

Accessing Massachusetts Archives Vital Records, 1841-1920, on FamilySearch.org *

For many years the Massachusetts Archives has partnered with FamilySearch/GSU to make our vital records more widely accessible to researchers. Recently, FamilySearch made the transition from microfilm to digital imaging. They have digitized their microfilm of our 1841-1915 records and our original 1916-1920 and amended vital records. These digital images are now available online through the FamilySearch website: <http://www.familysearch.org>.

FamilySearch has indexed a large portion of these records to make them readily searchable and viewable. However, if you are not able to find a particular record on their website, you are encouraged to visit the Massachusetts Archives in person or online (<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc>) to access indexing for our vital records. The indexing will provide a year, volume, and page number which can help to find a record not yet locatable on the FamilySearch website.

If you cannot visit us in person, please contact the Massachusetts Archives Reference staff for assistance by phone (617-727-2816) or by email (archives@sec.state.ma.us) to discuss the research services we can offer.

*Please note that FamilySearch periodically updates their website, changing how you can access these records. If you find that these instructions no longer work, please let us know.

Below you will find information on three different types of search methods you can try on the FamilySearch website.

General searches on the FamilySearch website:

1. Start at the "Search" page: <https://familysearch.org/search>.
2. On the search page, you will find multiple options for filling in names, dates, locations, parents' or spouses names, etc. You may wish to start with the maximum amount of information and then remove some to create a broader, more flexible search. This helps to account for spelling variations.
3. Be aware that this general search method includes not only our vital records, but also other types of records, such as census, military, town and church records, etc. This can be helpful, but also overwhelming.

Searching birth, marriage, or death records from 1841-1915 and 1916-1920:

1. Start at the “Search” page: <https://familysearch.org/search>. Under the heading “Research by Location,” select the United States from the map.
2. That will cause a pop-up window to appear. From the list, click “Massachusetts” which will take you to a new webpage showing Massachusetts-only collections.
3. Click on the link “View all ### collections” which will reveal the full list of Massachusetts-related collections. Select “Massachusetts, Births, 1841-1915,” “Massachusetts, Deaths, 1841-1915,” or “Massachusetts, Marriages, 1841-1915.” For the 1916-1920 vital records and amended/added record books (v.1 - v.69), select “Massachusetts, State Vital Records, 1841-1920.”
4. Within each of these searchable collections, you will find multiple options for filling in names, dates, locations, parents’ or spouses names, etc. The results of this search will be limited to the collection you had previously selected.

Searching by year, volume, and page for records 1916-1920 and Amended/Added records (v.1 – v.69):

1. Start at the “Search” page: <https://familysearch.org/search>. Under the heading “Research by Location,” select the United States from the map.
2. That will cause a pop-up window to appear. From the list, click “Massachusetts” which will take you to a new webpage showing Massachusetts-only collections.
3. Click on the link “View all ### collections” which will reveal the full list of Massachusetts-related collections. For records from 1916-1920 and amended/added records (v.1 – v.69), select “Massachusetts, State Vital Records, 1841-1920.”
4. Go the heading “View Images in this Collection” toward the bottom of the page, and select “Browse through ### images.”
5. From here, you will choose the type of vital record. Once you are in the birth, marriage, or death section select the link that corresponds to the correct year and volume number.
6. Type in the page number you are looking for in the text box after the word “Image” or use the grey arrows (found toward the top of the page) to advance page by page. Because page and image numbers may not match up precisely, you may need to use the grey arrows to navigate to the correct page. The page number should appear in one of the top corners of the image of the record.

Remember, if you are not able to locate the records through FamilySearch, feel free to visit, call (617-727-2816), or email us at archives@sec.state.ma.us

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