

Purpose of the Class

As we seek information on our ancestors, one of the most important things we want to learn is where they came from before they arrived in the United States. In order to be successful searching in European records, you need to know the name of the town or parish where your ancestor was born or lived. Finding this information can be challenging. Without the name of the town of origin, it is necessary to begin research in United States records. This class will explain the records that would be most helpful in finding the town of origin in Europe, what those records contain, and where to find the records.

You will learn about:

- Useful Records and Hints
- U.S. Passenger Lists
- U.S. Naturalization Records
- Non-U.S. Sources—European Records

Definitions:

- Immigration—Coming into a country
- Emigration—Leaving a country
- Migration—Moving from one locality to another (often within a country)

Gather Information from all sources because you need to know:

1. Date of Immigration (approximate)
2. Family member who immigrated
3. County of origin in the British Isles (preferably town or parish)
4. Town or parish of origin in European countries

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Collect Records

- Home sources—Birth, marriage, death, or naturalization certificates, documents in your possession, information on family traditions, or lore
- U.S. Census Records
- Vital Records
- Obituaries
- Church Records
- County Histories
- Military Records

COLLECT RECORDS—U.S. CENSUS

- 1820–1840—number of “foreigners”
- 1850–1940—place of birth (country)
- 1870—naturalized male citizens over 21
- 1880–1940—place of birth of parents (country)
- 1900–1930—year of immigration and number of years in the U.S.
- 1910–1920—native tongue spoken and the native tongue of parents in 1920
- 1900–1940—naturalization information (1940—only for two people per page)
 - If naturalized—NA=Naturalized, PA=1st papers or Declaration of Intent, AL=Alien
 - 1920—year of naturalization
- 1940—place of residence in 1935

COLLECT RECORDS—VITAL RECORDS

May list place of birth

- Check marriage and death records for the immigrant
- Check birth, marriage, and death records for all children of the immigrant

COLLECT RECORDS—OBITUARIES

- Obituaries—available mostly in late 1800s through 1900s. May show town of birth or residence. Check for obituaries online or at local public libraries.

COLLECT RECORDS—CHURCH RECORDS

May list place of birth

- Check marriage and burial records for the immigrant
- Check baptism, marriage, and burial records for all children of the immigrant
- Confirmation records for children baptized in Europe may list place of baptism
- Check the Family History Library Catalog under the name of the town or county. You may need to contact the church or church archives.

COLLECT RECORDS—COUNTY HISTORIES

- Usually published late 1800s

- May contain biographical information on residents or families, including town of origin
- Check local public libraries and the Family History Library Catalog under the name of the county

COLLECT RECORDS—MILITARY RECORDS

- May contain birth information
- 20th Century records more likely to provide town of birth
- Search for enlistments, pension records, draft registration, discharge records, and personnel files
- Check the National Archives, FamilySearch.org, Ancestry.com, and Fold3.com for records

HELPFUL HINTS

- The later the time period, the more likely to find records and a place of origin
- Settlers came in groups—often sending out a “scout” to check things out
- Chain migrations—family members coming one at a time as they could afford it
- Ethnic groups may have settled together in the same town or section of the city
- Religious groups stayed together and attended the same church
- Named their settlements after “home,” especially during the colonial period

U.S. Passenger and Immigration Lists

U.S. PASSENGER LISTS

- Major U.S. ports—New York, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans
- Immigration Lists—Few lists before 1820
- Custom’s Passenger Lists—1820–1891
 - Before 1893—usually no town of residence in the “old” country
- Ship’s Passenger Lists—1891–1954
 - After 1893 may show previous residence, address of nearest relative, where they are moving to upon arrival

PASSENGER LISTS BEFORE 1820

- Before 1820, Federal Government did not list the arrival of immigrants
- Record keeping based on local legislation but compliance was not complete and few lists exist
- Indexed in *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index* by William Filby on Ancestry (\$) and in books at the Family History Library and many larger libraries

U.S. CUSTOM’S PASSENGER LISTS (1820–1891)

- States responsible for Custom’s passenger lists
- Captains of vessels were required to submit a list to Collector of Customs
- Not required of all ports until 1905 and not all ports complied
- Usually only the country of origin is listed

IMMIGRATION LISTS (1891–1954)

- May include: name, age, sex, nationality, occupation, marital status, last residence, name of relative and final destination, purchaser of ticket, place of birth (starting in 1906), name and address of closest living relative in the country of origin (starting in 1907)

WHERE TO FIND RECORDS

- FamilySearch.org—Free site for indexes and images (in process)
 - Ancestry.com—Subscription site
 - Stevemorse.org—More vibrant search features
 - On microfilm at the Family History Library and Centers and the National Archives
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U.S. Naturalization Records

