

Unlocking French Archives: a guide on how archives are organized and what you may find on MyHeritage

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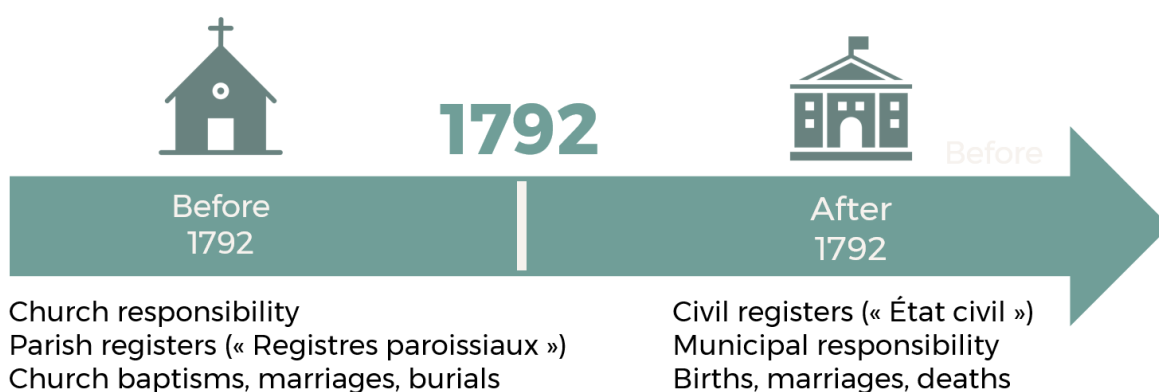
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In this video, you discover how French archives are organized and what types of records you can find when tracing your ancestry in France. We walk you through the geography of archives and through various categories of archives, from civil registers and parish records to military and notarial documents. You also learn which of these invaluable resources are available on MyHeritage, making it easier to uncover your French heritage. If you are starting discovering your French roots, this video provides essential insights into navigating French archives efficiently and effectively.

Parish records and civil registers (“Registres paroissiaux & État civil”)



Key Historical Dates :

- 1539 - François I: Baptisms mandatory
- 1579 - Henri III: Duplicate registers required
- 1667 - Louis XIV: Standardization (names, parents, signatures)
- 1789 - French Revolution
- 1792 - Civil registers begin

The case of Protestant Records :

- 1598-1685: Religious freedom under Henri IV
- 1685-1787: Persecution under Louis XIV - registers kept secretly
- Many destroyed or lost, some survived

Privacy Laws :

- Records are public archives
- Exception: Information < 75 years old restricted (except deaths)
- Records < 100 years old not available online



On MyHeritage: 26 collections for parish & civil records

<https://www.myheritage.com/research/catalog/category-2000/birth-marriage-death?location=France>

- ✓ Main collections: Church Baptisms & Civil Births | Church Marriages & Civil Marriages | Church Burials & Civil Deaths
- ✓ Protestant records collections
- ✓ France Vital Records Index (indexed data, no images)
- ✓ French Deaths since 1970 (INSEE database)
- ✓ Paris reconstitution records
- ✓ Daily Burial Registers of Parisian Cemeteries

💡 Tip: Activate name variations when searching!

Link to the full catalogue of French resources:

<https://www.myheritage.com/research/catalog?location=France>

Find the map of French roots archive centres here :

<https://www.dans-les-branches.fr/ressources-french-roots-research/>

Notarial records ("Archives notariales")

- Documents created by notaries (public officers appointed by the king)
- Purpose: Record transactions for tax collection
- Include: marriage contracts, estates, wills, property sales, loans, and more

Value for genealogy:

- Pre-date parish registers (before 17th century)
- Reveal family relationships, property, wealth, community affairs
- Help fill gaps in parish records

Availability:

✗ Not yet on MyHeritage - Must visit departmental archives in person
Future: Expected online & indexed

Noble Ancestry:

- ✓ Collections available on MyHeritage under "Histories, Memories & Biographies"
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Military records ("Archives militaires")

- From 1795: Mandatory registration at age 20
- 1867: Registration cards ("fiches matricules") introduced

Information included:

- Military service details
 - Physical description
 - Level of education
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On MyHeritage

<https://www.myheritage.com/research/catalog/category-3000/military?location=France>

- ✓ Indexed for departments: Nord, Vienne, Calvados, Saône-et-Loire, Rhône, Paris (from 1887)
 - ✓ Military Deaths Index 1914-1961 (French forces, foreign forces in France, civilians)
 - ✓ Other departments: digitized but not indexed (visit departmental archives websites)
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Census records ("Recensements")

- Recording by address and street (not alphabetical)
- Summary tables rare
- Must browse entire record if not indexed

Timeline:

- 1836: Most censuses begin (some cities from 1790s)
 - Every 5 years (except during wars - no 1916 census)
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On MyHeritage

<https://www.myheritage.com/research/catalog/category-1000/census-voter-lists>

- ✓ National censuses: 1872, 1906, 1911, 1921, 1931
 - ✓ Paris censuses: 1926, 1931, 1936
 - ✓ After 1946: No nominative census for Paris
 - ✓ Selected years in other departments
 - ✓ Other departments: digitized but not indexed (visit archives websites)
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Tax records ("Archives fiscales")

- Every legal act = tax recorded
- Estate declarations for substantial fortunes

- Mention notarial acts
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On MyHeritage

<https://www.myheritage.com/research/catalog/category-9000/government-land-court-wills?location=France>

- ✓ Tables of Successions & Absences (indexed for certain departments)
- ✓ Indicates if ancestor had estate declaration

Note: Declarations themselves not digitized - must visit archives onsite

Newspapers



On MyHeritage

<https://www.myheritage.com/research/catalog/category-8000/newspapers?location=France>

I hope this presentation has inspired and equipped you to unlock the treasures of French archives. With MyHeritage as your starting point and French departmental archives as your destination, you now have the tools to uncover your French heritage. Bon courage dans vos recherches, and happy ancestor hunting!

Marine



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