



National Archives and Records Administration

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Record Group 255

Series: Index to Black and White Photograph Files

What information is in these records?

This series is an electronic index to the black and white photographs submitted to NASA's national headquarters by the 10 major and various related research and space flight centers around the country. The index includes: the image identification citation (under the column entitled "BW ID"); the narrative caption (under "Label"); the subject classification; the identity of the facility from which the image originated; and the media and formats. Also included are 14 summary fields containing the total item count for each respective media or format.

Why were these records created?

The agency created the index to locate images in its black and white photographic files and to calculate the total number of items appearing in each respective media or format. This index provides the primary point of access for images found in the following two black and white photographic series: "Historical Photograph Files, 1958-1964" and "Black and White Photograph Files, 1965-1991."

How are the images located?

The structure of the national headquarters identification citation (the column "BW ID") in the index provides the key to locating the image. For images found in the series "Historical Photograph Files, 1958-1964" the identification string incorporates the final two digits of the year in which the photograph was entered into the national headquarters filing system, followed by a subject category, followed by the item number, e.g., 62-Apollo-1. By contrast, for images found in the series "Black and White Photograph Files, 1964-1991" the black and white identification string incorporates the final two digits of the year, followed by the "H" designator, followed by the item number, e.g., 68-H-277. In cases where there is a corresponding color image, the "Color ID" string will either include an "HC" designator (in which case the color version will be found in the series "Color Photograph Files, 1965-1983"), or, alternatively, will include a subject designator, such as "Gemini," in which case the color version will be found in the series "Color Photograph Files Relating to Projects, Astronauts, and Events, 1958-1965."

What is the best way to search these records?

The black-and-white index may be searched by name, subject, or image identification citation. Full-text searching of the captions ("Label" field), using a single name or subject term or combinations of such terms, provides the most common pathway for researchers exploring the nature, and extent, of Headquarters coverage of particular personalities, sites, events, structures, and technologies.

What is the meaning of a "1" in the media and formats fields?

The database includes 14 fields for the identification of media and formats; a "1" entered in any of these fields indicates that the image being indexed is available in that particular media or format.

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