

Ancestry's Approach to Accessible Historical Documents

Ancestry.com, Inc.; Provo, Utah, USA

In family history research nothing compares to the moment a researcher sees their ancestor's name on an original document. A searchable data index is the key to connecting individuals to that experience. At Ancestry we have over a decade of experience creating name-rich indexes for historic documents that have led millions of researchers to the discoveries they seek.

WE OFFER A FULL DIGITIZATION SERVICE AT NO COST TO THE ARCHIVES.

Imaging Quality - Our digital imaging process goes through several steps that start with a detailed Inventory to barcode and collect metadata for every item; a Document Preparation stage is used to identify conservation needs, and to catalogue original images for matching with digital images created; then the Digitization takes place with planetary cameras capturing high resolution color images of original documents, or greyscale capture of microfilm; next our Quality Assurance process makes a second check of each image, and the digital images are optimized for clarity in several ways for the best viewable image; and lastly is Delivery where a high-resolution copy of the images is prepared for the Archive. These images are typically provided in JPG 2000 file format but can be made available in other formats. Each image has a unique identifier that will correspond to any data index that may be created for the collection.

Keying/Indexing Quality - At Ancestry we have over a decade of experience creating name-rich indexes for historic documents that have led millions of researchers to the discoveries they

seek. We accomplish this by rigorously applying the science of quality control throughout the index-creation process. We are constantly learning, developing, and improving this process in order to deliver a higher quality product to our Ancestry content partners and users.

Our indexing methods employ the following quality-control processes: Field Completion to ensure that fields are populated or left blank as expected; Dictionary Validation, where entries are checked against a defined set of possible results for key fields such as geographic locations, dates, and names; Keystroke Accuracy, which compares samples from each batch side-by-side against the original document image; Collection-Specific Checks, which use selections from a library of dozens of additional verification processes to check unique aspects in each collection and assure quality; and Data Normalization, which occurs as nonstandard entries are reviewed and corrected.

Once digital materials appear online, Ancestry has developed additional tools that improve a user's chances for a successful search. We have advanced search algorithms and variation dictionaries that help users even when the name or location they enter is spelled differently than it is on the actual record. We've spent years learning how users search historic records and have customized our search service to support all levels of users, from novices to the most advanced. This added capability makes Ancestry the most effective search tool available for historic records.