

## ***Immigration and Naturalization (and Passenger Lists and Passports)***

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Santa Clara County Historical and Genealogical Society, September 19, 2017

### **Step One: Find Your Immigrant in the U.S. (in as many records as possible!)**

Consider as many name variations as possible

correct names improve chances of success

but look for variations; spelling inconsistent in most countries until 20th century  
people changed names (sometimes more than once): translation, pronunciation

given names can provide clues with naming patterns

earlier records more likely to be closer to original name

Establish approximate date of immigration by looking at wide variety of records

Most records will list only country; to increase odds find as many records as you can

Place names may change over time due to changing boundaries and administrations

Records to look for

Censuses

U.S. federal census has helpful information in 1820, 1830, 1850–1940

don't forget state censuses

look at neighbors from same country

look at all birthplaces, including those of children

name be spelled more accurately if census taker is from same country

Vital records

marriage records of immigrants and siblings

death records of immigrants and siblings

vital records (BMD) of children of immigrants

Religious records

baptisms, christenings, marriages, burials

membership transfers

who else belongs to congregation

sponsors, witnesses, etc. may be related or from same area

religion itself can be a clue

Personal/family information

who in the family kept old documents

bibles, letters, postcards, memorabilia

photos: clothing, background, location, photographer

family stories, food preferences

names of farms, businesses

occupations

who signed important documents

names of other people in documents

More records to look for

mortuary records, cemetery records, tombstones

newspapers for obits, reunions, anniversaries, visits, stories, etc.

voter registers

ethnic newspapers

city directories

town records

Repositories and group records

historical and genealogical societies

ethnic/heritage societies

immigrant aid societies (helped people find jobs, lent money)

archives and libraries

books on ethnic and religious groups

Web sites for countries, groups, surnames

## **Step Two: Migration to This Country**

Ship passenger lists/manifests

Incoming to U.S. (immigration)

Outbound from origin country or stop midway (emigration)

after 1820 required in U.S., but earlier lists exist also

not all survived; many were lost or destroyed

early ones don't list towns of origin

information on them varies

“detained aliens” and “special inquiry” pages offer more info

usually filmed chronologically but not indexed

some indices now exist

many are now digitized and more coming

Border crossings

Canadian border (on Ancestry.com)

called “St. Alban’s lists”, but cover entire border and Canadian ports

Mexican border (on Ancestry)

not only Mexicans; many people went to Mexico and then to U.S.

Sites to check

SteveMorse.org One-Step site (better search pages for many sites)

Ancestry.com

EllisIsland.org (192–1924); search through SteveMorse.org

CastleGarden.org (1830–1892); search through SteveMorse.org

NARA Archives.org

Collections Canada

GermanRoots.com

Great Migration Begins (early New England, 1620–1635) on NEHGS

Other Documents (not all will be available for all times and locations)

newspapers printed many lists for arrivals and departures

ports along the route might have information

ship’s logs

U.S. customs passenger lists (1820–1891)

### **Step Three: Naturalization and Passports**

Before 1906 no uniformity in U.S.: could go to any court anywhere  
Could start in one state and complete in another  
After 1906 federal guidelines, more consistent; declaration, petition, certificate  
Sometimes find oaths of allegiance  
Sometimes naturalizations are filed with homestead applications, as one needed to be a citizen to own the land  
Military naturalizations often have no declaration of intent and are missing info on petition; naturalized where stationed  
Look for alien registration forms if someone has not naturalized

### **Naturalization Laws**

Good timeline: <http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~hornbeck/immigra2.htm>  
First law in 1776 saying that people living in the U.S. who wanted protection from laws owed allegiance to those colonies  
Basics: free, white, male, declare intent, reside some years in U.S., renounce allegiance to other country, good moral character, take oath of allegiance to U.S.  
1855 alien woman who married male citizen automatically naturalized; repealed 1922  
1862 alien with 1 year Army service could become citizen after 1 year  
1868 blacks became citizens after passage of 14th Amendment  
1872 alien with 3 years Merchant Marine service naturalized with no residency  
1882 Chinese Exclusion Acts (which ended up including other Asians); repealed 1943  
1894 alien with 3 years Navy or Marine service naturalized with no residency  
1907 woman who married alien took on his nationality; repealed 1922  
1918 alien serving in U.S. armed forces during WWI naturalized with no residency  
1922 woman no longer gains citizenship by marrying a citizen, must apply herself  
1924 American Indians also U.S. citizens  
Many records are list; indices are inconsistent  
Early naturalizations have very little information

