

Researching Immigrant Ancestors to America, 1620-1965

Class 4: Passenger Lists

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REVIEW – Context & Definitions

Detailed recordkeeping increased through the 19th and 20th centuries.

Immigrant: individual who arrived within the borders of the United States that intends to reside there permanently.

Alien or non-citizen: a permanent resident who has not naturalized.

Non-immigrant alien: an individual residing temporarily in the United States.

Emigration: an individual's movement out of a country.

Immigration: an individual's movement into a country.

1. Border crossings
2. Naturalization (C-Files)
3. Visa Files
4. A-Files
5. Alien Registration
6. Passports
7. Displaced Persons

Emigration Records

The types of emigration records preserved will vary by the country, territory or empire that administered the area where your ancestor originated.

You can find helpful overviews of emigration records at the FamilySearch Wiki (https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Main_Page) by searching the country name and the search terms “Emigration and Immigration.”

Some ports compiled embarkation lists that duplicate information found on American passenger lists. Not all ports have surviving records. Kory L. Meyerink compiled a list of European ports and their surviving records (available through the catalog at FamilySearch.org) for Heritage Quest Magazine:

European Passenger Departure Lists at the Family History Library

Listed in the FHL library catalog under the name of the port city and the topic "Emigration and Immigration"

<u>Port</u>	<u>Lists</u>	<u>Indexes</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Antwerp, Belgium	1855	Book index	by Charles Hall
Bergen, Norway	1874-1924	1874-1924	Transcripts, with given and surname indexes.
Bremen, Germany	—	1904-1914	Originals may no longer be extant.
Copenhagen, Denmark	1868-1911	1868-1940	Indirect and direct lists and indexes.
Gothenburg, Sweden	1869-1920	1869-1951	Most Swedes left from this port.
Hamburg, Germany	1850-1934	1854-1934	Card indexes cover 1850-1871.
Le Havre, France	1750-1887	1750-1775	Commercial cargo vessels only.
Liverpool, England	1697-1707, 1773-1776	In publications	Published lists
Malmö, Sweden	1874-1939	1874-1939	
Oslo (Kristiania), Norway	1867-1902	1869-1902	
Rotterdam, Netherlands	1900-1940	1900-1940	Holland-America Line only
Stockholm, Sweden	1869-1940	1869-1940	
Trondheim, Norway	1867-1926	1867-1925	Indexes to given and surnames.

Additional lists may be available for these, and other ports, in local and state archives of European countries.

REVIEW – Where are the records?

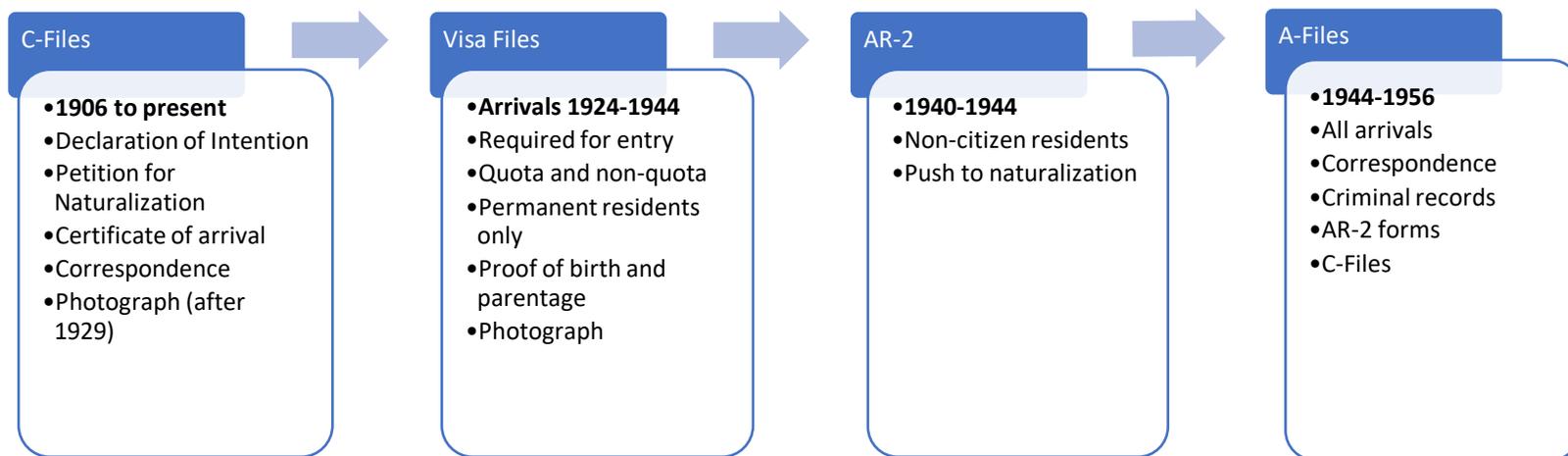
1. Border crossings: National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and indexed at major genealogical websites.

