

The Immigration-Naturalization Circle

John M. Hoenig gives advice on how to stop chasing your tail.

TWO BASIC TYPES of records sought by genealogists are those pertaining to immigration and naturalization. If you find either one, you can use it to help find the other. American naturalization records (especially those after 1906) often have information on arrival into the country; if not, one can subtract five years from the naturalization date and use that as a possible, albeit approximate, latest arrival time. Passenger manifests from 1906 (occasionally earlier) to 1942-43 often have special markings that indicate when and in which district naturalization papers were filed. If not, one can add five years to the arrival date and use that as a starting point for searching for naturalization. (In some cases, when an immigrant married an American, eligibility for naturalization occurred after three years.)

But how do we get started? Sometimes it seems as if we're going around in circles. In this article we first review why we want these records. Then we discuss the latest methods for finding them.

The Value of the Records

Immigration and naturalization records are valuable for tracing ancestors because they can tell us the name of the ancestral home-

town, the name of a relative back home, and the names of potential relatives who may have traveled with your ancestor, hosted your ancestor upon arrival in the new world or served as witnesses for the naturalization. These records also serve to anchor your relative to specific places at specific times and can thus be especially useful in determining if another record pertains to your relative. For example, suppose there are two Tom Smiths in the city directory, one of whom is married to Mary and the other to Sue. Which is your relative? If the naturalization papers reveal that the Tom Smith who was your relative lived at 100 Barrow Street, and the Tom Smith who married Sue lived at 100 Barrow Street, then you have almost certainly discovered Tom's wife's name was Sue.

Finding the Arrival

Determining which type of record to begin with depends on your particular circumstances. If your ancestor arrived at Ellis Island in New York City (1892-1924), then you may be in luck. The Ellis Island Foundation has created a searchable index to the passenger arrivals. It is filled with errors but, even so, it is a fantastic database. There are now extremely powerful

search engines that will allow you to get around many errors in, and misconceptions about, the passenger records (see www.stevemorse.org or www.jewishgen.org for access to these search engines). For example, my Schwartzfeld relatives actually arrived under the name Schwarzfeld and my Diener relatives arrived as Diners. But I can search for the first name and the first few letters of the surname, and use approximate age, date of arrival, gender, hometown or some combination of these to reduce the number of names in the output. If the immigrants are identified as being "Hebrew" in the database, one can also search for pairs of people arriving together.

If you can't find your relatives in the Ellis Island online database, but you have reason to believe they arrived at Ellis Island, you can use the Soundex microfilms available at the National Archives; they're also available through your local Family History Center.

Soundex indexes are also available for other years and other ports at the National Archives and the Family History Centers. There are also many published indexes of passenger arrivals and new indexes are continually being posted on the Internet. As an example, passenger arrivals in New York in

Under the best of circumstances, the following information can be found in passenger arrival and naturalization records. More recent records generally contain more information than older records.

Arrival records can tell us:

naturalization petition year, district
ancestral home, maybe city
relative or friend back home
marital status
person going to see & address
profession, cash on hand
who paid for ticket
age
ethnicity
brief physical description
traveling companions

Naturalization records can tell us:

arrival port, date, ship
national origin, maybe city
1 or 2 witnesses (name, address, profession)
spouse, date & place of marriage
children's names, birth dates, places
address in America
profession
age
ethnicity
change of name
photo, signature

1890 and 1891 of people listed as coming from Austria, Poland and Galicia (96,000 records) were compiled by Dr. Howard Relles and posted on the JewishGen website (www.jewishgen.org/databases/1890ny.htm). Luckily for me, a relative and her two daughters arrived in New York in 1890. It was a snap to find them in the online index and I discovered my relative also had a son. There are indexes that have been created for specific ethnic groups including Italian, Irish, German, Czech and Russian immigrants.

