

## **Find Your Immigrant Ancestors -- Begin Research In the United States**

By James L. Tanner

We are all immigrants. Even those of us who call ourselves natives, ultimately came from somewhere else. From a genealogical standpoint, as we go back in time researching our ancestors, sooner or later, we will always run out of records. If you happen to live in the United States, you are either a Native American, or your ancestors came from another country sometime after 1492 A.D. We may suspect or believe in earlier contact such as references to Lief Ericson, but until 1492 A.D., written records are mostly missing. So, at some time, if we do enough research, we will all encounter the need to research the origin of our immigrant ancestors.

The difficulty of determining the origin of an immigrant depends on a number of factors. It is enticing to try to jump directly to the country of origin and do some research, but there are many reasons why all research about immigrant origins should begin in the country of the immigrant's arrival. In the case of immigrants to the United States (or America before 1776), must begin in the country of arrival. Here are a few of those reasons:

- The immigrant's country of origin may not be known
- The immigrant may have changed his or her name at the time of the immigration
- Records about the immigrant family may yet need to be found some time after the immigration occurred
- The family traditions and records may be misleading and/or inaccurate

There are likely many other reasons why careful research requires that the origin of the immigrant ancestor be approached systematically starting with known locations in America.

### **Where do you start?**

As you research back on your family lines and you suspect that you have reached the immigrant, you need to make sure the information you have on the immigrant and his descendants while they are found in the United States (America) is as complete and correct as possible. It is particularly important to have accurate locations where events occurred. Documents with information about the ancestor's place of origin are most likely to be found as in depth research is done on every member of the family. I searched for years for information about one of my Irish ancestors and found the location from a church marriage record in Utah.

At this point, many researchers are stumped with what to do next. When I mentioned above that I found where my Irish ancestor was born in Ireland, the key phrase was and is, that "I searched for years..." It is tempting to avoid the difficulty of finding that key document that tells where the ancestor came from and jump to research in the country of origin, but that is almost always a very bad idea. When you start to seek help, it is very easy to get overwhelmed with websites and publications that talk about getting started with finding your immigrant ancestor. This is especially true when you begin to realize that they are mostly all saying about the same things. So why is what I am saying any different? That is a really good question.

I have several rules about genealogical research that apply directly to finding your immigrant ancestors.

#### **Rule One:**

Always start researching the immigrant's children and even grandchildren.

Most researchers begin with the immigrant and spend a lot of time looking for a record containing a record of the immigrant's birth. Since the immigrant was not born in America, the records about his or her birth are not likely here. So the idea is to find records preferably from the immigrant or his family that tell where they originated.

**Rule Two:**

Research the entire family and anyone living in the area who speaks the same language.

People tend to congregate in communities. If the immigrant came from a certain place, it is likely that the neighbors and associates came from the same or very near place.

**Rule Three:**

Search for church records.

It is sometimes possible that the immigrant "transferred" their membership in a church to the same denomination in America. The church priest or minister may have noted the congregation of origin.

**Rule Four:**

Use a [Record Selection Table](#) such as the one in the FamilySearch.org Research Wiki.

**Rule Five:**

Don't believe all you hear from family traditions.

It is possible that the family has a tradition based on ignorance. For example, a tradition that your ancestors came from Germany may obscure the fact that they came from the Austro-Hungarian Empire or even from Poland. With the changes in political boundaries in Europe and elsewhere, it is not a good idea to accept tradition as fact.

**Rule Six:**

Become aware of the laws in force at the time your ancestors immigrated.

Immigration laws in the United States and before when European countries claimed sovereignty, have changed over time. It is a good idea to make sure you understand how the laws may have affected your ancestors' arrival in America.

**Rule Seven:**

Be skeptical of the reasons given for your ancestors' name changes.

There are many reasons people changed their names when they came to America. Not all of these reasons were made public. Your ancestor may have left Europe or another location for political or criminal reasons. A very large percentage of those who came to America came as transported criminals or indentured servants. They may not have wanted this to be known.

That's enough rules for now.

Not too long ago, I wrote a very long series of blog posts on the elements of research. Here is a link to the last post in the series that contains links to all the other posts.

[http://genealogysstar.blogspot.com/2015/06/the-elements-of-research-part-twenty\\_28.html](http://genealogysstar.blogspot.com/2015/06/the-elements-of-research-part-twenty_28.html)

Let's just say that my perspective on research differs from what is traditionally assumed in the vast majority of books on finding your immigrant ancestor. When you strip away all of the suggested records and such that might help you find you ancestor's exact place of origin, you find that the key is to keep looking and expand your search to other relatives and even to people living in the same geographic area as did your ancestor.

Notwithstanding the fact that my opinions about research may differ from some, I appreciate the wealth of resources available both online and in books. Here is a sample list of resources online that help you to learn how to find you immigrant.

- [Ancestors, KBYU-TV](#)
- [Ancestry.com Immigration and Travel](#)
- [FamilySearch.org Research Wiki, United States Emigration and Immigration](#)
- [Coming to America: Finding Your Immigrant Ancestors](#)
- [Finding Your Ancestors in Immigration, Probate, Land and Military Records](#)
- [Finding the Birthplace of Your Immigrant Ancestor](#)
- [The Ellis Island Foundation](#)
- [Tips for Determining Your Ancestor's Probable Port of Arrival](#)
- [Emigration and Immigration Records online with Crista Cowan](#)
- [British National Archives, Emigration](#)

Here is a sample of books to get you started.

