

CASE STUDY:

Forest Lawn Cemetery

Forest Lawn Cemetery in Buffalo, New York was founded in 1849 by Charles E. Clarke. It covers over 269 acres and over 161,000 are buried there. Notable graves include U.S. President Millard Fillmore, singer Rick James, and inventor Lawrence Dale Bell. Forest Lawn is on the National Register of Historic Places.

THE PROBLEM

Forest Lawn has a collection of more than 1.2 million historic documents, including the most comprehensive family archives in Western New York, with currently over 350,000 individual family records and growing by 3,500 families per year. However, with so many old and delicate archives, documents were inevitably starting to fall apart and decline in quality. Forest Lawn archives were being stored in a basement and various other locations that didn't have the capabilities to protect the quality of their documents. Some documents were printed on fragile onion-skinned paper and nails were binding books together. Forest Lawn wanted to centralize their archives to a new location that would preserve their legacy for generations to come.



Digitizing 1.2 million
historic documents

THE SOLUTION

In 2014, Forest Lawn called InStream to help them with the task of archive preservation. So far, InStream has digitized over 132 boxes containing over 400,000 images, some dating as far back as 1853. InStream had of the unique task of digitally converting over 26 types of delicate genealogy records that included photographs, lot registers, birth and death certificates and biographies. InStream also digitally redacted specific documents that were not public record. Additionally, InStream placed watermarks and redactions on over 325,000 images, enabling Forest Lawn to trademark, copyright and protect sensitive information. Using our software and hardware, we were able to make images more legible.



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Following the Digital Conversion, InStream sent the digitized images and the original documents back to Forest Lawn. Next, Forest Lawn had their team of genealogists index the documents. Indexing associates documents with different search terms, making it easier to search for information across a wide range of digital documents. From there, Forest Lawn was able to upload the documents onto a cemetery software system allowing Forest Lawn staff to research genealogy records directly through their web site.



Research genealogy records
directly through thier website

THE RESULTS

Through Digital Conversion, InStream helped Forest Lawn achieve their goal of archive preservation. Forest Lawn moved their newly preserved archives to be housed in the new Margaret L. Wendt Archive and Resource Center. This new building features a secure, climate controlled storage room with a connecting research area where original documents can be studied. The digitally converted documents allow for archives to be accessible and retrievable, creating an invaluable resource and asset for families, researchers and students. In working with InStream, Forest Lawn was able continue their legacy, centralize Buffalo's ancestry and bring history to life.



Bringing history
to life