If you have no luck with these standard techniques, you can try the emigration lists and passenger line records. The port of Hamburg kept careful records of passengers departing from Hamburg from 1850 to 1934. An index to 13 years of these records (1890-1902) has been put on the Internet and more years are being added (search with Google for Hamburg emigration). If you can't wait for the indexing to get to your year of interest, you can request the microfilmed indexes through your local Family History Center. Once you locate your ancestor in the index you can request the film with the actual record. (An important technical detail is that people traveling directly to their destination were indexed separately from those with a stopover. Thus, you have to search two sets of indexes.) You can also pay the Archives in Hamburg to search for you — contact information is on their website. The port of Bremen also kept

lists of departing passengers: most of these did not survive, but the result of an attempt to reconstruct these records from passenger arrival records in the US is online (www.surnamesupersearch.com/passenger/).

The Holland American line, a steamship company, kept corporate records of passenger ticket sales from 1900 through 1940. Their ships sailed from Rotterdam and stopped to take on additional passengers at Boulogne and Southampton. The records list the head of the party traveling and the number of tickets sold, but do not give the names of the individuals in the party. Interestingly, the company would sometimes book much of the trip for the passenger, so you may find, for example, that train tickets from Warsaw to Rotterdam and New York to Cleveland were sold along with the steamship passage. That doesn't mean that Warsaw and Cleveland were the starting and ending points of the journey but it gives an indication of what routes were involved. The Holland American Line records are available at the Boston Public Library Microforms Division and through your local Family History Center.

Another way to gain information about arrivals is through federal and possibly state censuses. The federal censuses from 1900 to 1930 asked for year of immigration. State censuses were generally conducted at the midpoint of the decade. The questions asked varied with the state and the year. In

New York, the 1905, 1915 and 1925 censuses asked the number of years a person had been in the US. Similarly, the 1915 and 1925 New Jersey censuses and the 1905 Rhode Island census asked for the number of years in America.

Yet another source of arrival information is passport applications. These may provide the port and date of departure for the US and sometimes the name of the ship. Finding passport applications is discussed in the next section.

If your relative was 14 years old or older and had not become a citizen by July 1940, he or she was required to register at a post office under the Alien Registration Program. Registration forms (known as AR-2 files) from 1940-44 were microfilmed by the INS and are available under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). (Information about obtaining records is available at www.immigration.gov/graphics/aboutus/foia/). The registration forms contain information about when the alien first came to the US as well as about the most recent arrival in America (date, place and mode of transport).

Finding the Naturalization

If you're not having any luck finding the passenger arrival record, perhaps the naturalization record will be easier to find. It is convenient to divide naturalization history into three periods. Records prior to 1906 have been extensively filmed and indexed. Check the Family History Library catalog

7. ☆(a) I last arrived in the United States at	Black Rock	on	Jan. 2, 1920
	(PORT OR PLACE OF ENTRY)		(MONTH, DAY, AND YEAR)
☆(b) I came in by	Train		
	(NAME OF VESSEL, STEAMSHIP COMPANY, OR OTHER MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION)		
☆(c) I came as a (check one):	Passenger... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ¹	Crew member... <input type="checkbox"/> ²	Stowaway... <input type="checkbox"/> ³ Other
☆(d) I entered the United States as a (check one):	Permanent resident... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ¹	Visitor... <input type="checkbox"/> ²	Student... <input type="checkbox"/> ³
	Treaty merchant... <input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	Seaman... <input type="checkbox"/> ⁵	Official of a foreign government... <input type="checkbox"/> ⁶
	Employee of a foreign government official... <input type="checkbox"/> ⁷	Other	
☆(e) I first arrived in the United States on	Jan or Feb. 20	1920	
	(MONTH)	(DAY)	(YEAR)
8. ☆(a) I have lived in the United States a total of	20	years.	

