

# Naturalization Records: The Who, What, Where, When, Why, And How of the Naturalization Process In The USA.

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Naturalization Records are federal records to document the citizenship process of immigrants in the United States of America. Although they are federal records, they were created at courts in local areas. They are court records and can be found in the court records of local, state, and federal courts.

## REASONS FOR CITIZENSHIP:

## NATURALIZATION DOCUMENTS:

- Declaration of Intent (First papers)
- Petition for Naturalization (Second papers, or final papers)
- Immigration data
- Oath of Allegiance
- Witness Statements – Deposition of Witnesses

## NATURALIZATION LAWS

### **“Old Law” Period (March 26, 1790–September 26, 1906)**

- Any court could award naturalization
- No certificate was required to be awarded.
- No standard forms
- Info: name of applicant, court name, date of citizenship, witnesses’ names, and country they left.
- Family affected by the naturalization were not listed.
- Only the court kept a record.

### **“Certificate File (C-File)” period (September 27, 1906–March 31, 1956)**

- Standardized forms
- Must file in Federal Court
- Certificate named all members who obtained citizenship from the naturalization

- Copies kept off site at Naturalization Service in a C-File
- Only the Naturalization Service could re-issue documents
- Naturalization Service -> Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) -> United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
- Request copies through the USCIS Genealogy Program  
<https://www.uscis.gov/records/genealogy>

#### **A-Files August 1940-Present**

- 1940-1944 registered and fingerprinted all aliens in the United States 14 years old and up
- Records kept through the naturalization process.
- An Alien Registration number was assigned to the alien to be used on all documents
- Number could be assigned without the naturalization process being started.
- Official file for all immigration and naturalization records
- C-Files became part of A-Files April 1, 1956
- View in person at National Archives Kansas City or San Francisco by appointment or order it. Search the National Archives Catalog at <https://catalog.archives.gov/> . The index is complete. Information to order the records can be found at <https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/aliens>
- <https://www.uscis.gov/records/genealogy/historical-record-series/a-files-numbered-below-8-million>

#### **Specific Laws:**

See “Major United States Laws Relating to Immigration and Naturalization: 1790-2005” handout at the end of this packet.

Interactive Timeline at <https://www.timetoast.com/timelines/naturalization-and-immigration-us-policy-timeline>

#### **Women:**

- Pre-1804 “Free white persons” were allowed to become citizens
- 1804-1934 Women and minors became citizens through the husband
- Few women needed naturalization unless single or widowed
- Before 27 September 1906, Women were naturalized automatically when their husband received his citizenship.
- Unmarried adult women were seldom naturalized until 22 September 1922 when the law required all women to file separately from their husbands.
- Women [NOT men] lost U.S. Citizenship by marrying foreigners after March of 1907 – Expatriation Act.

#### **Posthumous Citizenship:**

- Individuals who served honorably in the military during a specified period of military hostilities and died as a result of injury or disease incurred in or aggravated by that service are eligible for citizenship
- Must be filed within two years after the death.

- Citizenship will show that they were a citizen when they died.
- Wife and children receive benefits

#### Collective Naturalizations

- 1803 – Louisiana Purchase
- 1819 – Florida Purchase incl. Mississippi, Alabama
- 1845 – Texas Purchase
- 1867 – Alaska Purchase
- 1868-70 – All African Americans
- 1900 – Hawaii addition
- 1917 – Puerto Rico
- 1924 – All Native Americans
- 1927 - Virgin Islands
- 1950 - Guam

#### **INFORMATION WE CAN LEARN FROM NATURALIZATION RECORDS**

- Full name, previous used names
- Name of spouse
- Name of children and ages
- Residence address
- Home country
- Birth date and place
- Residence places (location where he filed papers), current address
- Marriage date and place
- Spouse and children's names, birth date, and place
- Immigration date and ship, departure port, arrival port of self and spouse
- Last residence
- Occupation
- Photo, physical description
- Name changes
- FAN club - witnesses names, address, occupation
- Original signature, can they write?

#### **HOW TO FIND YOUR ANCESTOR**

1. Research the life of the ancestor.
2. Gather all information you know about your ancestor any details help, such as nationality, what part of the country they first came to, kind of money they had with them lire, pounds, pesos, etc.,
3. Search US records first.
  - a. You're trying to find names of relatives, places they lived and when, occupations, age,

- b. Search census records: 1830, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, all have clues to naturalization status,
- c. abbreviations used: **NA=naturalized, PA= first papers filed, AL = Alien, NR=Not reported,**

Census Year	1830	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
Year of Immigration	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Duration in USA	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Status of Naturalization	Yes (# of foreigners not naturalized)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Year of Naturalization	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Residence in 1935	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Speak English	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Mother Tongue	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

- d. Find death, burial, obituaries, land records, city directories, etc.
  - e. Search newspapers for lists of new citizens
    - i. Get 20% off newspapers.com with code FAMILYLOCKET
    - ii. NewspaperArchive.com available through library website.
  - f. Search military records too as many state alien status
4. If you can't find their location,
    - a. look at ethnic and religious gathering spots, where did people of that nationality or religion usually settle in the US. If there are a lot of German and Polish in that area, they probably are of that nationality or have many friends that are.
  5. Look for alternate names
    - a. first and middle names, Americanized versions of the name Johann, Janos, John, Jno
    - b. shortened names, nicknames, possible name changes, surnames often dropped Mc, De, Van prefixes.
    - c. Search for husband and wife and parents' names.
  6. Make a timeline of events; note when and where they lived
  7. Compare the waiting periods of filing the naturalization documents to their timeline. One document could be created in one court, and finalized in another if they moved. Search courts in both locations.
  8. Decide what time and place to search

## **WHERE TO FIND NATURALIZATION RECORDS**

1. What courts existed in that location? It could be filed in any of the courts. Ask the court clerk for tips on how to find the record.
2. USCIS.gov search their indexes <https://www.uscis.gov>
3. National Archives and Records Administration <https://nara.gov>
4. Genealogy or historical societies and libraries may have created indexes
5. FamilySearch Wiki
  - a. In the search box, enter location and naturalization records (Indiana Naturalization)
  - b. Look at this compiled list of online records  
[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United\\_States\\_Naturalization\\_and\\_Citizenship\\_Online\\_Genealogy\\_Records](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_Naturalization_and_Citizenship_Online_Genealogy_Records)
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