to locate a record within one of these collections. But I think you'll agree it's more convenient to look through them from the comfort of your own home rather than renting microfilm or traveling to a far-off location!

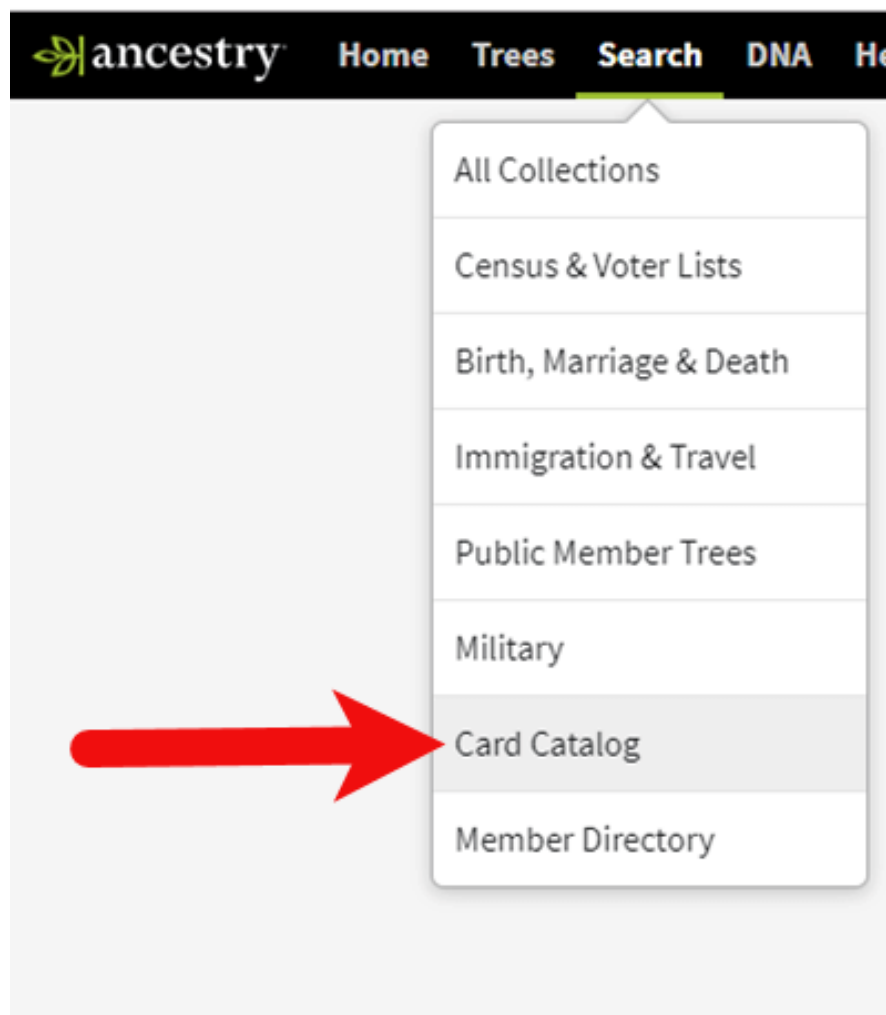
Here's your checklist for better browsing.

How to Search and Find Browse-only Collections at Ancestry

While Ancestry.com doesn't make it quite as easy as FamilySearch to find browse-only or partially indexed databases, it's still very much worth the effort.

1. Head to the Card Catalog

From the main menu on the Ancestry website, select *Search > Card Catalog*.



2. Search and Filter

In the upper left corner you can search the catalog by title and / or keyword. However, if you know the type of record you are looking for, such as military records, the best place to start is filtering by that category. If the list is long, you can then search within that category by keywords.

