

Advanced Tomb Search Guidelines

Listed below are the advanced search guidelines for researching tombs on this site and information on the differences between the numbering systems of The Historic New Orleans Collection (THNOC) and the Archdiocese of New Orleans, including the differences between freestanding tombs and wall vaults.

Field by Field Search Options:

Please note that several search fields employ autocompleting. Entering an initial letter or number will open a drop-down menu.

1. **Cemetery:** Select “St. Louis No. 1” or “St. Louis No. 2” for a site-specific search, or select “All Cemeteries” to search both locations. At this time, only two cemeteries are searchable, but more sites will be added in time.
2. **Alley/Aisle/Street:** Enter the name of a footpath (sometimes called an “alley,” “aisle,” “parallel,” or “street”). This field employs autocompleting.
3. **THNOC Tomb Number:** Enter the numerical tomb identifier, either a one-, two-, or three-digit number. If an ‘E’ is listed at the end of the number sequence, this plot is empty and has no tomb structures. This field employs autocompleting.
4. **Archdiocesan Tomb Number:** Enter the alphanumeric tomb identifier. See an explanation of the Archdiocesan ID system [here](#). This field employs autocompleting.
5. **Name on Pediment:** Enter the family name recorded on the tomb’s pediment. Some names found on the pediment are not searchable in the memorialized search fields. This field employs autocompleting.
6. **Inscription:** Enter words or phrases inscribed on the tomb. Some names in the inscription are not searchable in the memorialized search fields. This field employs autocompleting.
7. **Language:** Select the language used on the tomb from the drop-down menu.
8. **Architect/Stone Mason:** Enter the name of the tomb architect or mason. This field employs autocompleting.
9. **Material:** Select pertinent terms from the list of tomb materials.
10. **Condition:** Select pertinent terms from the list of tomb conditions.
11. **Symbols/Decoration:** Select pertinent terms from the list of tomb symbols and decorations.

“Exact” versus “Like” Search Options:

Selecting “Exact” will return only results that exactly match the search terms. Selecting “Like” will return results that begin with the character or characters entered.

THNOC versus Archdiocesan Tomb Numbers:

The Historic New Orleans Collection (THNOC) began conducting surveys of historic cemeteries in 1981. THNOC’s tomb-numbering system differs dramatically from that employed by the Archdiocese of New Orleans in its day-to-day operations. THNOC tomb numbers are simple ordinal numbers, whereas Archdiocesan numbers are more complex and include “street” name abbreviations. Researchers may use either system to search this database. For example, in St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, THNOC tomb 315 is Archdiocesan tomb ANo10_R8 (Alley Number 10, Right of Center Alley, Tomb 8).

In order to navigate the two numbering systems, it is important to understand that New Orleans cemeteries are divided into geographic sectors known as “squares.” St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 comprises a single square, while St. Louis Cemetery No. 2 comprises three squares.

THNOC’s numbering system assigns each freestanding tomb within each cemetery square a discrete number reflecting the order in which it was photographed and documented. No two tombs within the same square bear the same identification number.

The **Archdiocesan system**, by contrast, assigns each tomb an alphanumeric “address” based on its location along a given footpath and within the larger grid of city streets bounding each square. The numeric portion of a tomb identifier can appear multiple times within a given square: just as you can have the *house* numbers “12 Main Street” and “12 Elm Street” in the same city block, you can have the *tomb* numbers “Basin Alley 12” and “St. Louis Street 12” in the same cemetery square.

To visualize the differences between the two systems, compare THNOC cemetery maps with those created and numbered by the Archdiocese on the Maps page of this website. Also, multiple concordances, one for St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 (STL1) and three for St. Louis Cemetery No. 2 (STL2), have been created for side-by-side comparison of the two numbering systems. The concordances can be accessed on the Advanced Tomb Search page under [Tomb Concordance Reference Guides](#). They also

provide a guide to the abbreviations used in the Archdiocesan numbering system, which can be complex.

THNOC's survey identified 640 freestanding tombs in St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 and 1,156 freestanding tombs in St. Louis Cemetery No. 2.

Empty Plots:

There are numerous empty plots in the various cemetery squares. While the Archdiocese maintains alphanumeric addresses for almost all of these empty plots, the THNOC survey of 1981 did not assign numbers to them. In the intervening decades, a number of once-empty plots have had tombs built on them. This new construction is captured in the Archdiocesan records but not the THNOC survey. Thus, if you search one of these new tombs using its Archdiocesan tomb number, you will find that the corresponding THNOC number contains an "E" for "Empty," (e.g., "123E") and the notation "Empty plot(s)."

Wall Vaults:

Wall vaults are stacked rows of contiguous tomb vaults that are built against a cemetery's outer walls. The THNOC survey identified 225 wall vaults in St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 and 2,396 wall vaults in St. Louis Cemetery No. 2. The relationship between THNOC's numbering system for wall vaults and the Archdiocese system is regular and predictable. Both systems count the vault columns from left to right. The discrepancies arise in the method of counting rows. The Archdiocese uses the term "range" and begins counting from the bottom, using numbers; THNOC uses the term "row" and begins counting from the top, using letters.

So, for example, in St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, the Archdiocesan vault number for the highest, left-most vault along the Basin Street wall is **Basin_1_Range_4**, while THNOC's number for this same vault is **Basin_1A**, as can be seen (**highlighted**) in the charts below:

ARCHDIOCESE'S WALL-VAULT NUMBERING SYSTEM

Vaults: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Range 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

Range 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Range 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

Range 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

THNOC'S WALL-VAULT NUMBERING SYSTEM

Vaults: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(Row) A A A A A A A

(Row) B B B B B B B

(Row) C C C C C C C

(Row) D D D D D D D

Note: Along many sections of the cemeteries' walls, the bottom-most row of vaults has sunk partially or entirely below ground level. Researchers should be aware that the vaults in these bottom rows (the Archdiocesan Range 1 and THNOC Row D) often could not be seen or documented at the time the THNOC survey was created.