



Using NAIL (National Archives Information Locator) and ARC (Archival Research Catalog)

What are NAIL and ARC?

NAIL is the **National Archives Information Locator** which is an on-line search of the databases provided by the **National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)** of the federal government. It was started in 1998 and contains a variety of things – maps, charts, data files, artifacts, moving images, photographs, textual files, etc. that are housed in NARA's various repositories around the country. NAIL is being replaced by ARC (**Archival Research Catalog**) which is the new version of NAIL as an online catalog of NARA's nationwide holdings. ARC is a work in progress currently containing only about 50% of NARA's holdings with new material being added every two weeks. This is a source that may or may not be of much worth, but, as the amount of data increases, so may its value to family history researchers. Currently, it seems that for Native American research, it may be a very good search.

Accessing NAIL and ARC

NAIL

- Go to <http://www.nara.gov/cgi-bin/starfinder/0?path=images.txt&id=demo&pass=&OK=OK>

ARC

- Go to http://arcweb.archives.gov/arc/basic_search.jsp

Searching with NAIL and ARC

- Enter your search term(s) in the field provided.
- Set drop-down menus, if you are only after a specific type of medium or from a specific source. I recommend leaving them set to all.

NAIL Digital Copies Search Form

The screenshot shows the NAIL Digital Copies Search Form interface. At the top, there are five buttons: "Submit Search", "Display Results", "Clear Form", "Help", and "Exit NAIL". Below these buttons, the "Hits Retrieved" is shown as 0, and the "Hits to Display" is set to 1-300. The main search area includes a "Enter Keywords" field with a "Keyword Help" button. Below the search field are three radio buttons for "AND", "OR", and "NOT", with "AND" selected. At the bottom, there are two dropdown menus: "Media" and "NARA Units". The "Media" dropdown is set to "All Media" and lists options: Aerial Photographs, Architectural and Engineering Drawings, Artifacts, and Data Files. The "NARA Units" dropdown is set to "All Units" and lists options: Cartographic and Architectural Branch (College Park, MD), Center for Electronic Records (College Park, MD), Center for Legislative Archives (Washington, DC), and Civilian Records (College Park, MD). At the very bottom, there are five buttons: "Submit Search", "Display Results", "Clear Form", "Help", and "Exit NAIL".

ARC Basic Search

Search for [descriptions of Archival Materials](#) containing the following keyword(s):

[Search Tips](#)

Limit Results to 100 1000 2000

Filter Your Search:

[Descriptions of Archival Materials](#) linked to [digital copies](#)

[Archival materials dated](#) between and



Location of Archival Materials:

All Locations
 Cartographic and Architectural Records LICON, Special Media Archives S...
 Center for Legislative Archives
 Civilian Records LICON, Textual Archives Services Division

Type of Archival Materials:

All Types
 Architectural and Engineering Drawings
 Artifacts
 Data Files

- Press **<enter>** or click the **Submit Search** button on NAIL or the **Go** button on ARC.
- When the results appear, scroll through the results and, if you want to see the details for that particular item, click the **View Full Description** in NAIL or on the **blue link** in ARC.

<p>Media: Photographs Control No.: NRCA-142-INF001-PK958A</p>  <p>Title: <i>Franks', G.R. three room home from rear; unusual d...</i></p> <p><input type="button" value="View Larger Access Image"/> (96134 bytes)</p> <p><input type="button" value="View Full Description"/></p> <p>Select Description for Viewing <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Media: Photographs Control No.: NRCA-142-INF001-PK958B</p>  <p>Title: <i>Franks', G.R. three room home from front; unusual...</i></p> <p><input type="button" value="View Larger Access Image"/> (89506 bytes)</p> <p><input type="button" value="View Full Description"/></p> <p>Select Description for Viewing <input type="checkbox"/></p>
---	--

NAIL Results

ARC Results

ARC Search Results

100 hit(s) retrieved for keywords "licks".

Displayed 1 - 10 of 100 hit(s), Page 1

Jump to Page

Sorted

By: Relevancy Ranking Date Creator Location Record Group/Collection

- ARC Identifier:** 253034
Title: [Enrollment for Cherokee Census Card D1286](#)
Creator: Department of the Interior. Office of Indian Affairs. Office of the Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes. (1893 - 1914) (Most Recent)
Type of Archival Materials: Textual Records
Level of Description: Item from Record Group 75: Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1793-1989
Location: NARA's Southwest Region (Fort Worth), Fort Worth, TX
- ARC Identifier:** 252144 [Digital Copy Available](#)
Title: [Enrollment for Cherokee Census Card D396](#)
Creator: Department of the Interior. Office of Indian Affairs. Office of the Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes. (1893 - 1914) (Most Recent)
Type of Archival Materials: Textual Records
Level of Description: Item from Record Group 75: Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1793-1989
Location: NARA's Southwest Region (Fort Worth), Fort Worth, TX

NOTE: There are all sorts of things to look at from the **NARA home page** -- <http://www.archives.gov/index.html>

There is a link for **Genealogy/Getting Started** and another for **Genealogists/Family Historians**, so start with these, but clicking around will show you all sorts of other things which may be available online in the future as well as what you can use or how to do things right now.