Card Catalog

Searchable listing of all record collections

Title

Keyword(s)

or

Filter By Category

- Birth, Marriage & Death +1000
- Census & Voter Lists 555
- Court, Land, Wills & Financial +1000
- Dictionaries, Encyclopedias & Reference +1000
- Directories & Member Lists +1000
- Family Trees 4
- Immigration & Emigration 529
- Maps, Atlases & Gazetteers 195
- Military +1000
- Newspapers & Periodicals +1000
- Pictures 40
- Stories, Memories & Histories +1000

Filter By Location

- Africa 136
- Asia 79
- Australia 235
- Canada +1000
- Europe +1000
- Mexico 159
- North America +1000
- Oceania 282
- South America 69
- USA +1000

Filter by Dates

1600s 1700s 1800s 1900s

Results 1-25 of 32,707

Title

- Nova Scotia, Canada, Petitions in Favour of Female Suffrage, 1918
- Finland, Communion Books, 1670-1917 (in Finnish)
- Finland, Pre-Confirmation Books, 1670-1918 (in Finnish)
- Brompton, London, England, Cemetery Registers, 1840-2012
- U.S., Navy and Marines Awards and Decorations, 1942-1994
- U.S., Veterans Administration Master Index, 1917-1940
- Limbach-Oberfrohn, Germany, Deaths, 1876-1952 (in German)
- Limbach-Oberfrohn, Germany, Marriages, 1876-1922 (in German)
- Limbach-Oberfrohn, Germany, Births, 1876-1904 (in German)
- Limbach-Oberfrohn, Germany, School Lists, 1835-1920 (in German)
- U.S., National Register of Scientific and Technical Personnel, 1921-
- New York, Episcopal Diocese of Rochester Church Records, 1800-18
- UK, WWII Royal Artillery Tracer Cards, 1939-1948
- Illinois, Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield Sacramental Records, 1853-1975
- Denmark, Church Records, 1812-1918 (in Danish)
- Oschersleben, Germany, Marriages, 1874-1935 (in German)
- Oschersleben, Germany, Births, 1874-1905 (in German)
- Oschersleben, Germany Deaths, 1874 - 1985 (in German)
- Newspapers.com Obituary Index, 1800s-current
- Bristol, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-19
- Pembrokeshire, Wales, Electoral Registers, 1740-1978
- Bristol, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812
- Bristol, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1813-1894

3. Determining if the Records are Searchable

If you don't see a search box on the left side, then you can assume that this collection has not yet been indexed and therefore isn't searchable by keywords and other data. Instead you will see typically see the source information box at the top.

Nevada, County Marriages, 1862-1993

Source Information

Ancestry.com. *Nevada, County Marriages, 1862-1993* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014.
Original data: *Nevada, County Marriages, 1862-1993*. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.

About Nevada, County Marriages, 1862-1993

This collection includes marriage records from Nevada.

You can learn more about this collection at the [FamilySearch](#) website.

Browse this collection

To browse this image set, select from the options below.

County

Choose... ▾

Record Type, Year Range, Volume Number/Letter

Related data collections

[Nevada, Birth Index, 1975-2012](#)

Vital records are a cornerstone of

How to Filter Browse-Only Genealogical Records

1. Browse This Collection Box

On the right side of the screen you will see a Browse this Collection box. The filtering options presented will depend on the way the collection is organized.

Nevada, County Marriages, 1862-1993

Source Information

Ancestry.com. *Nevada, County Marriages, 1862-1993* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014.
Original data: *Nevada, County Marriages, 1862-1993*. Salt Lake City, Utah: FamilySearch, 2013.

About Nevada, County Marriages, 1862-1993

This collection includes marriage records from Nevada.

You can learn more about this collection at the [FamilySearch](#) website.

Browse this collection

To browse this image set, select from the options below.