Naturalization is the process whereby a foreign born person becomes a citizen

- U.S. Naturalization law began in 1790
- Three steps to U.S. naturalization
 1. Declaration of Intention or 1st Papers—any time after arrival but usually after 2 years
 2. Petition—usually after 5 years
 3. Certificate—given to the new citizen

NATURALIZATION POLICY

- Derivative Citizenship—women and children automatically naturalized as husband/father naturalized
 - In 1922 wives no longer received citizenship from husband
- Could be naturalized in any court or state
 - Begin in one court or state/county and finish in another court or state/county
 - May have filed declaration of intent but never finished the process

HISTORY OF USCIS—UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES

- 1906—Bureau of Immigration Services was created and later called Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS)
 - 2004—name changed to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
- More federal courts naturalizing (District and Circuit Courts)
- Forms standardized
- Naturalization papers recorded in court and copies sent to INS

NATURALIZATIONS BEFORE 1906

- Renounce allegiance to previous king and country

Immigration: Crossing the Pond

- Minimal information—usually only name of the country. Though the records vary, records may show current residence, number of years in the United States
- Search for both declaration of intent (1st papers) and naturalization petition

NATURALIZATIONS AFTER 1906

- Likely to find place of birth (not parents)
- Usually in federal courts (District or Circuit Courts)
- Most naturalization records not on Internet but more are becoming available
- May show residence; occupation; physical description; birth and marriage date and place; port, date, and ship of arrival; photo (after 1929); names of children with dates and places of birth

NATURALIZATION RECORD ISSUES

- No parents' names on declaration of intent, petition, or certificate
- Could be naturalized in any court in the state
 - Begin process in one state or court and finish in another state or court. Check every court in every county in every state where the ancestor lived
- Records before 1906 usually do not list parish/town of birth or residence

WHERE TO FIND RECORDS

Many not online yet but more being digitized

- FamilySearch.org—Free site for indexes and images (in process)
- Ancestry.com—Subscription site (in process)
- On microfilm at the Family History Library and Centers, or in state, county, or city/town courts
- On the Family History Library Catalog
 - Use the Place Search for the state, county, and city or town
 - More likely under the state jurisdiction after 1906
 - Search for the topics: Naturalization and Citizenship or Naturalization and Citizenship—Indexes
 - Search all levels of jurisdiction for records

Europe

BRITISH SOURCES

- Major ports
 - England—Liverpool, London, Bristol Plymouth, Hull
 - Scotland—Glasgow, Aberdeen
 - Ireland—Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Londonderry
- Emigration records from British ports began in 1820, but all records before 1890 were destroyed
- Some military regiments disbanded in the U.S. rather than going back to Britain (during the colonial period)
- Prisoners were sent to America during the colonial period, often for petty crimes

Immigration: Crossing the Pond

- Shipping concerns, trade, etc., came from specific areas in Britain

EUROPEAN PASSENGER LISTS

- Bremen, Germany
 - 1874–1909—Lists destroyed each year. After 1909 lists destroyed during WWII
 - Reconstructed 1907–1908 and 1913–1914 available on familysearch.org
 - The Bremen passenger lists 1847–1867 reconstructed from the New York passenger lists (FHL book 974.71 W3g)
- Hamburg, Germany Passenger Lists, 1850–1934 (minus World War II) on Ancestry.com or at FHL—shows town of last residence
- Le Havre, France (passports through Colmar and Strasbourg)
- Rotterdam, Netherlands (Holland American Line 1900–1940; also LDS immigrants 1908–1914)
- Amsterdam, Netherlands (no surviving port records)

GERMAN KINGDOMS AND STATES

- Prussia is a kingdom covering 13 states
- For all German states (for example: Brandenburg, Bayern, Württemberg, etc.) you need to know the name of the town/parish

FINDING THE RECORDS IN THE FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY CATALOG

- Use the Place Search for the name of the city/town or parish
- Search for the topics: Emigration and Immigration or Emigration and Immigration—Indexes

Review

REMEMBER

- Search U.S./Canada sources first for clues
- Search for all records dealing with immigration or naturalization
- Need to know the name of the town/parish in the country of origin to search across the pond

Bibliography

Filby, P. William & Mary K. Meyer, ed. *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index: A Guide to Published Arrival Records of about 500,000 Passengers who came to the United States and Canada in the Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries*. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research, 1981–2010. (FHL book 973 W32p.) Also available at <http://www.ancestry.com> (“Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, 1500s–1900s.”)

FamilySearch Research Wiki articles at: <http://wiki.familysearch.org>

- Tracing Immigrant Origins
- United States Emigration and Immigration
- German Research: Hansel and Gretel: Finding our German Ancestor's Trail

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Website www.uscis.gov/genealogy

Passenger list indexes at www.FamilySearch.org, www.Ancestry.com, www.stevemorse.org and www.germanroots.com/onlinelists

Naturalization Records online at www.FamilySearch.org and www.Ancestry.com