- Anderson, Chris, and Ernest Thode. *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your Germanic Ancestors: How to Find and Record Your Unique Heritage*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books, 2000.
- Association of European Migration Institutions. *A Key to Your North European Roots*. [Place of publication not identified]: [Association of European Migration Institutions], 1992.
- Brøderbund, and Learning Company. "Family Tree Maker Immigration Records: Dutch in America, 1800s." Learning Co., 2000.
- . "Family Tree Maker Immigration Records: Scottish Immigrants to North America, 1600s-1800s." Learning Co., 2000.
- Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo. *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Immigrant & Ethnic Ancestors*. Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 2000.
- . *A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your Immigrant & Ethnic Ancestors: How to Find and Record Your Unique Heritage*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Betterway Books, 2000.
- . *Ellis Island Research*, 2011.
- . *The Family Tree Guide to Finding Your Ellis Island Ancestors*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Family Tree Books, 2005.
- Chambers, Paul. *Early Modern Genealogy: Researching Your Family History 1600-1838*. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2006.
- Ciment, James, and Thomson Gale (Firm). *Encyclopedia of American Immigration*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001. [http://find.galegroup.com/openurl/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&url\\_ctx\\_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&req\\_dat=info:sid/gale:ugnid:nysl\\_me\\_ma\\_nhat&res\\_id=info:sid/gale:GVRL&ctx\\_enc=info:ofi:enc:UTF-8&rft\\_val\\_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:book&rft\\_id=info:sid/gale:bmcode:recid/5EEU](http://find.galegroup.com/openurl/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&url_ctx_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&req_dat=info:sid/gale:ugnid:nysl_me_ma_nhat&res_id=info:sid/gale:GVRL&ctx_enc=info:ofi:enc:UTF-8&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:book&rft_id=info:sid/gale:bmcode:recid/5EEU).
- Coddington, John Insley. *Bridging the Atlantic: Finding the Place of Origin of Your German Ancestor : Part I, United States*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1969.
- Colletta, John Philip. *They Came in Ships: A Guide to Finding Your Immigrant Ancestor's Arrival Record*. Orem, Utah: Ancestry, 2002.
- Colletta, John Philip, and Teaching Company. *Discovering Your Roots an Introduction to Genealogy*. Chantilly, VA: Teaching Company, 2014.

- Conte, Stephen, and Thomas A Peters. *[Locating Immigrant Ancestors]*. West Caldwell, N.J.: S. Conte, 1989.
- De Breffny, Brian M. Leese, and World Conference on Records and Genealogical Seminar. *Finding Your Italian and Italian-Swiss Ancestors and Emigration from Italy to the New World*. Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1969.
- Dollarhide, William. *British Origins of American Colonists, 1629-1775*. Bountiful, Utah: Heritage Quest Genealogical Service, 1997.
- Films for the Humanities & Sciences (Firm), and Films Media Group. *The Melting Pot*. New York, N.Y.: Films Media Group, 2014.  
<https://ezproxy.uu.edu/login?url=http://digital.films.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?aid=13753&xtid=60708>.
- Finding Ancestors in American and Carribean [sic] Ports*. Arlington, Va.; St. Louis, MO: National Genealogical Society] ; Jamb Tapes, 2011.
- Hart, Simon. *Bridging the Atlantic: Finding the Place of Origin of Your Germanic Ancestor : Part III, the Netherlands*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1969.
- Hedegaard, Ruth, Elizabeth Anne Melrose, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, Genealogy and Local History Section, and IFLA General Conference. *International Genealogy and Local History Papers Presented by the Genealogy and Local History Section at IFLA General Conferences 2001-2005*. München: K G Saur, 2008.  
<http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=364693>.
- Israel, Ottokar. *Bridging the Atlantic: Finding the Place of Origin of Your German Ancestor : Part II, Germany*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1969.
- Learning Company. "Family Tree Maker Scotch-Irish Settlers in America, 1500s-1800s: Immigration Records." Learning Co.], 2001.
- Lener, Dewayne J. *Tracing Your Italian Heritage in America*. Dallas, Texas: D.J. Lener, 1991.
- Marlin, Robert W. *My Sixteen: A Self-Help Guide to Finding Your Sixteen Grea-Great Grandparents*. Nashville, TN.: Land Yacht Press, 1996.
- Melnyk, Marcia Iannizzi, and Mary M Tedesco. *Tracing Your Italian Ancestors*, 2014.
- Miller, Olga K. *Migration, Emigration, Immigration. Volume II Volume II*. Logan, Utah: Everton, 1981.
- Num, Cora. *Family History Notebook: How to Find Australian Shipping and Immigration Records : A Check List Guide to Selected Published Sources*. Pearce, A.C.T.: Cora Num, 1995.
- . *How to Find Shipping and Immigration Records in Australia*. Pearce, A.C.T.: C. Num, 2002.
- Ollhoff, Jim. *Exploring Immigration: [discovering the Rich Heritage of America's Immigrants]*. Edina, MN: ABDO Pub., 2011.
- One-Step Web Pages a Potpouri [sic] of Genealogical Search Tools*. Arlington, Va.; St. Louis, MO: National Genealogical Society] ; Jamb Tapes, 2007.
- Public Archives of Nova Scotia. *Passenger Lists and Lists of Immigrants: The Public Arcives of Nova Scotia Finding Aid : Includes Emigrants to Australasia*. [Halifax, N.S.]: P.A.N.S., 1981.
- Quillen, W. Daniel. *Mastering Immigration & Naturalization Records*. Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y.: Cold Spring Press, 2011.
- Roehl, Evelyn M. *Finding Your Ancestors on Ship Passenger Lists: Books and Microfilms in the Puget Sound Region*. Seattle, Wash.: Kin Hunters Historic Research Service, 2003.
- Smith, Clifford Neal. *Nineteenth-Century Emigration of "Old Lutherans" from Eastern Germany (mainly Pomerania and Lower Silesia) to Australia, Canada, and the United States*. Baltimore, Md.: Reprinted for Clearfield Pub. by Genealogical Pub. Co., 2004.

## Find Your Immigrant Ancestors -- Border Crossings and other Records

By James L. Tanner

As genealogical researchers, we commonly come to the issue of our ancestors' arrival in a new country. For those immigrants coming to America, there is the inevitable border crossing. Of course, since we commonly hear references to "illegal aliens" (now through political correctness called undocumented aliens) we know that a substantial number of people crossed into the United States without going through formal border crossing procedures. If we go back in time, we eventually reach a time when there were no records kept of any border crossings at all. In other countries, during different political times, border crossings have also been an issue and records of the crossings may be available.

The United States has two major borders: Canada and Mexico. Those who come into the United States legally, would have arrived by coming through one of the many ports of entry. If the immigrant arrived by boat, it is possible that they came to one of the many ocean side ports of entry, but that is another topic for another post. In this post, I am concentrating on arrivals that came either from Canada or Mexico. If you want to take the standpoint of a Native American, all European entries into the Americas were by illegal aliens. But the practical reality is that during the early history of America, there were no controls on either entry or exit from the Colonies or later from the newly formed United States of America.

The border between the United States and Canada was established through [a series of treaties](#):

- The Treaty of Paris (1783)
- The Jay Treaty (1794)
- The London Convention (1818)
- The Ashburton Treaty (1842)
- The Oregon Treaty (1846)
- The Northwest Boundary Survey (1857-61)
- The Alaska Boundary Dispute (1903)

Controversy over the boundary continued and in 1925, the two countries formed the [International Boundary Commission](#).

