

# Getting Started in New Zealand Research

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## Overview

Researching your New Zealand heritage can be a rewarding journey. Each discovery brings you closer to understanding your family's unique story and cultural background. Many of the records and resources to finding your ancestors in New Zealand have been digitized and made available online to assist you in your journey!

## Getting Started with New Zealand Records

### CIVIL REGISTRATION

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Civil registration records include the government recording of births, deaths, marriages. New Zealand began recording birth and death certificates in 1848. Marriage certificates began in 1854 and became compulsory to register your marriage in 1856.

The registration of specific Maori marriages began in 1911 and the recording of Maori births and deaths began in 1913. These records are essential for tracing and connecting family lines and understanding vital events. Verify birth, death, and marriages of an ancestor.

#### Where to find civil registration:

- <https://www.familysearch.org>
- <https://www.ancestry.com/>
- <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>,
- <https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/search> = to order the original records.

### ELECTORAL ROLLS

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Lists of eligible voters providing insights into addresses and occupations. Useful for tracking family movements and social status. Electoral rolls began in 1853. There are Maori electoral rolls which will name the Maori tribe (Iwi) and family clan (Hapu).

Before 1860 only males who owned property could vote. In 1860 miners were allowed to vote. Maori males could vote beginning in 1867. In 1879 all males in New Zealand were granted the right to vote. In 1893, all women were granted the right to vote, becoming the first country to extend voting rights to women.

#### Where to find electoral rolls:

- <https://www.familysearch.org>
- <https://www.ancestry.com/>
- <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

## NEWSPAPERS

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Valuable for news, obituaries, birth, marriage, and death notices, and community information. Uncover stories, vital events, and personal details of your ancestors.

### Where to find newspapers:

- <https://www.familysearch.org>
- <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>
- <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/> (if they went to Australia)

## PROBATE RECORDS

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Legal documents related to a deceased person's estates and assets. Reveal familial relationships, property, and personal wealth. If an ancestor left a will they died "testate." If they didn't leave a will they died "intestate." The probate process was the same for both and may take years to complete. Probate records can include death information, name of heirs, guardians, family relationships, residences, inventory of the estate, and witnesses.

### Where to find probate records:

- <https://www.familysearch.org>
- <https://www.archives.govt.nz/>

## ARCHIVES NEW ZEALAND

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Archives New Zealand contains vast records important for researching New Zealand ancestors. Many of the records in the archives have been digitized and indexed and are accessible and searchable by name. Here is a list of records one can find in the archives: passenger lists, probate records up to 1975, court records, divorce records, Maori research, military records, old land claims, government employee records, education records, etc., and research guides to learn more about the records.

### Where to Find:

- <https://www.archives.govt.nz/>

## PASSENGER LISTS

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Most passenger lists began in New Zealand in 1838. These include names of individuals and families arriving in or departing from New Zealand. With passenger lists one can trace migration patterns, arrival dates, and ships traveled on in New Zealand. FamilySearch has digitized the New Zealand passenger lists from Archives New Zealand and has made them available on their website. Passenger lists available on FamilySearch.org include: New Zealand Company, 1838-1853 (Arrivals to Wellington, Nelson, and New Plymouth), Assisted immigration to Canterbury, 1855-1870, Assisted immigration to the whole country, 1870-1888, and Commercial passenger lists and some crew lists, 1883-1973.

### Where to find passenger lists:

- <https://www.familysearch.org>
- <https://www.archives.govt.nz/>
- <https://www.maritimemuseum.co.nz/>

## CEMETERIES

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Gravestones may provide birth and death dates, and family connections. Aid in locating ancestors' final resting places and family plots.

### Where to find cemeteries:

- <https://www.familysearch.org>
- <https://www.ancestry.com/>
- <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>
- <https://www.findagrave.com/>
- Do an online search

## MAORI RESEARCH

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Exploration of indigenous Maori heritage and genealogy. Connect with cultural roots, understand tribal affiliations.

### Where to Find:

- <https://www.familysearch.org>
- <https://www.ancestry.com/>
- <https://www.archives.govt.nz/> - Archives New Zealand
- <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies>
- <https://www.xn--morilandcourt-wqb.govt.nz/> - Maori Land Courts
- <https://natlib.govt.nz/> - National Library of New Zealand
- Do an online search for New Zealand Tribal Maps, or the name of the Maori tribe (Iwi) or Hapu (family clan).

## Steps to Finding New Zealand Records

### FAMILYSEARCH

<https://www.familysearch.org>

Login or create a free familysearch.org account.

1. Go to Search, then Records.
2. Scroll down to Find a Collection and in the Collection Title box type, New Zealand.
3. Choose the record of your choice.
4. You can also go to the Search by Place, and in the search box type, New Zealand.

For New Zealand Whakapapa records:

1. Go to Search, then Catalog.
2. In the Keyword search type Whakapapa.

## **ANCESTRY**

<https://www.ancestry.com/>

Login to your ancestry.com account or access it in a local FamilySearch Center.

1. Go to Search, then All Collections.
2. Scroll down to the map and click on Oceania.
3. Click New Zealand.
4. Search through the various online records for New Zealand.

## **FINDMYPAST**

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

Login to your findmypast.com account or access it in a local FamilySearch Center.

1. Go to Search, then click All Record Sets.
2. In the search box type, New Zealand.
3. Scroll through the various records sets for New Zealand.

## **ARCHIVES NEW ZEALAND**

<https://www.archives.govt.nz/>

1. In the search box type the name of your ancestor or even just a family surname and click Search.
2. Click on the record that you want to view.
3. Click the View online: number to see the digital image.
4. You can also click on the Help with research tab or the How to search Collections tab to learn more. Archives New Zealand has some great research guides to help you searching their site and records.

## **HISTORICAL BDM REGISTERS**

<https://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/search>

You can search the New Zealand, Civil Records Indexes, 1800-1966 on FamilySearch.org for the registration number of an ancestor, and then place that number in the Registration Number search box on the BDM Registers site to find the ancestor.

1. Click on either the births, deaths, or marriages, depending on what you would like to search.
2. Fill out the information in the search boxes.
3. When you find your ancestor, click Order Product.
4. Selecting the printout of the birth, death, or marriage will get you a copy of the certificate and is less expensive than getting the certificate. The certificate is actually a handwritten transcription of the document.

## **DICTIONARY OF NEW ZEALAND BIOGRAPHIES**

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies>

There are some great New Zealand biographies of both Maori and European Settlers on the Te Ara website.

1. Click the Biographies tab to search in English, or the Te Reo Maori to search in Maori.
2. Click the letter of the alphabet for your family or ancestral name.

## PAPERS PAST ONLINE

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>

1. Click the Newspapers link.
2. In the Search Newspapers box, type the name of your ancestor or family member.

## SEARCH ONLINE

Choose an Internet browser and try searching for the following:

- New Zealand Tribal Maps
- The name of the Maori tribe (Iwi) or Hapu (family clan).
- The name of the cemetery where your ancestor was buried.

## Bibliography/further reading

- Bromell, Anne. *A Beginner's Guide to Family History Research in New Zealand*. (Auckland, [New Zealand]: New Zealand Society of Genealogists, c2001). FSL# 993 D27ba 2001.
- Joyce, Brenda, Bruce Mathers and Owen Ormsby. *Whakapapa: An Introduction to Researching Māori and Pākehā-Māori families, their history, heritage, and culture*. (Wellington, [New Zealand]: New Zealand Society of Genealogists. Maori Interest Group, c2008). FSL# 993.1 F3w 2008.
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