

Three Eras of US Immigration and Nationality Records

EARLY
18th & 19th Century

GREAT WAVE
Early 20th Century

RECENT
Late 20th Century

1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Customs Lists, 1820-1892							Immigration Lists, 1892-1954									
						Chinese Exclusion Act Files, 1882-1944										
							Border Arrival Manifests, 1895-1954									
							Immigration Correspondence, 1893-1944									
									Visa Files, 1924-44							
											Registry Files, 1929-44					
												AR-2				
													A-Files, 1944 - present			
Court Naturalization Records, 1790-1992																
									Certificate Files, 1906-1956						A-Files, 1944-	
											Natz Corresp., 1906-1944					

NON-INS Records

INS Records at NARA

INS Records at USCIS

Researching USCIS Records

EARLY Era, 18th & 19th Century

What	Where
Customs Lists, 1820-1892 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Records of the US Customs ServiceSurviving records of passengers arriving from foreign ports to US ports of entry	National Archives , Record Group 36 <ul style="list-style-type: none">http://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/ Also online
Court Naturalization Records, 1790-1906 <ul style="list-style-type: none">The original and only records of naturalizations by courts, including Federal, State, and local courts	Federal court records at the National Archives , Record Group 21 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Available at the National Archives and some onlinehttp://www.archives.gov/research/naturalization/ State and local court records at courthouses, State archives, historical societies, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Some records and indices online across various websites

GREAT WAVE Era, Early-Mid 20th Century

What	Where
Passenger Arrival Manifests <ul style="list-style-type: none">Immigration Lists, 1892-1954Border Arrival Manifests, 1895-1954	National Archives Records of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85 http://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/
Chinese Exclusion Files, 1882-1944 Case files opened at ports of entry and departure under the Chinese Exclusion Acts.	National Archives http://www.archives.gov/research/chinese-americans/index.html
Immigration Correspondence, 1893-1944 Case files covering appeals, investigations, deportations, and any matter requiring a decision from INS in Washington, DC	National Archives Records of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, Entry 7, Entry 9 See guidance and handouts at http://www.uscis.gov/research
Naturalization Correspondence, 1906-1944 Case files covering every conceivable question and matter regarding naturalization and citizenship. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Name Index to Bureau of Naturalization Correspondence Files, 1906 – 1946, NARA Identifier 1593296	National Archives Records of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, Entry 26 See guidance and handouts at http://www.uscis.gov/research
Court Naturalization Records, 1906-1956 Original records of naturalization and some repatriations performed judicially in Federal, State, and local courts.	Federal court records at the National Archives , Record Group 21 http://www.archives.gov/research/naturalization/ State and Local Courts Records at courthouses, State archives, historical societies, etc.
Visa Files, from July 1, 1924, to March 31, 1944¹ Original, official arrival records of immigrants admitted for permanent residence under provisions of the Immigration Act of 1924	USCIS Genealogy Program http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy <ul style="list-style-type: none">Some visas relate to re-entries of immigrants who first arrived before 1924.
Registry Files, from March 2, 1929, to March 31, 1944¹ Original, official records documenting the creation of immigrant arrival records for persons who entered the United States prior to July 1, 1924, and for whom no arrival	USCIS Genealogy Program http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy <ul style="list-style-type: none">Most Registry Files relate to immigrants who arrived before 1924, and naturalized

Researching USCIS Records

record could be found.

between 1929 and 1944.

Microfilmed Alien Registration Forms, from August 1, 1940, to March 31, 1944.¹

Microfilmed copies of 5.5 million Alien Registration Forms (Form AR-2) completed by all aliens age 14 and older, resident in or entering the United States between the dates given.

USCIS Genealogy Program

<http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>

- Some arrivals date back to 1870's, 1880's

Certificate Files (C-Files), from September 27, 1906, to April 1, 1956.

INS copies of records relating to all U.S. naturalizations in Federal, state, county, or municipal courts, overseas military naturalizations, replacement of old law naturalization certificates, and the issuance of Certificates of Citizenship in derivative, repatriation, and resumption cases.