Just from this very brief historical review, you can probably tell that finding an ancestor's boundary crossing record would likely be a matter of chance. I have also found that many of my ancestors crossed international boundaries with Canada and Mexico many times on business or for vacations or to see relatives. Other of my relatives likely crossed international boundaries on church business. For genealogists, this is one of those types of records that help identify your ancestors, but often leave more questions than answers.

The border between the United States and Mexico is more complicated than that with Canada. Mexico and the United States fought a war over the issue between the years of 1846 and 1848. Many of the soldiers and military leaders of that war become prominent in the subsequent U.S. Civil War. The Mexican-American War (1846 - 1848) is sometimes confused with the Mexican Border Conflict that lasted from 1910 to 1919. This conflict was also called the The Bandit War. See [Wikipedia: Border War \(1910-19\)](#). My Tanner Grandfather fought in the Border Conflict. If you listen to some of the politicians today, you might think that this border conflict is still being fought.

The reasons for the Mexican-American War (1846 -1848) are complex on both sides of the dispute. Part of the dispute came because of the Mexican War of Independence from Spain that ended in 1821. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo established the initial border between the United States and Mexico in 1848. That treaty established much of the U.S. border at the Rio Grande and added the states of California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, most of Arizona and Colorado and parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Wyoming. The southern portion of Arizona and New Mexico was added later through the Gadsden Purchase of 1853. Until well into the 20th Century, the border between the United States and Mexico was ill-defined. See [Wikipedia: Mexican-American War](#).

The first U.S. Federal law on immigration was passed in 1882. Arrivals at the Canadian border were first kept in 1895 and at the Mexican border about 1906. See [Mexican Border Crossing Records from the U.S. National Archives](#). Here is a quote from the National Archives website: Beginning in 1895, immigrants who arrived at Canadian seaports with the declared intention of proceeding to the United States were recorded and included in the immigration statistics. Other alien arrivals at land borders began to be reported in 1906, and reporting was fully established in 1908 under authority of an act of February 20, 1907 (34 Stat. 898).

Not all aliens entering via the Canadian and Mexican borders were necessarily counted for inclusion in the immigration statistics. Before approximately 1930, no count was made of residents of Canada, Newfoundland, or Mexico who had lived in those countries for a year or more if they planned to enter the United States for less than 6 months. However, from about 1930 to 1945, the following classes of aliens entering via the land borders were included in immigration statistics:

1. Those who had not been in the U.S. within 6 months, who came to stay more than 6 months;
2. Those for whom straight head tax was a prerequisite to admission, or for whom head tax was specially deposited and subsequently converted to a straight head tax account;
3. Those required by law or regulation to present an immigration visa or reentry permit, and those who surrendered either, regardless of whether they were required by law or regulation to do so;
4. Those announcing an intention to depart from a seaport in the United States for Hawaii or other insular possession of the U.S. or for a foreign country, except arrivals from Canada intending to return there by water; and
5. Those announcing an intention to depart across the other land boundary.

You can probably guess that, as I mentioned above, that finding a record of a border crossing would be a hit or miss situation. I suggest the following databases:

- [Ancestry.com](#)'s U.S., Border Crossings from Canada to U.S., 1895 -1956
- [Ancestry.com](#)'s Border Crossings: From Mexico to U.S. 1895 - 1964
- [U.S. Archives: Mexican Border Crossing Records](#)
- [By Way of Canada: U.S. Records of Immigration Across the U.S.-Canadian Border, 1895-1954](#) (St. Albans Lists) By Marian L. Smith
- [FamilySearch.org US Immigration Canadian Border Crossings](#)
- [FamilySearch.org US Immigration Mexican Border Crossings](#)

You might try the following books and publications also:

- Garza, Moises. *Mexican Genealogy Research Online: A Guide to Help You Discover Your Ancestry*, 2014.
- Ontario Genealogical Society, and Seminar. *Ontario Genealogical Society Seminar 2005 Syllabus: Cross Border Heritage*. Toronto: Ontario Genealogical Society, 2005.
- Ontario Genealogical Society, Seminar, Tom Mountain, and Ontario Genealogical Society, eds. *Seminar 2005 Syllabus: Cross Border Heritage*. Toronto, Ont.: Ontario Genealogical Society, 2005.
- United States, and National Archives and Records Administration. *Mexican Border Crossing Records*. [Washington, D.C.?]: National Archives and Records Administration, 2001.  
<http://www.nara.gov/genealogy/immigration/mexican.html>.
- United States, National Archives and Records Administration, Anne Bruner Eales, and Robert M Kvasnicka. *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives of the United States*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2000.
- Zaleski, Jan Steven, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Family History Library. *Guide to Records of Border Crossings between the United States & Canada 1895-1954*. Detroit: The Author, 1996.

## Find Your Immigrant Ancestors — Manifests and Passenger Lists

By James L. Tanner

Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Destination
4				
Joseph Grant	30	Male	Merchant	Western States
Thomas	35	Male	Merchant	"
Joseph	16	Male	Child	"
John	13	Male	Child	"
Mary Rayon	34	Female	Merchant	Western States
Thomas Howell	34	Male	Merchant	"
Edward Powell	35	Male	Merchant	"
Edward Russell	38	Male	"	"
Thomas Payne	32	Male	"	"
Daniel George	27	Male	"	"
Benedict Goodwin	30	Male	Mechanic	"
Thomas H. Hall	27	Male	Merchant	"
Ellen	26	Female	"	"
Thomas Howard	25	Male	"	"
John	3	Male	Child	"
Paul	32	Male	Merchant	"
Michael Daniels	29	Male	Merchant	Western States
Mary Miller	40	Female	Merchant	"
James	9	Male	Child	"
John	7	Male	Child	"
Ann	4	Female	Child	"
John	30	Male	Mechanic	"
Elizabeth Linton	10	Female	Child	"
Mary Ann	15	Female	Child	"
William	12	Male	Child	"
Robert	9	Male	Child	"
John	7	Male	Child	"
John	4	Male	Child	"
James	3	Male	Child	"
John	30	Male	Merchant	"

### US Atlantic Ports Passenger Lists, 1820-1873 and 1893-1959 for Elisabeth Linton

The act of entering a non-native country for the purpose of permanent residence is called "immigration." A person immigrates into a country. The act of leaving the home country for permanent removal is termed "emigration." There are records documenting both the arrival of an immigrant in the new country and the exit of the person from the homeland. The records maintained about the movement may contain names, ages, occupations, destinations and, infrequently, the place of origin or birth. Until the passage of the [Page Act of 1875](#), there were no governmental restrictions for entering into the United States or the previously established English Colonies. Most immigration studies and books focus on the waves of European immigrants that arrived in the United States during and after the 1800s. However, it is important to recognize that immigrants began coming to North America in the 1500s and there were several permanent



settlements in what is now the United States in that time period. Both France and Spain had established settlements in North America long before the first English speaking immigrants arrived in 1607 at Jamestown, Virginia.

