

From the Old World to the New: Tracing Ancestors in Immigration and Naturalization Records

Courtesy of Williamson County Archives

Emigrate: To exit a country

Immigrate: To go into a country

Push Factors

- Religious persecution
- Economic conditions
- Wars
- Forced exit: slaves and convicts

Pull Factors

- Religious freedom
- Food/land availability
- Employment opportunities
- Family members in America



Immigration Resources: 1607 - 1819

- Before 1820, records of immigrants were not required to be filed.
- Original manifests can be located in either the city/state of departure or arrival.
- Immigrant lists have been reconstructed using records other than manifests:

- Cargo manifests
- Oaths of allegiance
- Convict and pauper lists
- Naturalizations
- Church records
- Legal papers

Highlighted Resources:

1. Wills in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury
 - Some landholders in Virginia had their wills probated in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury in England.
 - These wills can prove links between emigrants from England and their towns of origin.
2. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database
 - Search particular voyages of slave ships, examine the volume of the slave trade, and explore the African name database.
3. *Passenger and Immigration Lists* and *Passenger and Immigration Lists Bibliography, 1538-1900*
 - Reconstructed passenger lists and sources

Pre-Departure Records: 1770s - 1900

- Records about an individual's or family's immigration are often held in the country of origin.
- Records available in the country of origin vary and can include:
 - Permission to emigrate records
 - Passports
 - Details in parish registers

Highlighted Resources:

1. Germany: Permission to Emigrate Records
 - Citizens of German states like Baden, Wurttemberg, and Bavaria were required to apply to the government to emigrate.
 - Records can include names, ages, marriages, occupations, reasons for emigrating, and payment plans.
2. Sweden: Moving Out Records
 - Parishioners had to inform their minister when they moved from their parish.
 - Minister gave them a certificate to show the minister of the new parish.
 - If they emigrated, the destination country would be recorded.

Passenger Lists and Arrival Information: 1820-1945

- Before 1819, the U.S. did not have laws restricting voluntary immigration.
- Steerage Act of 1819:
 - Required captain of a vessel arriving at a U.S. port to submit a list of passengers to customs.
 - Regulated the conditions of travel.
- National Archives has few passenger lists prior to 1820.

Customs Passenger Lists

- 1820 - 1891
- Prepared by ship's captain and filed with the collector of customs upon arrival.
- Information: name, age, occupation, and port of departure

Immigration Passenger Lists

- 1891-1957
- 1891: Superintendent of Immigration
- 1906: Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization
- Information: name, relationship of family members, relative's name, address, and birthplace

Colonial Naturalization Process

- English people living in the colonies were full subjects of England, so naturalization not necessary.
- Colonial charters ambiguous about naturalization of aliens, but typically required oath of allegiance.

Naturalization: 1790 -1906

- Naturalization Act of 1790
 - 1st naturalization law passed by U.S. Congress
 - No uniform standards
 - Any court of record could generate citizenship records.

Naturalization: After 1906

- 1906: Immigration Naturalization Service (INS)
 - Federal government regulated the process.
 - Pre-printed forms
 - Naturalization forms were distributed to specific state and federal courts.

General Naturalization Process

- 5 year minimum process
- 1. Declaration of Intent, or "First Papers"
 - Filed after living 2 years in the U.S.
 - Often contains important genealogical information
- 2. Petition for Naturalization
 - Filed after 3 additional years
- 3. Certificate of Citizenship



Women and Naturalization

- Immigrant women had the ability to become citizens.
- Laws often excluded women from the process.
- 1804-1922 - Derivative citizenship
- Marital status often dictated a woman's loss or gain of citizenship.
- Act of 1922
 - All women had to apply for their citizenship.

Veterans and Naturalization

- Act of 1862
 - Men who served in the Army & were honorably discharged were not required to submit a Declaration of Intent.
- Act of 1918
 - Soldiers could be naturalized at military camps.
 - No residency requirement.
 - Declaration of intent not required.

Finding Immigration and Naturalization Records Online

- Castlegarden.org: Immigration database
- Libertyellisfoundation.org: Immigration database
- Ancestry.com: Large collection of passenger lists and naturalization paperwork and indexes
- Familysearch.org: Indexes for many states, but most do not include original images
- Stevemorse.org: Collection of online resources, both free and subscription