

Naturalization Records: Key to Your Immigrant's Home

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In a country where virtually everybody descends from immigrants who arrived from other countries, naturalization records can be an essential source for learning that all-important genealogical fact: the ancestor's foreign home town. Even the millions of records that don't reveal this fact can provide essential information for the family historian. However, the search for such records demands caution: there are no such records for many immigrants and others are very difficult to find, or to apply to a certain immigrant.

DISCUSSION OUTLINE

Nature of Naturalization Records

- Process with multiple records
- Dual documents: Declaration, then Petition
- Dual court system: State Courts or Federal Courts

Colonial Era (1607-1790)

- British Rights
- Denization
- Allegiance vs. Abjuration

Federal Law – State Application (1790-1906)

- Legal Requirements (any court of record, but . . .)
- Exceptions: Citizenship through other Means
- Registry
- Declaration of Intent
- Petition for Citizenship
- Typical Content
- State Courts or Federal Courts?

Federal Law – Federal Regulation (1906+)

- Increased & Consistent Content
- Typical Content
- Bureaucracy Rules
- Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS)
- Citizenship Information Services (CIS, 2002+)

Access Issues

Federal Records, often created by states
State Courts = county level (usually)
National Archives regional facilities
Indexes: WPA & more!
Microfilm
Internet

Search Strategies

Determine: When they arrived & where they lived
Did they naturalize? Age, arrival and ethnicity are somewhat predictive
Search state AND federal records
Indexes are critical
Post 1892/1905: USCIS Naturalization Index (<https://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>)
Start online, but don't stop there!
Microfilms at the FHL and/or NARA
Original records at courts and archives (see Schaefer's book)
FAN: Friends, associates and neighbors

Naturalization Records Online

Ancestry: 100+ U.S. databases, including

- U.S. Naturalization Records Indexes, 1791-1992 5,823,340
- Illinois, Federal Naturalization Records, 1856-1991 4,252,174
- New York, State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1794-1940 3,701,069
- Massachusetts, State & Federal Naturalization Records, 1798-1950 3,113,455
- U.S. Naturalization Records Indexes, 1794-1995 2,494,757
- U.S., Naturalization Records, 1840-1957 1,402,040
- Connecticut, Federal Naturalization Records, 1790-1996 983,498
- New Jersey, County Naturalization Records, 1749-1986 786,130
- Minnesota Naturalization Records Index, 1854-1957 523,626
- Ohio, Naturalization Petition and Record Books, 1888-1946 506,341
- New York, New York, to Declaration of Intent:, 1907-1924 337,269
- New York County Supreme Court Natural. Petition Index, 1907-24 203,786
- Philadelphia, 1789-1880 Naturalization Records Pennsylvania; 119,649

Fold3: 12 collections

- Indexes and records for select federal naturalizations from California, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

NARA: 5 indexes (<https://www.archives.gov/research/naturalization>)

- Naturalization indexes for the Dakotas, Nebraska and St. Louis, Missouri courts

FamilySearch: 18 indexes and 48 browse collections

- Various states and federal district court naturalizations

Links to Other Online Resources

Online Searchable Naturalization Indexes & Records

(<https://www.germanroots.com/naturalization.html>)

FamilySearch Wiki: see “United States Naturalization Online Genealogy Records”

Linkpendium > *select state and/or county* > Immigration and Naturalization Records

Cyndi’s List > Immigration and Naturalization > Records

Naturalization Bibliography

FamilySearch Wiki: “United States Naturalization and Citizenship”

Also: “United States Naturalization Laws”

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Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives of the United States, 3rd ed.
Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2000.

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Franklin, Frank George. *The Legislative History of Naturalization in the United States*. New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969.

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*Schaefer, Christina K. *Guide to Naturalization Records of the United States*. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1997.

Smith, Darrell Hevenor. *The Bureau of Naturalization: Its History, Activities and Organization*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1926.

*Szucs, Loretto Dennis. *They Became Americans: Finding Naturalization Records and Ethnic Origins*. Salt Lake City: Ancestry, Inc., 1998.

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Naturalization Time Line

Jayare Roberts (* = major laws)

- 1740 English Parliamentary Statute required a residence of seven years in a particular colony. Applicant could appear before a magistrate and take an oath of loyalty.
- 1760s Some colonies enacted naturalization laws of their own.
- 1776 Any white person of European descent who had been born in the colony and who had been loyal to the American cause, automatically received citizenship.
- 1790* Congress enacted the first federal naturalization law. Requirements for citizenship: residence of two years in the United States and one year in the State.
- 1795 Requirements become five years in U.S., one year in state; declaration three years.
- 1798 New law required fourteen year residence. Registry of declarations required (until 1828).
- 1802* The 1798 law repealed; automatic citizenship for children of naturalized parents.
- 1803 The residents of the area included in the Louisiana Purchase could claim citizenship.
- 1816 Both registry and declaration must be part of petition for post-1812 arrivals.
- 1824 Time between declaration and petition changed from three to two years; validated certificates not meeting 1816 act, and those made before a clerk but not a court.
- 1828* Registry repealed; continuous residency between 1802 and 1812 not need a declaration.
- 1845 Residents of Texas became citizens by action of Congress.
- 1862 Soldiers over 21 could be citizens with a petition only, if honorably discharged.
- 1868 The Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States, including blacks (exceptions included Tribal Indians).
- 1887 Naturalization laws were amended so that Native Americans could become citizens.
- 1891 Federal government created the Office of Superintendent of Immigration.
- 1906* Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization Services created to apply uniformity to naturalization laws and procedures; controls all procedures.
- 1922* Wives must obtain her own naturalization papers.
- 1929* Registry of aliens, and certificates of arrival for those here before 1921, for declaration; photographs needed; certificates could be issued for derivative citizenship.