Some of the earliest immigration records are the lists of passengers on boats coming to America. One of the most comprehensive of the historical studies of this huge river of immigration is "The Great Migration Study Project." Here is a brief description of the project from [GreatMigration.org](http://GreatMigration.org):

The goal of the Great Migration Study Project is to create comprehensive biographical and genealogical accounts of all immigrants to New England from 1620 to 1640, from the arrival of the Mayflower to the decline of immigration resulting from the beginning of the Civil War in England. The Project was conceived by Robert Charles Anderson and was proposed to the New England Historic Genealogical Society early in 1988. Anderson and the Society quickly reached an agreement and the Project officially began on 15 November 1988.

The key issue in using immigration records for genealogical research is connecting the names on the passenger lists and other associated documents with the immigrant once they have arrived in America. It is all too easy to make the assumption that the person with the same name is the same person. There is no lack of records, although it seems that the one you are looking for always seems to be missing. Another obstacle in connecting your ancestor to his or her European origin is the fact that many immigrants altered or changed their names at the time of their entry into America or even before arrival. Finding out the original name may take some extensive detective work.

The [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org) Research Wiki, starting with an article entitled, "[United States Emigration and Immigration](#)" has extensive links and explanations of the process and details of immigration into America and each of the states. The U.S. Census Bureau also has extensive, although general, information about the [foreign-born population of the United States from 1850-1990](#). The number of books, magazine articles, journal articles, websites and other information about immigration can be overwhelming.

The U.S. National Archives has immigration records for arrivals in the United States from foreign ports from about 1820 to 1982. These records are arranged by port of arrival. The most common ports of arrival were the following:

- Baltimore, Maryland
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Detroit, Michigan
- New Orleans, Louisiana
- New York City, New York
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Los Angeles, California
- San Francisco, California

I have discussed border crossings in another post. See "[Find Your Immigrant Ancestors -- Border Crossings and Other Records](#)." Sometimes, it is possible to find the passenger list from the name of the ship using arrival and departure records. Here is a selected list of websites with ship arrivals and departures:

- [Passenger Ship Arrivals](#)
- [Immigrant Arrivals: A Guide to Published Sources](#)

The image at the beginning of this post illustrates a typical passenger list. The image shows the arrival of my Great-great-grandmother, Elizabeth Linton and her children in Passamaquoddy, Maine from New Brunswick, Canada in 1851. A ship manifest is a document listing the cargo, passengers and crew of a ship, accordingly, a "passenger list" is included in the ship's manifest. Searching for passenger lists has been simplified due to their inclusion in online searchable databases. The most extensive is that on [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com) but you should be aware of the [Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild](http://ImmigrantShipsTranscribersGuild.com), another extensive resource. Here is a selected list of websites containing passenger lists.

- [Immigration Records, U.S. National Archives](http://ImmigrationRecords.U.S.NationalArchives.com) -- The records are usually either in the National Archives or on microfilm copies.
- [United States Immigration Online Genealogy Records](http://UnitedStatesImmigrationOnlineGenealogyRecords.com) -- This is an extensive list of links to records from each of the states.
- [Online Genealogy Records by Location](http://OnlineGenealogyRecordsbyLocation.com) -- Another extensive list.
- [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org) Catalog by location
- The Olive Tree Genealogy -- [Ships Passenger Lists](http://ShipsPassengerLists.com) -- A very helpful list.
- [Pennsylvania German Pioneers Passenger Lists](http://PennsylvaniaGermanPioneersPassengerLists.com)
- USGenWeb Project -- [Immigration and Passenger Arrival Records](http://ImmigrationandPassengerArrivalRecords.com)
- [One-Step Webpages by Stephen P. Morse](http://OneStepWebpagesbyStephenP.Morse.com)
- [Ellis Island -- Passenger Search](http://EllisIsland.com)
- [Castle Garden -- Immigration Center](http://CastleGarden.com)
- [Ship Passenger Lists and Records Online](http://ShipPassengerListsandRecordsOnline.com)
- [Finding Passenger Lists and Immigration Records 1820 - 1940s](http://FindingPassengerListsandImmigrationRecords1820-1940s.com)
- [Immigrant Ship Passenger Arrival Records](http://ImmigrantShipPassengerArrivalRecords.com)

The list could go on and on; as I noted, there are an overwhelming number of records. There are some very useful compilations of records in books. There are multi-volume series of books about immigrants that are available in some larger libraries. I will list one of the volumes of each series below for reference, but unfortunately, the each book in each series has usually been cataloged separately. These include the following titles usually published by Scholarly Resources Inc.:

- Germans to America
- Italians to America
- Irish to America
- Russians to America

Here is a selection of books containing information about immigrants by category.

*Assisted Immigrants' Arrivals at Victorian Ports, 1839-1871: Index to Ships' Passenger Lists.* Salt Lake City, Utah: Filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah, 1985.

Colletta, John Philip. *They Came in Ships: A Guide to Finding Your Immigrant Ancestor's Arrival Record.* Orem, Utah: Ancestry, 2002.

Daniels, Roger. *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life.* New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1990.

Dobson, David. *Ships from Ireland to Early America, 1623-1850.* Baltimore, MD: Printed for Clearfield Co. by Genealogical Pub. Co., 1999.

*Early Irish Emigrants to America, 1803-1806.* S.l.: s.n.