Alien registration form from 1940 showing date of first arrival in the US as well as most recent arrival information.

online or at your local Family History Center. Look under place name (county, city or state) and then under “naturalization and citizenship”, and also under “naturalization and citizenship — indexes”. There may be several possible courts in which your relative might have naturalized; you’ll have to keep searching until you find the right court. Also try searching the Internet for naturalizations plus the place where your ancestor lived. For example searching for “naturalizations Philadelphia” will provide information on accessing the records in the City Archives.

For records after 1906, you may still find the microfilmed records at the Family History Library. But, you also have the possibility of filing a request for naturalization documents with the US Department of State under the FOIA. For naturalizations after 1956, FOIA requests should be submitted to the appropriate immigration district office. For a FOIA request to be honored, the person must have been born more than 100 years ago, or you must provide proof of death or you must have notarized permission from the person to obtain the records. The waiting time for a FOIA request can be quite lengthy so you’ll get speedier results if you can locate the naturalization record in the appropriate regional branch of the National Archives.

Gradually, court records are being indexed and put on the Internet. For example, 136,000 naturalizations in the New York County Supreme Court (Manhattan) from 1907 through 1924 are indexed at www.ancestry.com. An index of naturalizations in the Brooklyn Courthouse from 1907 to 1924 (253,000 records) is available at www.jgsny.org/kingsintro2.htm and indexes for the US District Court for the Southern District of New York from 1906 to 1949 (500,000 records), as well as naturalizations

in Suffolk (67,000 records) and Nassau (65,000 records) counties and some military naturalizations, are available at www.italiengen.org/default.htm. Soon, an index will be available for the US District Court for the Eastern District of New York. (In the interim, the National Archives has a microfilmed index.) These indexes often list the old name and new name of a person



New York City storefronts, catering to the immigrants' needs, 1936. Courtesy US National Archives.

who changed names as part of the naturalization process. Thus, the nightmare of finding a naturalization record in New York City is fast fading into something about which old timers reminisce. Similar indexing projects are occurring elsewhere so judicious use of a search engine like Google may well find the index you need. See also the lists at home.att.net/~wee-monster/naturalizationrecords.html. It is important to remember that no index is perfect, so it is good practice to find out if more than one index exists. For example, if you can't find a relative in the online index to naturalizations in the Southern District Court of New York, check the microfilm publication of the National Archives for a different index.

Trying to find a naturalization record can be frustrating. This is in part because in the past naturalizations could be done in a local, county, state or federal court. Where can we look if we can't find the naturalization record in an index?

Voting rolls. Only American

citizens can vote in the US, and proof of citizenship is required to register to vote. The voting registration record typically lists the year and court in which the naturalization occurred. Fortunately, registration records can go very far back in time. They are usually stored by election district. To find a record, you first need to find your ancestor's address. Then, the election board can help you determine the voting district. Finally, a search can be made of the records from that district. The records are usually arranged alphabetically. It is best to search for voting registration records from years with presidential elections. (In the past, many places required periodic re-registration and this was most likely to be done in a presidential election year.)

Incidentally, if you ask a relative whether a particular ancestor became a citizen and the relative doesn't know, try asking if the ancestor voted. One relative told me "Oh yes, my grandfather voted for Republican Alf Landon in 1936." The voting was memorable to her; the naturalization occurred well before she was born.

Censuses. Another way to gain information about naturalization is through federal and possibly state censuses. The federal censuses from 1900 to 1930 asked about citizenship status, i.e., whether an alien (denoted AL) or a naturalized citizen (NA), or whether papers (a declaration of intention to naturalize) had been submitted (PA). The 1920 census additionally asked each naturalized citizen the year in which he or she became naturalized. State censuses were generally conducted at the midpoint of the decade. The questions asked varied by state and by year. In New York, the state censuses from 1825 to 1865 asked for the number of aliens (not naturalized) in the household. After that, they asked if each person was an alien, a naturalized citizen or a citizen

by birth. The 1905, 1915 and 1925 censuses asked the number of years the person had been in the US and whether they were a citizen or alien. A number of other states (Rhode Island, New Jersey, California) asked about citizenship in some years. Using both the federal and state censuses, a researcher can bracket the year in which a naturalization occurred. The 1925 census in New York asked when, and in which court, naturalized persons obtained their citizenship — a fabulous resource.

