

Source Information:

Ancestry.com. *Selected U.S. Naturalization Records - Original Documents, 1790-1974 (World Archives Project)* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2009. Original data:

- Naturalization Petitions for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1522, 369 rolls); Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- Naturalization Records of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California (Los Angeles), 1887-1940; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1524, 244 rolls); Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- Naturalization Petitions of the U.S. District Court, 1820-1930, and Circuit Court, 1820-1911, for the Western District of Pennsylvania; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1537, 437 rolls); Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- Naturalization Records in the Superior Court of San Diego, California, 1883-1958; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1613, 19 rolls); National Archives Gift Collection, Record Group 200; National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- Naturalization Records in the Superior Court of Los Angeles, California, 1876-1915; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1614, 28 rolls); National Archives Gift Collection, Record Group 200; National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- Petitions for Naturalization from the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, 1897-1944; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1972, 1457 rolls); Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

About Selected U.S. Naturalization Records - Original Documents, 1790-1974 (World Archives Project)**Introduction to Naturalization Records:**

The act and procedure of becoming a citizen of a country is called *naturalization*. In the U.S., naturalization is a judicial procedure that flows from Congressional legislation. However, from the time the first naturalization act was passed in 1790 until 1906, there were no uniform standards. As a consequence, before September 1906, various federal, state, county, and local courts generated a wide variety of citizenship records that are stored in sundry courts, archives, warehouses, libraries, and private collections. After 1906 the vast majority of naturalizations took place in federal courts.

Naturalization laws have changed over the years. These acts are important to understand as they would have greatly impacted when your ancestor was able to become naturalized, as well as the exact process he or she had to go through to become a citizen. For example, some naturalization acts required residency in the U.S. for a certain number of years, some excluded certain ethnicities from being able to become citizens, and others granted citizenship status in exchange for military service.

The Naturalization Process:

The first responsibility for an immigrant wishing to become an official U.S. citizen was to complete a *Declaration of Intention*. These papers are sometimes called First Papers since they are the first forms to be completed in the naturalization process. Generally these papers were filled out fairly soon after an immigrant's arrival in America. Due to some laws, there were times when certain groups of individuals were exempt from this step.

After the immigrant had completed these papers and met the residency requirement (which was usually five years), the individual was able to submit his *Petition for Naturalization*. Petitions are also known as *Second or Final Papers* because they are the second and final set of papers completed in the naturalization process.

Immigrants also took a *naturalization oath* or *oath of allegiance*. A copy of this oath is often filed with the immigrant's first or second papers. After an immigrant had completed all citizenship requirements he was issued a *certificate of naturalization*. Many of these documents can be found in the records of the court in which they were created.

Other naturalization records include *naturalization certificate stubs* and *certificates of arrival*. See further below for a description of these two documents.

Many immigrants took out their *First Papers* as soon as they arrived in America, in whatever county and state that may have been. Later they would file their *Second Papers* in the location in which they took up residence.

What's Included in this Database:

This database contains images of original naturalization records (primarily Declarations and Petitions) from U.S. District and Circuit courts. Specifically, this database includes the following:

California:

- Naturalization Records of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, Central Division (Los Angeles), 1887-1940 (**NARA Roll Series M1524**)

- Naturalization Records in the Superior Court of San Diego, California, 1883-1958 (**NARA Roll Series M1613**)
- Naturalization Records in the Superior Court of Los Angeles, California, 1876-1915 (**NARA Roll Series M1614**)

New York:

- Petitions for Naturalization from the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, 1897-1944 (**NARA Roll Series M1972**)

Pennsylvania:

- Naturalization Petitions for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania (**NARA Roll Series M1522**)
- Naturalization Petitions of the U.S. District Court, 1820-1930, and Circuit Court, 1820-1911, for the Western District of Pennsylvania (**NARA Roll Series M1537**)

Information Available in the Records:

The amount of information that is contained on each naturalization document varies widely between time and place.

Generally speaking, most pre-1906 naturalization papers contain little information of biographical or genealogical value. In the absence of standardized naturalization forms, federal, state, county, and other minor courts of record created their own naturalization documents, which varied greatly in format. There are, however, wonderful exceptions, so it is worth seeking pre-1906 naturalizations.

Records created after 1906 usually contain significant genealogical information and are often worth the search to locate them.

To Learn More:

Much of the above information was taken from:

Lorretto D. Szucs, *They Became American: Finding Naturalization Records and Ethnic Origins*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry, Inc., 1998).

To learn more about naturalization records and how to research them, please consult this book.

Related Databases:

[U.S. Naturalization Records Indexes, 1794-1995](#)

[U.S. Naturalization Record Indexes, 1791-1992 \(World Archives Project\)](#)

[U.S. Naturalization Records – Original Documents, 1795-1972](#)

Where to go from here:

Help index this collection! The World Archives Project allows anyone to help bring FREE historical records to the public. Simply download the software and select the projects you want to help with. The resulting searchable indexes will be available free of charge on Ancestry.com.