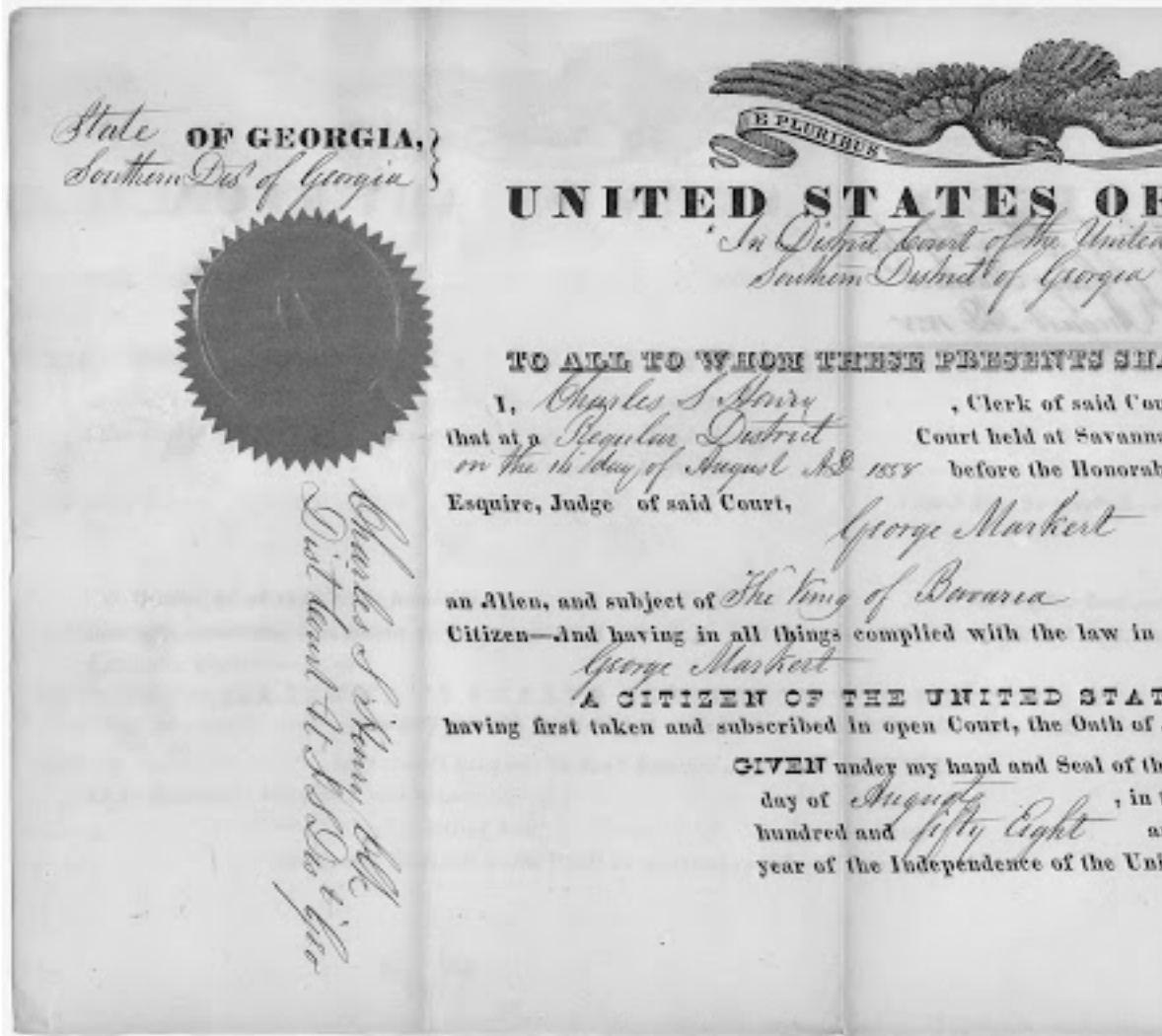
Genealogy.com. "Russians to America, 1850-1896 Passenger and Immigration Lists." Genealogy.com, 2001.

- Glazier, Ira A. *Emigration from the United Kingdom to America: Lists of Passengers Arriving at U.S. Ports*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2006.
- Glazier, Ira A, and P. William Filby. *Germans to America: Lists of Passengers Arriving at U.S. Ports*. Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1988.
- . *Italians to America: Lists of Passengers Arriving at U.S. Ports, 1880-1899*. Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1992.
- Grubb, Farley Ward. *German Immigrant Servant Contracts Registered at the Port of Philadelphia, 1817-1831*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1994.
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). *Immigrant Records, 1884-1952*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Microfilmed by IMI for the Balch Institute, 1980.
- Irish Genealogical Foundation (U.S.). *Names of Irish Passengers to America before 1850: A Selection Listing over 7,000 Individuals Embarking from Irish Ports and Arriving in America*. Kansas City, MO: Irish Families : Irish Genealogical Foundation, 2000.
- . *Names of Irish Passengers to America: With Dates, Ports & Ship Names : From the Archives of the Irish Genealogical Foundation*. Kansas City, Mo.: Irish Genealogical Foundation, 2000.
- Johnson, Eileen B. *They Came Direct: Immigrant Boat Direct to the Port of Wide Bay*. [Maryborough, Qld.]: [E.B. Johnson], 1994.
- Mission, Walter C. *Foreign Protestant Passenger Lists*. [Lunenburg, N.S.]: [South Shore Genealogical Society], 1999.
- Mitchell, Brian. *Irish Passenger Lists, 1803-1806: Lists of Passengers Sailing from Ireland to America : Extracted from the Hardwicke Papers*. Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co, 1995.
- . "Irish Passenger Lists, 1803-1806: Lists of Passengers Sailing from Ireland to America Extracted from the Hardwicke Papers." Genealogical Pub. Co, 1995.
- . *Irish Passenger Lists, 1803-1806: Lists of Passengers Sailing from Ireland to America : Extracted from the Hardwicke Papers*. Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co, 1995.
- . *Irish Passenger Lists, 1847-1871: Lists of Passengers Sailing from Londonderry to America on Ships of the J. & J. Cooke Line and the McCorkell Line*. Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co, 1988.
- . *Irish Passenger Lists, 1847-1871: Lists of Passengers Sailing from Londonderry to America on Ships of the J. & J. Cooke Line and the McCorkell Line*. Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co, 1988.
- Natal (South Africa). European Immigration Department. *Immigrant Records, 1845-1911*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah, 1978.
- Natal (South Africa). Indian Immigration Department. *Civil registration (immigrant passenger passes and passenger births - Indians), Natal, 1888-1941*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah, 1998.
- New South Wales, Immigration Office, Archives Authority of New South Wales, and Archives Authority of New South Wales. *Immigration Persons on Bounty Ships (agent's Immigrant lists), 1838-1851*. Genealogical Society, 1985.
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## Find Your Immigrant Ancestors - Naturalization Records -- Part One

By James L. Tanner



"The naturalization petition of George Markert. - NARA - 279281" by Unknown or not provided - U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_naturalization\\_petition\\_of\\_George\\_Markert.\\_-\\_NARA\\_-\\_279281.jpg#/media/File:The\\_naturalization\\_petition\\_of\\_George\\_Markert.\\_-\\_NARA\\_-\\_279281.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_naturalization_petition_of_George_Markert._-_NARA_-_279281.jpg#/media/File:The_naturalization_petition_of_George_Markert._-_NARA_-_279281.jpg)

One of the thorny issues of genealogical research is determining the place of origin of an ancestor. If you are doing research in the United States, unless your ancestors were Native Americans, you will inevitably have to deal with discovering the place of origin of an immigrant. One of the most potentially productive areas of research involve naturalization records. However, there are some definite time related limitations on their usefulness. As you go back in time, there are fewer records and those that do exist become less valuable due to their lack of detail. For this reason, it is important to understand the naturalization process as well as the general time periods in which the records can be expected to be found.