Draft registrations. All males born between 1873 and 1900 and living in the US, whether American citizens or aliens, had to register for the draft during US participation in WWI (1917-18). The 24,000,000 draft registration cards are available on microfilm through the Family History Centers and at the National Archives Regional Branch in New York City. You can also write to the National Archives Southeast Regional Branch, 1557 St. Joseph Avenue, East Point, GA 30344 or e-mail them at archives@atlanta.nara.gov. They'll send you an application form. Return the form to them and they'll conduct the search. If they find the card they will contact you about billing (the fee is \$10). The records will tell you if a man was a citizen and, if he obtained citizenship through naturalization, how he did so. It often also contains his town of birth, profession, place of employment and wife's name. The records are arranged by draft board district so, except in small towns, it is essential to determine the registrant's address. Ancestry.com is going to put all 24 million cards online. At present, records for six states are complete and some records for 20 other states are online.

The draft registration records for WWII are also genealogically interesting, but they do not contain arrival or

WWI draft registration card for Abe Peller. Item 14 shows that, as of 1917, Abe had taken no action to become a US citizen. The application tells us his date of birth, his occupation and his wife's name.

naturalization information.

Passport applications.

Applications for US passports for the period October 1795 through March 1925 are at the National Archives in Washington (see www.archives.gov/research_room/genealogy/research_topics/passport_applications.html for a complete description of the types of passports and holdings). There are indexes at the National Archives for the years from 1810 through 1923. You can search for applications yourself in

Washington, D.C., or order them by mail from the National Archives and Records Administration, Attn: Old Military and Civil Records, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001. You can also order them over the Internet at www.archives.gov/global_pages/inquire_form.html. Be sure to provide the applicant's name, year of birth, place of residence at the time the application was made and the approximate year of travel. Passports were generally valid for a period of two years or less so a person may have applied for a passport several times.

Later applications are retained by the US Department of State. The State Department also has an index to the applications up to the present. A search of the records may take several months and generally costs \$45 unless you are requesting your own passport records or those of your minor children (see http://travel.state.gov/passport_records.html for information and instructions).

I found a relative's 1911 application for a passport and was disappointed by how little information it had. And, because I already had his arrival and naturalization records, I could see that the information in the passport application wasn't even very accurate. On the other hand, I found a 1922 passenger manifest for another relative,



The author's first glimpse of his relatives Moses and Frieda Schwartzfeld. Photos are from Moses' 1922 passport application.

Moses Schwartzfeld, and it was annotated with a passport number. This made it easy to obtain the passport application by e-mailing the National Archives. I was delighted to find my first photograph of Moses and of his wife. The application told me the date he immigrated to the US, his port of departure and the date and court of his naturalization. The application also indicated he wished to visit his ailing mother in Jablonow (Poland)

Guides to Finding Passenger and Naturalization Records

Passenger records:

- Colletta, John P. *They Came In Ships: A Guide To Finding Your Immigrant Ancestor's Arrival Record, Third Edition* (Orem, Utah: Ancestry Press, 2002).
- Lockhart, D.C. "Holland-America Line passenger lists, at the Boston Public Library (BPL) Microtext Department" (www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/hollam3.txt).
- Recu, K., I. Recu and S. Recu. "Holland-America Line (HAL) passenger lists 1900-1940" (www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/hollam.txt).
- Smith, M.L., E. Friedman, F. Gursky and E. Bien. "Manifest markings — a guide to interpreting passenger list annotations" (www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/Manifests/).