County

Choose... ▾

Record Type, Year Range, Volume Number/Letter

Related data collections

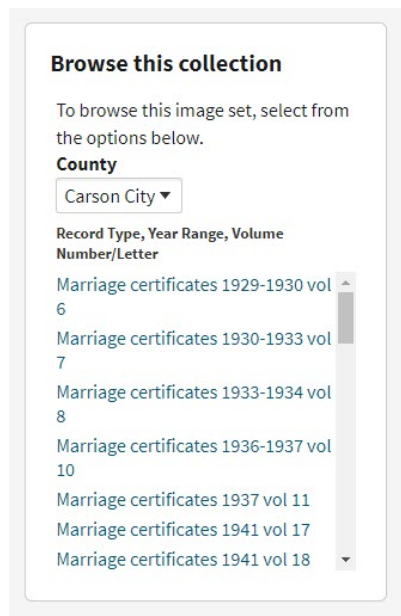
[Nevada, Birth Index, 1975-2012](#)

Vital records are a cornerstone of

In the case of the Nevada County Marriage database, a drop-down menu allows you to filter by county.

2. Make a Selection

As you can see in my example, once I selected a county, I can also filter down by record books. So even though you can't search names, you can often zero in on the portion of the collection most relevant to your search.



How to Browse Records at Ancestry.com

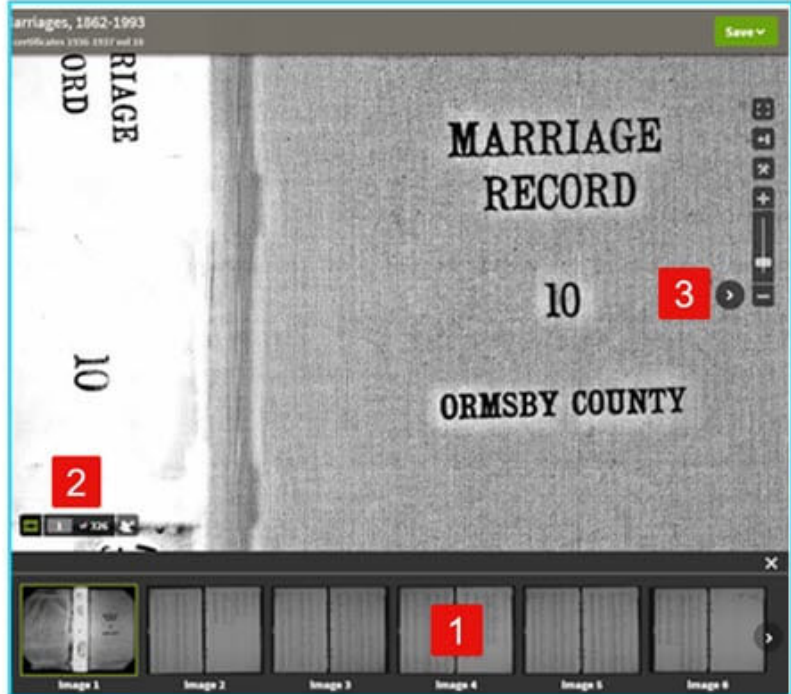
Once you have selected the available filters, you'll find yourself in the digitized records. They are displayed in a filmstrip layout which will come in quite handy for navigation through the pages.




Navigation is crucial since we can't search by names and keywords. Let's take a closer look at the ways you can navigate:

Browsing Navigation

at Ancestry.com



- 1 Click any image on the filmstrip to jump to that image.
- 2 Enter a page number to jump to that page.
- 3 Click the left or right arrow to move that direction along the the filmstrip images.

GenealogyGems.com 

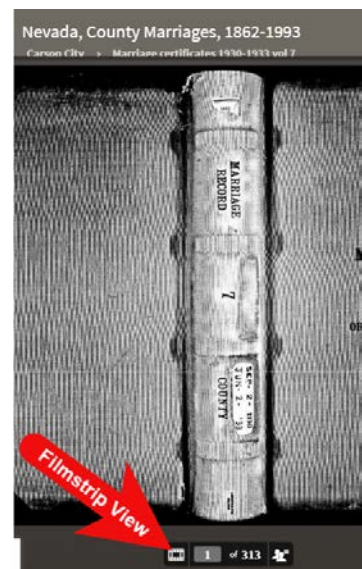
Browsing a digitized genealogy record collection at Ancestry.com