The earliest naturalization laws were not passed until 1790. It is important to realize that when a person entered the area now part of the United States of America, their entry was made according to the laws of the various European countries that controlled the area of entry. For example, immigrants who settled in the area now known as Arizona, New Mexico or California before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 were entering into Spain or Mexico. This is an important fact to remember. Likewise, if someone came from England before 1776, they were essentially moving from one part of the British Empire to another part and were not strictly "immigrants." They did not change their citizenship upon their arrival in America. Accordingly, there are no "naturalization" records available during those time periods. If people came from other areas of the world, then they would most likely be found in ship passenger arrival records. For records of arrivals on the Eastern Seaboard from 1538 to 1819 see the following books. This is a supplement (with a few duplicates) of the list I included in my post on passenger lists.

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- Filby, P. William, and Dorothy M Lower. *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index*. Detroit, MI: Gale Research Inc., 1992.
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- . *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index: 1991-95 Cumulated Supplements in Three Volumes*. Detroit, MI: Gale Research Inc., 1995.

- Filby, P. William, and Mary K Meyer. *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index ... Vol. 2, Vol. 2.* Detroit: Gale Research, 1981.
- . *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index ... Vol. 3, Vol. 3.* Detroit: Gale Research, 1981.
- Filby, P. William, and Mary Keysor Meyer. *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index: A Guide to Published Arrival Records of 300,000 Passengers Who Came to the United States and Canada in the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries.* Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research Co., 1980.
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Naturalization is defined as the process by which an alien becomes a national citizen. The process in the United States can be divided into two general time periods: Pre-1906 and naturalization after 1906. This time division is based on the fact that prior to 1906 naturalization was handled by local court's of record, whether municipal, county, state or Federal. In 1906 the Naturalization Acts required all naturalizations to be handled by the Federal District Courts and all the records were transferred, after that time, to the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The Pre-1906 records are scattered in archives and other repositories around the country.

Here is a summary of the early immigration laws from the [U.S. National Archives website](#):  
 An act of March 2, 1819 (3 Stat. 489) required the captain or master of a vessel arriving at a port in the United States or any of its territories from a foreign country to submit a list of passengers to

the collector of customs, beginning January 1, 1820. The act also required that the collector submit a quarterly report or abstract, consisting of copies of these passenger lists, to the Secretary of State, who was required to submit such information at each session of Congress. After 1874, collectors forwarded only statistical reports to the Treasury Department. The lists themselves were retained by the collector of customs. Customs records were maintained primarily for statistical purposes.

On August 3, 1882, Congress passed the first Federal law regulating immigration (22 Stat. 214-215); the Secretary of the Treasury had general supervision over it between 1882 and 1891. The Office of Superintendent of Immigration in the Department of the Treasury was established under an act of March 3, 1891 (26 Stat. 1085), and was later designated a bureau in 1895 with responsibility for administering the alien contract-labor laws. In 1900 administration of the Chinese-exclusion laws was added. Initially the Bureau retained the same administrative structure of ports of entry that the Customs Service had used. By the turn of the century it began to designate its own immigration districts, the numbers and boundaries of which changed over the years.

In 1903 the Bureau became part of the Department of Commerce and Labor; its name was changed to the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization when functions relating to naturalization were added in 1906. In 1933 the functions were transferred to the Department of Labor and became the responsibility of the newly formed Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Under President Roosevelt's Reorganization Plan V of 1940, the INS was moved to the Department of Justice. The INS was abolished, and its immigration and naturalization recordkeeping functions were transferred to the new Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services within the new Department of Homeland Security, established January 24, 2003, by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (116 Stat. 2135, 2205).



Find Your Immigrant Ancestors - Naturalization Records -- Part Two  
By James L. Tanner

5

NATURALIZATION RECORD.

We it Remembered, That on the Eighteenth day of February in the year of our Lord, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty, William C. Bassett late of England, in the Kingdom of Great Britain, at present of Salt Lake County in the Territory aforesaid, appeared in the Third Judicial District Court of the United States, in and for Utah Territory, and applied to the said Court to be admitted to become a Citizen of the United States of America, pursuant to the directions and requirements of the several Acts of Congress in relation thereto. And the said William C. Bassett having thereupon produced to the Court such evidence, made such declaration and renunciation, and taken such oath as are by the said Acts required; thereupon it is ordered by the said Court, that the said William C. Bassett be admitted, and he was accordingly admitted by the said Court to be a Citizen of the United States of America.

By the Court,  
John A. Hunter Judge.

We it Remembered, That on the Nineteenth day of February in the year of our Lord, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty, John Erickson late of Sweden, in the Kingdom of Sweden, at present of Salt Lake County in the Territory aforesaid, appeared in the Third Judicial District Court of the United States, in and for Utah Territory, and applied to the said Court to be admitted to become a Citizen of the United States of America, pursuant to the directions and requirements of the several Acts of Congress in relation thereto. And the said John Erickson having thereupon produced to the Court such evidence, made such declaration and renunciation, and taken such oath as are by the said Acts required; thereupon it is ordered by the said Court, that the said John Erickson be admitted, and he was accordingly admitted by the said Court to be a Citizen of the United States of America.

By the Court,  
John A. Hunter Judge.

We it Remembered, That on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of February in the year of our Lord, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty, Thomas Sorensen late of England, in the Kingdom of Great Britain, at present of Wasatch County in the Territory aforesaid, appeared in the Third Judicial District Court of the United States, in and for Utah Territory, and applied to the said Court to be admitted to become a Citizen of the United States of America, pursuant to the directions and requirements of the several Acts of Congress in relation thereto. And the said Thomas Sorensen having thereupon produced to the Court such evidence, made such declaration and renunciation, and taken such oath as are by the said Acts required; thereupon it is ordered by the said Court, that the said Thomas Sorensen be admitted, and he was accordingly admitted by the said Court to be a Citizen of the United States of America.