2. Naturalizations: Court of jurisdiction and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

- State and federal records for specific localities indexed at major genealogical websites.

- Court records available through the FamilySearch.org catalog.

3. Visa files: USCIS exclusively.
4. A-Files: USCIS (<100 years) and NARA (>100 years).
5. WWI Alien Registrations: NARA and individual state agencies.
6. AR-2: USCIS
7. Passports: NARA (before 1925) and Department of State (after 1925)
8. WWII Refugee and Displaced Persons records: Arolsen Archive and consolidated in the immigrant's A-File or C-File.



Progression of records collected by the Immigration and Naturalization Service now in the possession of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service.

Alien Registration Forms (AR-2), 1940-1944:

Over 5.5 million records on microfilm at USCIS. Assigned A-File numbers.

A-File Number	Description
A1000000 to A5980116	Resident aliens and Delayed registration, Aug 1940-Mar 1944
A6100000 to A6132126	Railroad workers, 1942-1943
A7000000 to A7043999	Children under 14 years of age, resident in US (not all children were registered), Aug 1940-Mar 1944
A7500000 to A7759142	Newly arriving immigrants (Consular registrations), Aug 1940-Mar 1944

A-Files:

A genealogy request may be submitted through USCIS for an A-File numbered below 8 million (created about 1951).

FOIA request required for A-Files created from 1951 to the end of the series in 1956.

NARA has A-Files for individuals born more than 100 years ago.

Fee schedules for various immigration records as of July 2024:

USCIS

Index Search Request: \$30 (online); \$80 (paper application)

Record Request: \$30 (online); \$80 (paper application)

NARA

Fixed-Fee Orders (Fixed-fee order prices supersede digitized reproduction prices (i.e., a Form 82 digitized order carries a fee of \$20.00 not a per copy price).)

Fee

NATF Form 37: Order for Copiers of Alien Case Files (A-Files) – A-File w/ a birth date prior to 1890 \$27.00 per file

NATF Form 37: Order for Copiers of Alien Case Files (A-Files) – A-File w/ a birth date of 1890 or after \$40.00 per file

NATF Form 81: Order for Copies of Ship Passenger Arrival Records \$20.00 per case

NATF Form 82: Order for Copies of Federal Census Records \$20.00 per case



Helpful links:

The USCIS Genealogy Program for ordering records from before 1951:

<https://www.uscis.gov/records/genealogy>.

For records created after 1951, a request through the Freedom of Information Act to USCIS:

<https://www.uscis.gov/records/request-records-through-the-freedom-of-information-act-or-privacy-act>.

FOIA requests through the United States Department of State: <https://foia.state.gov/>.

NARA Online Catalog: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>.

The NARA guide to immigration records in their holdings:

<https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration>.

Helpful information for using FOIA for genealogical record requests:

<http://www.researchguides.net/foia.htm>.

Records documenting Nazi persecution during WWII and Displaced Persons: <https://collections.arsen-archives.org/en/search/>.