### **Where to Find Naturalizations**

Many naturalizations now digitized on Ancestry.com and Fold3.com  
Prior to 1906 could be filed in any court in the country  
Look where they lived at any point during their lives in the U.S.  
If in a federal court may be at NARA, archives.gov  
FamilySearch.org  
    United States Research Outline (30972)  
    state research outline  
    card catalog searches; try several approaches  
        United States naturalizations (304)  
        Massachusetts naturalizations (130)  
        California naturalizations (168)  
    keyword search, *e.g.*, naturalizations  
USCIS.gov/genealogy (formerly INS)

## **Passports**

began in 1795 but used more frequently from 1879  
many applications ask where person was born and when naturalized  
immigrants who went back to homeland often got one for verification  
more people obtained passports when WWI began  
several years on Ancestry.com  
2,095 films at Family History Library; not all are indexed  
special passports, emergency passports also exist

## **Things to Think about If You Get Stuck**

### **Why did they immigrate?**

What was happening at home?  
political uprisings  
religious persecution  
programs inviting immigrants  
Economics/wanted a better life (most common reason)  
Wanted land, which was difficult in many other countries  
Some immigrants came to earn money and then returned home

### **Where did they settle?**

Why did they go there?  
How did they get the money to travel?  
indentures (primarily earlier U.S. history)  
family member(s)

### **How did they travel?**

by sea: from which port? How did they get there?  
by land through Canada or Mexico: How did they get there?  
by air: for later immigrants (some on Ancestry.com)

## **Some Useful Web Sites**

SteveMorse.org (better search pages)  
FamilySearch.org  
Ancestry.com  
RootsWeb.com  
FindMyPast.com  
Fold3.com  
LibertyEllisFoundation.org  
CastleGarden.org  
Archives.gov (NARA)  
USCIS.gov/genealogy  
<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/> (Library and Archives Canada)  
GermanRoots.com  
GreatMigration.org (early New England)  
<http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~hornbeck/immigra2.htm> (good timeline)

# Useful Tools to Access Obscure Records of Citizenship and Nationality

Records/Files	Dates	USCIS Index	Name Index to Bureau of Naturalization Correspondence Files NARA A3388 ARC Identifier 1593296	Subject Index to Correspondence Files of the INS NARA T458 ARC Identifier 4490783	Access or More Information
Naturalization C-Files (USCIS)	1906-1956	All Indexed	If correspondence filed in C-File, C-number is shown	If correspondence filed in C-File, C-number is shown	<a href="http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy">www.uscis.gov/genealogy</a>
Derivative, Repatriation, and other C-Files (USCIS)	1929-1956	All indexed	If correspondence filed in C-File, C-number is shown	If correspondence filed in C-File, C-number is shown	<a href="http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy">www.uscis.gov/genealogy</a>
Bureau of Naturalization Correspondence Files (NARA-DC, RG 85, Entry 26)	1906-1946		If correspondence filed in a correspondence file, the correspondence file number is shown; If correspondence filed in a C-File, A-File or other file, the file number is shown		<a href="http://www.archives.gov/research/naturalization/naturalization-files.pdf">http://www.archives.gov/research/naturalization/naturalization-files.pdf</a>
Bureau of Immigration (INS) Correspondence Files (NARA-DC, RG 85, Entry 9)	1906-1957	Most indexed			<a href="http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1946">http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1946</a>

[www.uscis.gov/historyandgenealogy](http://www.uscis.gov/historyandgenealogy)

Questions about index cards: [cishistory.library@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:cishistory.library@uscis.dhs.gov)