By the Court,  
John A. Hunter Judge.

Example of post-1906 Declaration of Intent and Naturalization

Very few subjects in American history have been more contentious than immigration and conflicts over immigration and immigration policies continue to this day to be subject to political fighting at the highest levels. For genealogists, this controversy is both good news and bad news. The good news is that naturalization produces genealogically valuable records. The bad news is that those records are often not so easy to find.

I once considered taking on immigration law as an emphasis in my law practice. I spent a considerable time reviewing all of the existing laws and the status of immigrants at the time and concluded that trying to follow the immigration laws in the United States was equal to or greater than the Internal Revenue Tax Laws and rulings. I gave up the idea.

Finding the naturalization records before 1906 takes some degree of detective-like investigation. In the first instance, you need to ascertain the exact location of the ancestor, at about the time the initial naturalization petition was filed. Next, the history of the court system in that place needs to be studied to determine where the petition would have been filed, that is, which court could have had jurisdiction to declare citizenship. If the court is identified, then the records also need to be located. Once located they need to be searched. It must be understood that, in some cases, the petition could have been filed in several different places.

One good indicator of the existence of an ancestor's naturalization record is a mention of naturalization in the U.S. Federal Census. The naturalization status of foreign-born people was listed on the Census records from 1890 to 1930. But the 1890 U.S. Federal Census records were partially lost to a fire and the rest destroyed by the U.S. Government with a very few exceptions. The problem in finding naturalization records prior to 1906 is highlighted in a statement made in a 1905 "[\*Report to the President of the Commission on Naturalization\*](#)" that states: The methods of making and keeping the naturalization records in both the Federal and State courts are as various as the procedure in such cases. Thus the declaration of intention in some courts consists merely of the bare statement of the intention and the name and allegiance of the alien, while in other courts it also includes a history of the alien.... In a majority of courts alien applicants are not required to make the declaration of intention required by law ... and in other courts he is. Previous to 1903 a majority of courts did not require petitions or affidavits; other courts did. Some courts keep a naturalization record separate from the other records; other courts include the naturalization record in the regular minutes of the court. Some records contain full histories of the aliens, but a majority of the records show only the name, nationality, oath of allegiance, and date of admission. See Naturalization, United States Commission on, Milton Dwight Purdy, Gaillard Hunt, and Richard K. Campbell. *Report to the President of the Commission on Naturalization Appointed by Executive Order March 1, 1905* ... U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905, page 89.

In most cases, applying for naturalization was a two-step process; the alien filed a "declaration of intent" after being in the United States for at least two years and then after 3 more years filed a "petition for naturalization." Before 1906, the content of these documents varied from court to court as indicated in the above quote. A summary of the problem of locating the records is given in a short article entitled "[\*Naturalization Records\*](#)" on the U.S. National Archives website.

As the U.S. National Archives article point out, from 1790 to 1922:

Wives of naturalized men automatically became citizens. This also meant that an alien woman who married a U.S. citizen automatically became a citizen. (Conversely, an American woman who married an alien lost her U.S. citizenship, even if she never left the United States.) From 1790 to 1940, children under the age of 21 automatically became naturalized citizens upon the naturalization of their father. Unfortunately, however, names and biographical information about

wives and children are rarely included in declarations or petitions filed before September 1906. See [Prologue Magazine, Summer 1998, Vol. 30, No. 2 "Any woman who is now or may hereafter be married..." Women and Naturalization, ca 1802-1940, by Marian L. Smith.](#)

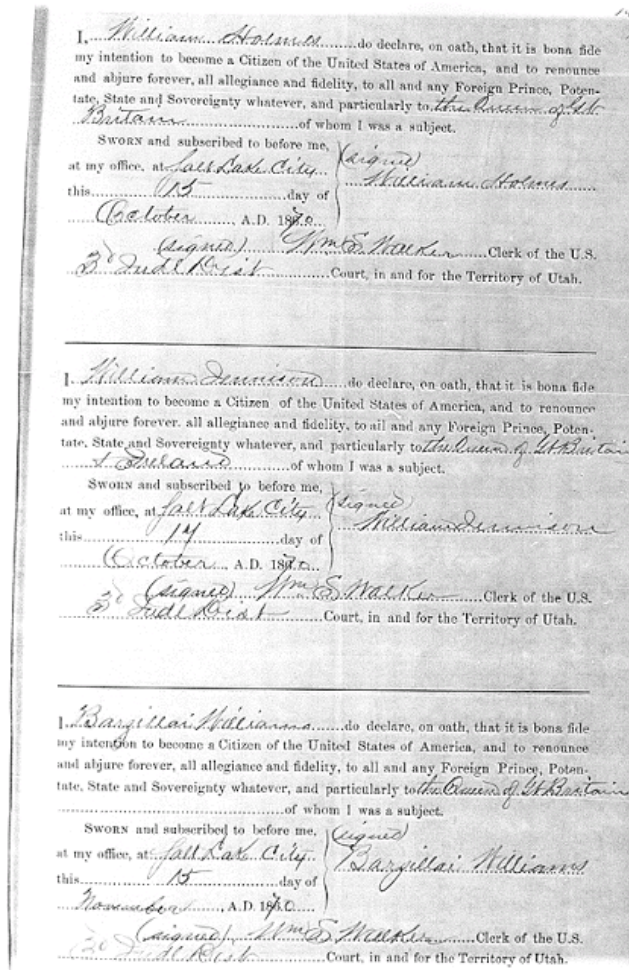
The [Utah State Archives article on Naturalization and Citizenship Records](#) explains the status of wives and children more completely. Here is a quote:

With the passage of the Cable Act in 1922 women were allowed to naturalize on their own (42 Stat. 1021). A married woman whose husband was a citizen did not need to file a Declaration of Intent. A woman who had lost her citizenship through marriage and regained it under the Cable Act could file to naturalize in any naturalization court. In 1936, Congress passed a new act allowing a woman who had lost her citizenship between 1907-1922 through marriage to a foreign national to take an oath of allegiance for citizenship to be restored.