Naturalization records, passport applications & alien registrations:

- Schaefer, Christina. *Guide to Naturalization Records of the United States* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1997).
- Smith, M.L. "'Any woman who is now or may hereafter be married . . . ' Women and Naturalization, ca. 1802-1940" (www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/summer_1998_women_and_naturalization_1.html).
- "Finding US Naturalization Records — a genealogy guide" (<http://home.att.net/~wee-monster/naturalizationrecords.html>).
- National Archives and Records Administration. "Passport applications" (www.archives.gov/research_room/genealogy/research_topics/passport_applications.html).
- "Alien Registration Records 1940-1944" (http://naturalizationrecords.com/usa/alien_reg.shtml).

Census records:

- Hinckley, Kathleen W. *Your Guide to the Federal Census: For Genealogists, Researchers & Family Historians* (Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 2002).
- Lainhart, Ann. *State Census Records*. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1992).

Draft records:

- Blatt, W. "World War I draft registration cards" (www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/wwidraft.htm).
- Italian Genealogical Group. "World War I Selective Service System draft registration cards 1917-1918" (www.italiengen.org/igg011.stm).

Voter registration records:

- Meshenberg, M.J. "New York City voter registration records" (www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/nycvote.txt).

and visit Denmark, Danzig and the British Isles. There was one other piece of information as a bonus: the application indicated his father Judah was already deceased in 1922. It is worth noting that when Moses originally arrived in the US he came under the name Schwarzfeld (without a 't'), but given the information in the passport application I could find Moses' original arrival despite the change in name.

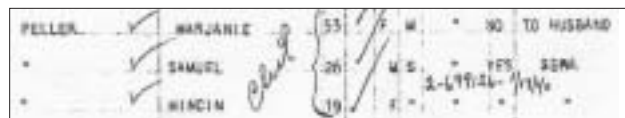
Women's Naturalizations

Women's naturalizations present a problem: between 1855 and 1922, a woman derived US citizenship through her husband. Therefore, you're not likely to find any paperwork for her citizenship. After 1922, a woman marrying an American did not automatically become a citizen but, rather, had to apply for it. No declaration of intention needed to be filed and the woman only had to be a resident of the US for one year (now it's three years). Women obtained the right to vote in 1920 or shortly thereafter (depending on the state) and thus papers pertaining to women's citizenship and voting became more common.

Searching For Relatives

When my mother arrived in the US in 1938 and her parents arrived in 1940, there were cousins in New York who provided one set of affidavits of support. These documents guaranteed a refugee would not become a burden on society. I wondered who supplied the second set of affidavits and what these papers might say. I submitted FOIA requests for their complete C files. It took several months to receive replies and the results were disappointing. There was nothing in the files that wasn't in the naturalization documents I obtained from the National Archives Regional Branch in New York City. Apparently, affidavits of support were not kept, a real pity.

My relative Marjanie Peller arrived in New York in 1921 from Poland with her two children Mincin and Samuel. More than a year ago, I had found their arrival record by searching the Ellis Island database for Peller. Now I decided to try out the "companion" feature of Steve Morse's search engine. I went to the "databases" section of the JewishGen website and clicked on the "blue form" for Jewish passengers. Then I typed in just two words: Mincin (under first name) and Samuel (under companion's first name). It quickly found the right record (and no other records). It did so even though Samuel was listed in the manifest before Mincin. I took another look at the manifest



Portion of the passenger manifest showing the arrival of Marjanie, Mincin and Samuel Peller in New York in 1921. The handwritten annotation on Mincin's line indicates she applied for US citizenship in district 2 (New York) on 17 January 1940.

and discovered two things I hadn't realized before. First, the manifest had the annotation "2-699126 — 1/17/40" next to Mincin's name. This means she applied for citizenship in district 2 (New York) on 17 January 1940. (The number 699126 is the application number which is useless because the files are no longer stored by that numbering

system.) Note that the district numbers changed over time so that you need to check the numbering system in use at the time the annotation was made.

