

AMERICA'S MOST WANTED: ALCATRAZ PRISONER RECORDS NOW ONLINE

Records from infamous US penitentiaries – Alcatraz, Leavenworth, McNeil Island and Atlanta uncover 75,000 records of prisoners, spanning from 1875 to 1963.

Renowned criminals Al Capone, George "Machine Gun Kelley" Barnes and "The Birdman from Alcatraz" records online
McNeil Island records include photo ID cards of 3,500 inmates

SYDNEY, Australia, 21 October, 2010 — Does every family really have a 'black sheep'? If, like many Australians, you're curious whether your ancestor is among those who did time for their crime, Ancestry.com.au has made available online a collection of nearly 75,000 records of prisoners from several of America's most infamous penitentiaries, including Alcatraz, Leavenworth, McNeil Island and Atlanta.

The prison record collection, US Penitentiary Records, 1875-1963, which adds to Ancestry.com.au's international collection of criminal records, also includes photo ID cards of nearly 3,500 inmates who did time on McNeil Island.

Analysis of the records reveal that Louisiana, Texas, Georgia, Mississippi and Oklahoma top the list of worst behaved states, having sent the highest proportion of people to prison. Maine, Minnesota, North Dakota, Rhode Island and New Hampshire were the best behaved, having sent the fewest.

The records show that common offenses perpetrated by inmates included bank and postal robbery, which were most common in maximum-security facilities. Mail fraud, IRS law violations and counterfeiting topped offenses of those in medium-security facilities.

Famous criminals who feature in the collection include:

Al Capone — This notorious Prohibition-era Chicago gangster was among the first to be sentenced to Alcatraz after making life too cozy for himself in another penitentiary. The "Birdman of Alcatraz" — Robert Stroud, otherwise known as the "Birdman of Alcatraz," was sentenced to 12 years for manslaughter in August 1909 at McNeil Island, was transferred to Leavenworth in 1912, and finally ended up in Alcatraz in 1942. Roy Gardner — Gardner, an infamous bank and train robber, escaped twice on his way to McNeil Island and later escaped McNeil Island in 1921. His mug shot and prison record from McNeil can be found in this collection. George "Machine Gun Kelley" Barnes — Barnes, a Prohibition-era robber and kidnapper, did time in both Leavenworth and Alcatraz. Ancestry.com.au Partnership Development Manager, Australia and New Zealand Brad Argent comments: "Prison and criminal records provide a unique opportunity for people to discover their family's more colourful secrets, such as being related to Ned Kelly... or even Al Capone.

"This unique collection allows individuals to uncover if they really do have an outlaw ancestor and offers insights into life behind bars in some of the world's harshest prisons."

Those who search this collection of prison records can learn a wealth of information about the inmates such as conviction date, offense committed, alias, where the prisoner came from and much more. In fact, the record indexes from Leavenworth and Alcatraz will be available for free on Ancestry.com.au.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION / INTERVIEWS:

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ABOUT ANCESTRY.COM.AU Officially Australia's leading website for family history resources, Ancestry.com.au contains more than 920 million records in its Australian and UK collections including the Australia Birth, Marriage and Death Index, the Australian Convict Transportation Registers, the Australian Free Settlers, Australian Electoral Rolls, New South Wales SANDS Directories, as well as the most complete online collection of England, Wales and Scotland Censuses and the England and Wales Birth, Marriage and Death Indexes.

Ancestry.com.au was launched in May 2006 and belongs to the global network of Ancestry websites (wholly owned by Ancestry.com Operations Inc.), which contains five billion records. To date more than 18 million family trees have been created and 1.8 billion names and 40 million photographs and stories uploaded. (Figures current as of 30 June 2010)

The Ancestry global network of family history websites: www.ancestry.com in the US, www.ancestry.co.uk in the UK, www.ancestry.ca in Canada, www.ancestry.com.au in Australia, www.ancestry.de in Germany, www.ancestry.it in Italy, www.ancestry.fr in France, www.ancestry.se in Sweden and www.jiapu.com in China.

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