USCIS Genealogy Program

<http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>

- Some arrivals date back to 1860's, birthdates to 1840's

C-Files Series:

- Naturalization "C" C-Files – Duplicate Declaration, Petition, and Certificate of Naturalization, and additional related documents.
- Derivative "A" C-Files - Certificates of Citizenship documenting derivative or "acquired" citizenship subsequent to birth (i.e., through the naturalization of a parent or a spouse). These are NOT A-Files.
- "AA" Files - Certificate of Citizenship documenting derivative or "acquired" citizenship by birth outside the United States or its possessions (i.e., child of US citizen born abroad).
- "OM" Files - Naturalization files related to persons naturalized overseas while members of the Armed Forces of the United States during World War II.
- "OS" Files - Naturalization files created for members of the US Armed Forces naturalized outside the United States under the Act of June 30, 1953.
- "B" Files - Certificates of Naturalization or repatriation issued to persons who regained US citizenship, prior to January 13, 1941, either by taking the prescribed oath of renunciation and allegiance before a naturalization court in the US or before a US diplomatic or consular officer abroad, following the loss of citizenship by reason of service in the armed forces of an allied foreign country in WW I or WW II, or by voting in a foreign political election during WW II. - Not duplicated in court records.
- "D" Files – Same as "B" above, but Certificates of Naturalization or repatriation issued to persons who regained US citizenship, on or after January 13, 1941.
- "3904/-" Files - Containing applications to resume citizenship by persons who lost citizenship as described under "B" and "D" files above, but who never applied for a certificate and for whom no prior certificate file exists.
- "OL" Files - "Old Law" Naturalization Certificates issued by INS to replace naturalization certificates which were lost, destroyed, or mutilated, where the original naturalization certificate was granted under the procedure in effect prior to the Act of June 29, 1906.
- "129/-" Files - Files documenting the repatriation of women who lost US citizenship by marriage to an alien prior to 1922, and who resumed US citizenship under the Act of June 25, 1936.

Alien Files (A-files) below 8 million

- Aliens registered between August 1940 and May 1, 1951

Individual alien case files (A-files) became the official file for all immigration records created or consolidated since April 1, 1944 (any case active after April 1, 1944). A-Files opened on immigrants or naturalized citizens who arrived prior to 1940 may contain all available INS records of that immigrant (i.e., the records created prior to 1940).

USCIS Genealogy Program

<http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>

Records of immigrants who are deceased / born more than 100 years ago:

USCIS Freedom of Information Program

<http://www.uscis.gov/foia>

- Alien Files (A-files) above 8 million

About A-files at the National Archives, see also

<http://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/aliens/>

Researching USCIS Records

RECENT Era, Since the 1950's

What	Where
<p>Alien Files (A-files) above 8 million</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can relate to any case that opened after May 1, 1951 <p>Individual alien case files (A-files) of persons who arrived or adjusted to immigrant status on or after May 1, 1951. (If the immigrant naturalized prior to April 1, 1956, see Naturalization Certificate Files above.)</p>	<p>USCIS Freedom of Information Program http://www.uscis.gov/foia</p> <p>About A-files, see also http://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/aliens/</p>
<p>Passenger Arrivals, 1954-1982 (air manifests, crew lists)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Passenger arrival records after ca. 1947 contain little information	<p>National Archives: Records of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85 http://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/</p>
<p>Court Naturalization Records, 1956-1992</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The original and only records of naturalizations by courts, including Federal, State, and local courts• The Immigration Act of 1990 ended judicial naturalization in 1992	<p>Federal court records at the National Archives, Record Group 21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Available at the National Archives and some online• http://www.archives.gov/research/naturalization/ <p>State and local court records at courthouses, State archives, historical societies, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some records and indices online across various websites

Visit

The banner features the title "History and Genealogy" in a large, bold font. To the right of the title is a silhouette of a family (two adults and a child) and a historical document with the number "No. A-50603". Below the title are four colored buttons: "Explore Our History" (red), "Discover Our Library" (blue), "Research Guidance" (green), and "Family History Research" (dark blue). At the bottom, there are two sign-up options: a blue button with a white "G" for "Sign-up for Genealogy notifications or updates" and a red button with a white "H" for "Sign-up for History & Library notifications or updates".

<http://www.uscis.gov/historyandgenealogy>

ⁱ In cases where the immigrant naturalized or the immigrant's case reopened after April 1, 1944, the Visa, Registry, or Chinese Exclusion File may have been transferred out of this historical Service record series to a C-File or an A-File.