The district number and date are valuable clues. However, Mincin was 19 when she arrived in America and was around 38 in 1940. It was very likely that she got married in the intervening years. A search of marriage records would probably be necessary in order to use this information. As it turns out, a relative recalled Mincin married a man named Platz and they had three children and lived in Brooklyn. I thought if I could find Mincin's naturalization papers it would probably tell me her children's names and dates of birth. From the online databases I discovered she was not listed as being naturalized in the Southern District Court for New York nor in Suffolk or Nassau County courts. Thus, most likely it was in the US District Court for the Eastern District. I contacted the National Archives Regional Branch in New York City by e-mail and asked them to search their index for this court. The papers they sent told me her husband was named Max and it gave me his age, place of birth and naturalization information. It also gave me the names and dates of birth of Mincin's four children.

Why would Mincin wait 19 years and then become a US citizen in 1940? My relative Pearl Peller arrived in New York in 1900 and finally became a citizen in 1943. Her reason for naturalizing was that her two sons were in the armed services and she wanted to be able to move around the country during wartime to visit them where they were stationed. I thought maybe Mincin was thinking the same thing. But Mincin's son was only 14 in 1940 so that doesn't seem likely. Perhaps she simply didn't want to be an alien in America at a time of war, especially since aliens were required to register at a post office starting in 1940.

There was an added bonus in Mincin's naturalization papers.

NAAM VAN DEN PASSAGIER	AANTAL			POOL		GEBOEKT	
	1/1	1/2	1/0	C.	S.	VAN	NAAR
	68713014			2362			
<i>Korala Mariot</i>	1			1		<i>Wenen</i>	<i>Wien N.Y.</i>
<i>Ayva Gaezch</i>	1			1			
<i>Leontine Frank</i>	1	1		2		<i>Krakau</i>	<i>Wichster N.Y.</i>
<i>Perke Farnes</i>	1			1		<i>Wenen</i>	<i>New York</i>
<i>Asafala Korala</i>	1			1			<i>Rotterdam</i>
<i>Mathias Prakey</i>	1			1			<i>Tasara N.Y.</i>
<i>Anna Michalcsin</i>	1			1			<i>Zol-ud Ill.</i>
<i>Kaymia Fyrbila</i>	1			1			<i>Wien N.Y.</i>
<i>Heine Wren</i>	1			1			<i>New York</i>
<i>Springe Limmaman</i>	1	1	1	3			
<i>Paula Redowit</i>	1			1			

Ticket sales register showing the Holland American Line provided tickets to Taube Rakowitz from Vienna to Rotterdam and Rotterdam to New York. The tickets were purchased in New York. Destinations other than New York are shown for a number of other passengers.

One of Mincin's witnesses was her brother Samuel. Samuel evidently became a US citizen but there was no annotation next to his name on the passenger manifest. The annotations were required starting in 1926 and continuing up until 1942-43. Therefore, it would appear that Samuel became naturalized just before the requirement for annotations went into effect. I looked for his naturalization at the National Archives branch in New York City but did not find it. Sometimes theory fails us.

The other thing I noticed about the Pellers' passenger manifest was that they departed from Rotterdam. That meant I should be able to find the Holland America Line record of the ticket sales. On a business trip to Boston, I stopped at the Boston Public Library. Because I knew the name of the ship and date of departure (from the passenger arrival record) I did not need to search the index and went directly to the sales records. Marjanie's tickets were purchased in New York (not surprising — her hus-

band was there) and they made their own way to Rotterdam. For another relative, Taube Rakowitz, I discovered the Holland America Line supplied her with train tickets from Vienna to Rotterdam as well as the boat passage from Rotterdam to New York. Judging from an old map of railroad routes, Taube must have taken the train from Vienna to Nuremberg, Frankfurt, Cologne and Rotterdam. There was a much more direct route to Rotterdam from her home near Kolomea. So why did she go via Vienna? And why didn't the Holland American Line provide train tickets from Kolomea to Vienna? Evidently, Taube stopped in Vienna for a while. Whether it was to visit family or to seek employment we do not know but it's an interesting lead to pursue.

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