

Naturalization and Citizenship Records

www.ChristineCohenGenealogy.com



=====

Naturalization: The process by which an alien becomes an American citizen.

The records generated in the naturalization process can provide:

Birth date / Birth location / Immigration date and place / Marital Status / Spouse and children information / Occupations / Friends / Associates / Neighbors

Not every immigrant became a citizen; there is no requirement. They could start the process many years after arrival; a study of the Censuses shows that from 1890 - 1930, it is estimated that **25% did not ever** naturalize.

Requirements included residency in the US, good moral character and an Oath of loyalty or allegiance given in a court of record

Naturalization laws changed requirements regularly every few years starting in 1790. Therefore, review the laws around the time that you estimate your ancestor began the process. Plus, your female ancestors and underage children were especially affected by these changes in the laws.

Military Service could expedite citizenship for Aliens who served in the Union in the Civil War, the Navy, and Marines in 1894 or World War I.

Until 1906, when the INS was created, the naturalization process could be done at “any court of record” of which there were 5,000 in the United States.

The immigrant could start the process in one court in one state and complete it in another court in another state.

Records created **after 1906, provide the most information.** Records for 1790 - 1906 vary greatly in details provided since each state created their own forms.

Naturalization is a Three Step Process:

- 1) Declaration of Intention (DOI) or First Papers normally filed 2 years after arrival, but this varied over time depending on the law. This application was valid for seven years after initial completion.
- 2) Petition for Citizenship or Second Papers, normally filed one to two years after Declaration of Intention has been filed.
- 3) Certificate of Naturalization often was given at the same court where 2nd papers were filed.

Clues

US Federal Censuses 1820 - 1840: "Number of individuals in household foreigners"

US Federal Census 1870 "Male citizens of the U.S. aged 21 years and upwards."

US Federal Censuses 1900/1910/1920/1930/1940/1950 had immigration and citizenship questions. The citizenship of the person was noted as:

AL = Alien

PA = Declaration of Intention has been Filed (1st Papers)

NA = Naturalized Citizen

Check States Censuses: <http://www.researchguides.net/census/state.htm>

Review WWI Draft Registrations for Citizenship Status

Poll taxes were a prerequisite to voting. Locate books for these lists.

An appearance on a Jury List means US citizenship was obtained.

Becoming a citizen was news worthy, so check newspapers.

Many US States have Voter Lists that ask about citizenship and naturalization

Visit this site for links <https://theancestorhunt.com/voter-lists.html>

PERSI - <https://www.genealogycenter.info/persi/> a valuable resource that provides citations to readily-available periodical sources. Keyword and Category search the word "Naturalization".

Homestead Records – Declaration of Intent had to be filed and should be included in application documentation. Learn more by reviewing:

<https://www.archives.gov/files/publications/ref-info-papers/rip114.pdf>

Derivative Citizenship (obtaining one's citizenship from another person) was available for immigrant women marrying US citizens or if their husbands obtained their citizenship during their marriage.

The opposite was not true for immigrant men, if they married a woman who was a US citizen, men still had to apply.

From 1907 to 1922, a woman could lose her US citizenship if she married an alien, even if she was born in the US.

Starting in 1790, children obtained derivative citizenship from their father. This applied to children under 16 or 18 years of age depending upon the laws of the time. No paperwork was created just their father's papers was sufficient from 1790 to 1929.

In 1929, individuals with derived citizenship could apply for a Certificate of Citizenship in their own names. Applicants had to be 21 years or older and file papers with the INS, not in a court.

Online Resources

Online Searchable Naturalization Indexes and Records

<http://www.germanroots.com/naturalization.html> It is arranged by State and then by County. (Not just for German applicants)

[www.FamilySearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) Catalog & Record Databases, plus digitized Books

[www.Fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com) Various Indexes and Documents for the state of CA/LA/MA/MD/NY/OH/PA and WWI soldiers (Non-Military section)

[www.Ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) US Databases for Naturalizations

[www.Archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov) Various Naturalization Indexes

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services www.USCIS.gov/genealogy to order the following:

1) **Certificate Files (C-files)**

Sep 27, 1906 - Apr 1, 1956

Declaration of Intent and / or Petition for Naturalization

2) **Alien Registrations (AR2)** Aug 1, 1940 - Mar 31, 1944

Records of 5.5 million Aliens age 14 and older. Search the AAD Index at:

<https://aad.archives.gov/aad/fielded-search.jsp?dt=3340&tf=F&cat=all&bc=s/>

3) **Visa Files** Jul 1, 1924 – Mar 31, 1944

Arrival records of immigrants admitted for permanent residence

4) **Registry Files** Mar 2, 1929 – Mar 31, 1944

Persons who entered the US Jul 1, 1924 and no arrival record can be found

5) **Alien Files (A-Files)**

Numbered 8 million (A80000000) and documents until May 1, 1951. Aliens and immigrants who entered the US between the years 1940 - 1945. Records up to May 1, 1951 are available.

Your Immigrant Ancestor:

Died before 8/01/1940

Will not have an A-File

Became a Naturalized Citizen between 9/27/1906 to 8/01/1940

Will not have an A-File, may have a C-File

Became a Naturalized Citizen between 8/02/1940 to 3/31/1956

May have an A or C file

Immigrated to US after 4/01/1944

Will have an A-File

Naturalized on or after 3/31/1956

Will have an A-File, if born in 1910 or earlier

Registered in the US as an alien in 1940, but never interacted with INS again

Likely assigned an Alien Reg. # but not an A-file

Registered in the US as an alien in 1940, and interacted with the INS again

Will have an A-File

Reference Books and Online articles:

Kettner, James H. *The Development of American Citizenship, 1608-1870*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1978

Newman, John J. *American Naturalization processes and procedures*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1985

Prologue Magazine www.Archives.gov/publications/prologue

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

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

“United States Naturalization and Citizenship.” FamilySearch Wiki, Modified 5 February 2021.

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Naturalization_and_Citizenship#Naturalization_Overview

U.S. National Archives & Records Administration. “Major United States Laws Relating to Immigration and Naturalization: 1790-2005”

<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/naturalization/420-major-immigration-laws.pdf>