From 1790 to 1940 children under the age of 21 automatically assumed citizenship with the naturalization of their father. Before 1906 names of minor children rarely appear on the declaration or petition forms. If there was no father who could naturalize himself and his family, a minor alien who had lived in the U.S. for at least five years could file the declaration and petition together before his 23rd birthday.

In 1929, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service began issuing a "Certificate of Derivative Citizenship" to women and children who had gained naturalization through the naturalization of their husband or father.

See also, "[Tracing Women Using Immigration and Naturalization Records \(National Institute\)](#)" from the FamilySearch.org Research Wiki.



### Example of pre-1906 Declaration of Intent and Naturalization

At different times, various minority groups such as Chinese, Blacks, Native Americans and Hawaiians, were not permitted citizenship. Here is a list of the exclusionary acts as set forth in the [Utah State Archives, Naturalization and Citizenship Records](#):

- 1882 - Chinese Exclusion Act, which would be extended in some form until 1902 (22 Stat. 58).
- 1891 - Classes of persons denied right to immigrate to U.S.—insane, paupers, persons with contagious diseases, persons convicted of felonies or misdemeanors of moral turpitude, and polygamists (26 Stat. 1084)
- 1900 - Hawaii Organic Act, granting U.S. citizenship to residents on or before August 12, 1898 (31 Stat. 141).
- 1921 - Quota Act limiting immigration from each country based on population in 1910 Census (42 Stat. 5).
- 1924 - Immigration Act with more limits, especially from Southern and Eastern Europe, plus Middle Easterners, East Asians, and Asian Indians (43 Stat. 153).
- 1924 - Indian Citizenship Act, granting citizenship to all Native Americans born within the borders of United States (43 Stat. 253).

- 1965 - "National quotas" replaced with "annual ceilings" for number of immigrants, strongly relying on family relationships for granting requisite visas for immigration (9 Stat. 911).

After 1940, finding an immigrant became somewhat easier. Here is a [quote from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#):

The Immigration and Naturalization Service ("INS") started issuing each non-citizen a unique A-number in 1940 as part of the Alien Registration Program (see [Alien Registration Forms](#)). On April 1, 1944, INS started using A-numbers to create individual files, called A-Files. INS opened or consolidated A-Files for every immigrant who arrived after April 1, 1944 or naturalized after April 1, 1956, and for immigration law enforcement matters.

Before A-Files, many aliens had more than one file with the agency. For example, an immigrant might have a Visa File, an AR-2, and a C-File. Accessing all agency records for an alien often required INS personnel to search multiple records systems and indexes. INS introduced A-Files to streamline its record keeping. Issuing each immigrant an A-number allowed INS to create one file for each immigrant containing all the agency's records for the subject.

From April 1, 1944 to March 31, 1956, A-Files contained all INS records of any active case of an immigrant not yet naturalized. When the agency opened an A-File for a non-citizen with previous agency records, INS consolidated its other records for the subject into the new A-File. Upon naturalization, INS consolidated (refiled) all agency records of the new citizen in his or her [Certificate File](#) ("C-File") and the A-File ceased to exist. Beginning April 1, 1956, INS started filing all agency records for active cases, including naturalization records, in the subject's A-File. USCIS continues this practice today.

I didn't particularly consider that this post would become a series, but I guess I forgot how complicated immigration and naturalization could be. The records, when found, can be very valuable or of little or no value and there is no way to predict what you will find. But I do need to continue with this discussion.

This is the third in a series of posts about naturalization records. Here is a link to the first installment:

[http://genealogysstar.blogspot.com/2015/09/find-your-immigrant-ancestors\\_21.html](http://genealogysstar.blogspot.com/2015/09/find-your-immigrant-ancestors_21.html)  
<http://genealogysstar.blogspot.com/2015/09/find-your-immigrant-ancestors.html>

By the time I got into writing the second part of this series on naturalization, I began to remember the complexity of the immigration laws in the United States and I realized that this subject was going to continue for a while. Who can become a citizen of the United States and the status of immigrants has always been a political football and it is one of many subjects I can get very involved in and move into my tirade mode.

As I have noted, discovering the origin of the immigrant is one of the most challenging and at the same time, most common, issues facing genealogists. I spent a considerable time searching for the birthplace of one of my ancestors in Ireland and thought I might find the place noted in naturalization records in Pennsylvania. In this case, I looked for records from his children who were born in Ireland. I was disappointed to find that the naturalization documents listed the birthplaces as "Ireland" and that was not much help.

The question for this installment is where are the records?

As I noted in the last installment, before 1906, naturalization was handled by local courts. So the documents are scattered all over the country. After 1906, the records have been kept in the National Archives. There are some concentrations of the records however. Here are some of the major repositories of naturalization records:

- Ancestry.com has a substantial number of collections dealing with passenger lists, immigration and naturalization records. I suggest consulting the Card Catalog and searching in specific collections.
- FamilySearch.org also has a substantial number of records in their Historical Record Collections. There are also a large number of records still in microfilm format. I suggest searching the Catalog by location; country, state, county and city or town.
- The U.S. National Archives also has records, in both paper and microfilm formats, for naturalizations both before 1906 and after. You can rent microfilm copies of some of the records. See [Naturalization Records](#).
- WorldVitalRecords.com is also a substantial database containing a substantial collection of naturalization records. It is part of [MyHeritage.com](#) and you can also search through the [MyHeritage.com](#) website.
- [German Roots Online Searchable Naturalization Records and Indexes](#). A list of links to state and local websites.
- [FamilySearch.org Research Wiki](#). A series of articles on Immigration and Naturalization with substantial links.
- The Olive Tree Genealogy [NaturalizationRecords.com](#), another list of websites.
- [Your Guide to Finding and using Naturalization Records](#).
- [Cyndi's List, Immigration, Emigration and Migration Records](#).

There are many more websites with articles, lists and links. Do a Google search on "online naturalization records" for hundreds of links.

How do you go about finding the records?

The first step is locating the immigrant in the United States. You have to identify a specific event in the ancestor's life at a specific time and place. Without a specific location of an event, you cannot be sure you are searching the right records. Next, you need to review census records and other records to see if there is any mention of the ancestor's naturalization. You need this information to narrow the extent of the record search. Once you have a place and a time frame, you need to identify the courts having jurisdiction in the time and place where you ancestor lived and determine which courts would have had jurisdiction over naturalization petitions. Moving on, you then need to determine where the courts records are located and search the records (if they still exist). As I indicated, before 1906, you might be disappointed at the lack of information in the record. Then again, you might hit the jackpot.