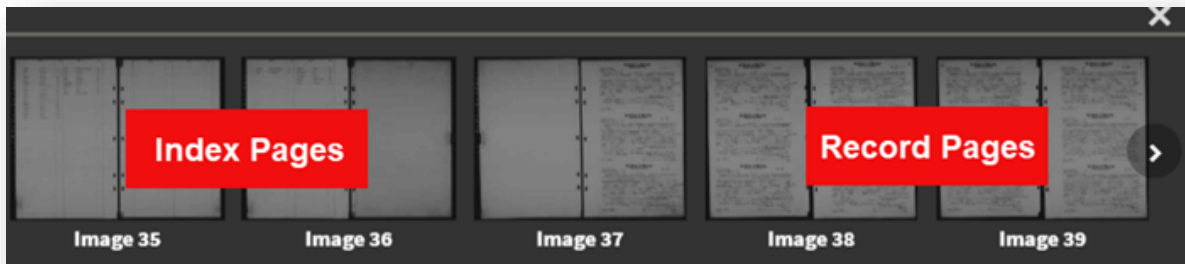
Finding the Filmstrip

if you don't see the filmstrip view, click the filmstrip icon. (Image right)

Finding and Using the Original Index

Many records that were originally bound in books like this collection include index pages. In this book the index appears at the beginning. If you look closely at the filmstrip images it's easy to spot where the index lists are and where the records begin.





So even though Ancestry hasn't had the chance to index the records yet, they are indexed in the book. This will make the job of browsing for the records you need even easier.

The "About" box on the card catalog entry often includes important information about whether or not the collection has an index. One example of this is the Canada, Photographic Albums of Settlement, 1892-1917 record collection. It is a browse-only series of digitized photo albums by Canada's Department of the Interior between 1892 and 1917. The collection description includes very useful instructions such as: "At the beginning of each album, you will find a table of contents with a brief description of each photograph and the photograph number. Use these tables to help you browse to the photograph of interest." As you can see, taking a few extra moments to read about the collection can make browsing it much easier.

Canada, Photographic Albums of Settlement, 1892-1917

Source Information

Ancestry.com. *Canada, Photographic Albums of Settlement, 1892-1917* [database online]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016.
Original data: Photographic Albums of Canadian Settlement. 47 albums. Department of the Interior Fonds. R190-0-3-E. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

About Canada, Photographic Albums of Settlement, 1892-1917

This collection consists of photographic albums compiled within the Department of the Interior in the period from 1892 to 1917, then maintained in the Immigration Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources from 1936 to 1939. The albums contain photographs primarily taken by photographers John Woodruff and Horatio N. Topley, who were either employed by or on contract to the Department of the Interior, and who undertook a number of journeys in the period from 1903-1914 to complete the photographs in the albums. Included are views relating to agriculture, railroads, ports, cities, and immigration in virtually every province and territory in Canada (excluding Newfoundland).

The photographs have not been indexed but images are available for browsing. At the beginning of each album, you will find a table of contents with a brief description of each photograph and the photograph number. Use these tables to help you browse to the photograph of interest.

Browse this collection

To browse this image set, select from the options below.

