

Immigration: U.S. Naturalization Records

"Naturalization" occurs when people who were born outside the United States are granted U.S. citizenship. When a man was naturalized, his wife and minor children (until 1922) also became citizens. Most people who were naturalized between 1790 and 1952:

1. Filed a declaration of intention (any time after immigrating),
2. Petitioned for naturalization (five or more years after immigrating).

These actions could have been recorded in any federal, state, county, or municipal court. Most naturalization between 1929 and 1991 were handled by federal courts.

You can use naturalization records to document an immigrant's origins. Records made after 1906 include the place and date of birth of the immigrant and other family members, port of arrival, vessel name, and date of arrival. Records before 1906 do not give birth date or town of birth.

The Family History Library has microfilm copies of county naturalizations before 1930 for many states, and it has most federal court naturalization records before 1930.

Step 1: Use records at the Family History Library.

A. Fill in as many of the blanks as you can:

Port of arrival _____

Places of residence _____

City & court of naturalization _____

Date of arrival _____ Year of declaration _____ Year of naturalization _____

☞ *If you are not sure when or where a person was naturalized, look first in federal and state censuses, passenger manifests, homestead applications, passport applications, and voter registrations for clues. Also look in Filby's "Passenger and Immigration Lists Index". (Religion/Family Ref CS 68 .P36)*

B. Find microfilm numbers of county records by looking in the Family History Library Catalog under the county where the person was probably naturalized. Example: ILLINOIS, COOK - NATURALIZATION AND CITIZENSHIP

☞ *If it is not under the county, try the state or city.*

C. Copy microfilm numbers of naturalization indexes on a research log. Also record the type of records and which courts are included in the index. You may have several to record.

D. Get the film, put it on a reader, and turn to the entry you want. Search petitions before you search for declarations.

Step 2: Obtain records the library doesn't have.

☞ *If the library doesn't have the record you need, you can write to the following offices and request naturalization information. Supply the person's name, date and place of birth, and, if possible, the court or exact address of residence at the time of application.*

A. County clerk:

1. To find the dates of existing naturalization records at many county and federal courts, look in the book *Locating Your Immigrant Ancestor*. (Religion/Family Ref CS 47 .N32)
2. To find courthouse addresses, look in the *United States County Courthouse Address Book*. (KF 8700 .A19 U53x)

B. Immigration and Naturalization Service Office:

See the *United States Research Outline* (Table 4) and state research outlines (Table 4) for additional information about naturalization records and how to obtain them.