Description

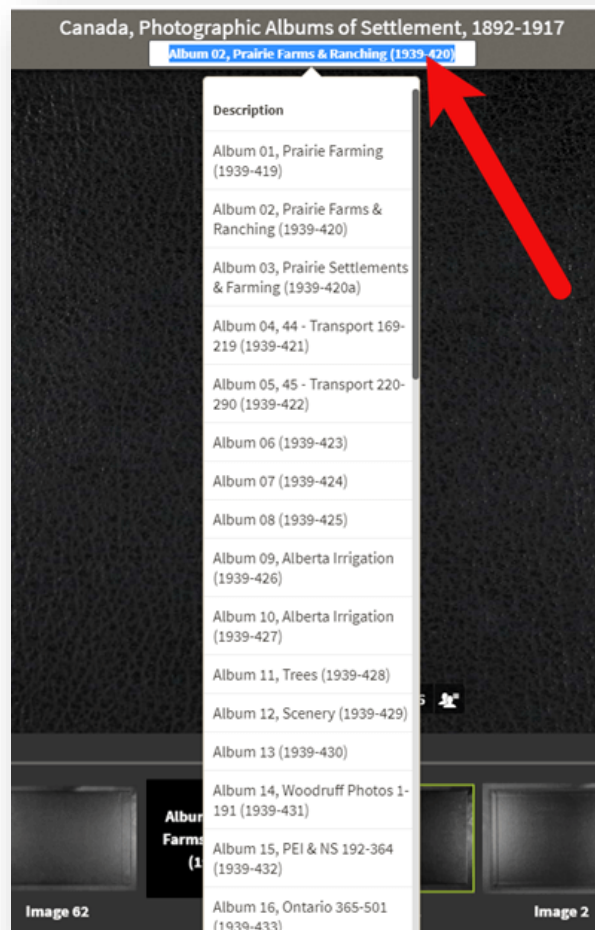
- Album 01, Prairie Farming (1939-419)
- Album 02, Prairie Farms & Ranching (1939-420)
- Album 03, Prairie Settlements & Farming (1939-420a)
- Album 04, 44 - Transport 169-219 (1939-421)
- Album 05, 45 - Transport 220-290 (1939-422)
- Album 06 (1939-423)

Related data collections

- [Library and Archives Canada](#)
Library and Archives Canada
- [Canada Historical Postcards, 1893-1963](#)
This database contains over 26,000 historical postcards with photos of

Save Time When Browsing Between Volumes

Remember that Browse this Collection box on the right-hand side of the card catalog entry page? (See the Browse this Collection box image 6 images above.) This handy menu is also embedded in the record viewer. If you need to switch to a different book, album or other portion of the collection, you don't have to hit the back button and start over. Instead, at the top of the viewing page, click the volume or collection you are currently viewing (this appears as a sub-title under the main title of the collection.) A browse structure menu will appear showing you all the other options within the collection. Just click the one you want and you will be instantly switched over. Think of it as pulling a different volume of a series of books off the shelf!

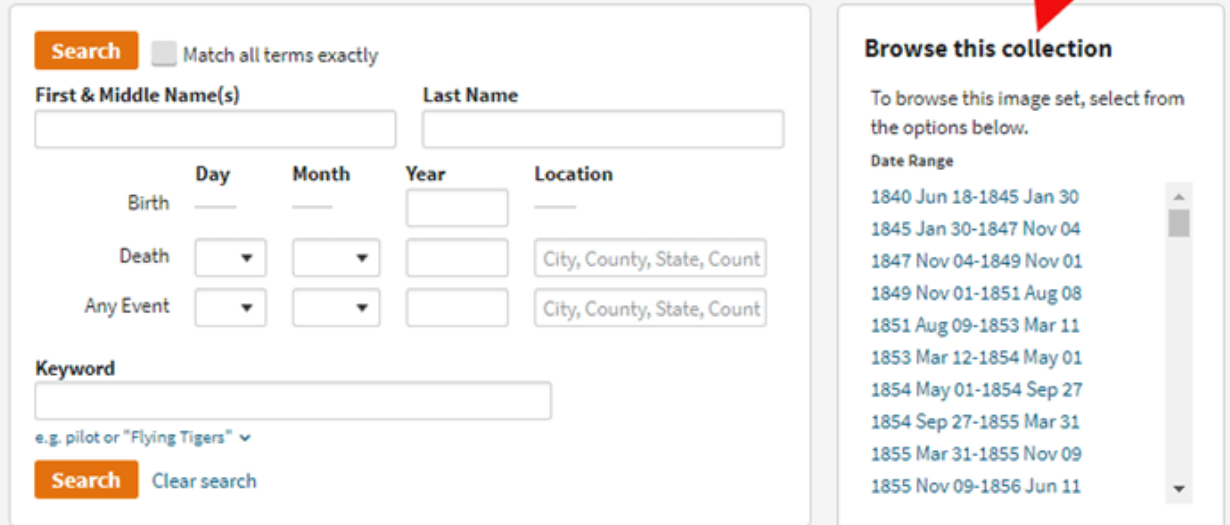


Browsing Indexed Records

There will be times when even though a record collection is indexed, you may still want to browse it. Browsing isn't just for unindexed records. Many genealogy gems can be found by browsing a database that you've already searched. You may spot neighbors of interest, other surnames from your family tree, and more. So even when you are working with a record collection that has a search box, look for the browsing option in the right column.

Search > Birth, Marriage & Death

Brompton, London, England, Cemetery Registers, 1840-2012



Search Match all terms exactly

First & Middle Name(s) Last Name

Birth Day Month Year Location

Birth

Death City, County, State, Count

Any Event City, County, State, Count

Keyword

e.g. pilot or "Flying Tigers" ▾

Search Clear search

Browse this collection

To browse this image set, select from the options below.

Date Range

- 1840 Jun 18-1845 Jan 30
- 1845 Jan 30-1847 Nov 04
- 1847 Nov 04-1849 Nov 01
- 1849 Nov 01-1851 Aug 08
- 1851 Aug 09-1853 Mar 11
- 1853 Mar 12-1854 May 01
- 1854 May 01-1854 Sep 27
- 1854 Sep 27-1855 Mar 31
- 1855 Mar 31-1855 Nov 09
- 1855 Nov 09-1856 Jun 11

How to Find the Newest Records at Ancestry.com

The records most likely to not yet be indexed, and therefore browse-only, are the newest records added to Ancestry. If you're looking to bust through a brick wall, here's a great way to find the newest records that just might do it.

1. Go to the Card Catalog

From the main menu on the Ancestry website, select *Search > Card Catalog*.

2. Sort the Records

In the right-hand corner you'll find a *Sort By* menu. Select *Date Added*.

Card Catalog

able listing of all record collections

	Category	Records	Sort By
da, Petitions in Favour of Female Suffrage, 1918	Lists		Date Added
ion Books, 1670-1917 (in Finnish)	Directories & Member Lists	13,887,919	Collection Title
rmation Books, 1670-1918 (in Finnish)	Directories & Member Lists	5,650,637	Date Updated
n, England, Cemetery Registers, 1840-2012	Birth, Marriage & Death	204,827	Date Added
ines Awards and Decorations, 1942-1994	Military	1,804,597	Record Count
ministration Master Index, 1917-1940	Military	5,678,476	
ina, Germany, Deaths, 1876-1952 (in German)	Birth, Marriage & Death	151,207	

Select Date Added from the Sort by menu.

3. Newest Record View

The Card Catalog will now be presented in the order in which the records were added. The newest records will appear at the top of the list.

4. Filter the List

Use the filters along the left side of the page to filter the collections by record type, location, and date. Then use the search boxes to target keywords. This will give you results that include your keyword starting with the newest collections.

More Tips on Searching Your Favorite Genealogy Websites

Making a small investment of time in getting to know the search and browsing functions of a website can pay off big. Here are three more articles and podcast episodes here at Genealogy Gems that can help you maximize your genealogy research efforts:

- [Searching Browse-Only Records at FamilySearch.org](#)
- [4 Tips for Getting the Most from Ancestry.com](#)

- [Using Ancestry Library Edition and Other Genealogy Databases at Your Public Library](#) (in Genealogy Gems Premium Podcast episode 125 ([Premium Membership](#) required to listen))