

# Top Online Immigration Resources

HAVING SPENT DECADES researching emigrant ancestors, I can't believe how much information has become available online that I didn't even dream about just a few years ago. Memories of trawling through un-indexed records, writing to various court houses and county officials, and pestering personnel at various university archives now give way to thoughts of sitting at my computer in my pajamas.

The records discussed here are those directly related to emigration, immigration, naturalization and citizenship. Are these the only records relevant to such? Definitely not. In fact, before you look at these records, you will have (or should have) looked at vital records (birth date and place, etc.), cemetery records, census records (status of naturalization, year of immigration, country of birth), WWI and WWII registrations, and other records.

This is not a tutorial on record types and their relevance. It is a summary of select key online resources where such record types can be learned about and accessed. With that said, let's get started!

## HISTORY OF NATURALIZATION REQUIREMENTS AND RELATED

- Timeline and Overview of Naturalization Requirements, <http://www.infoukes.com/genealogy/primer/naturalization.html> — This page is very helpful for understanding when requirements for residency changed, who could become naturalized and whether wives and children were included with husbands, or fathers, or not.

- Alien Registration Records, [http://genealogy.about.com/od/immigration/p/alien\\_cards.htm](http://genealogy.about.com/od/immigration/p/alien_cards.htm).
- About.com: The History of Naturalization Requirements, [www.immigration.about.com/od/usimmigrationhistory/a/Natural\\_History.htm](http://www.immigration.about.com/od/usimmigrationhistory/a/Natural_History.htm).
- Timeline of US Immigration Laws, <http://familytreemagazine.com/upload/images/PDF/naturalizationlaws.pdf>.



A 1911 photo of Anastasia (Barna) Malecka and Katherine Malecka, from Galicia (now Poland), both were part of the emigration wave of 1900-1910.

- Wikipedia pages on the various Naturalization Acts, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naturalization\\_Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naturalization_Act).

## JOE BEINE'S HELPFUL WEB PAGES

- What Passenger Lists are Online? <http://www.germanroots.com/onlinelists.html> — An excellent overview of

online sources for digitized or transcribed passenger records and indexes.

Organized into three main sections: US Arrival Records, International and Departures and General Sites.

- Online Searchable Naturalization Indexes and Records, <http://www.germanroots.com/naturalization.html> — A summary of American records (general and by state) and records for Canada.
- Finding US Naturalization Records <http://www.germanroots.com/naturalizationrecords.html> — Finding records before 1906 is much more challenging, and complicated, than finding those after 1906. This page talks about both time periods and the resources that can assist you in this endeavor.

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION (NARA) RESOURCES

- Research Our Records: Naturalization Records, <http://www.archives.gov/research/naturalization/index.html> — On this website you can find details on naturalization records and the process. Also, you can do a search to see what naturalization microfilm is available and at which facility nationwide.
- Research Our Records: Immigration Records (Ship Passenger Arrival Records), <http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/immigration/index.html> — This article discusses how NARA holds immigration records for arrivals to the United States from foreign ports between approximately

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1820 and 1882, arranged by port.

- *Prologue* articles on these topics, <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/genealogy-notes.html#natur> — This includes “Women and Naturalization, ca. 1802-1940”.
- Check records held at individual branches. For example there is “Research in Naturalization Records”, <http://www.archives.gov/north-east/nyc/finding-aids/naturalization-records.html>, for the Naturalization records held at NARA’s New York Facility.
- Access to Archival Databases (AAD) for Genealogy / Personal History: Passenger Lists <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/series-list.jsp?cat=GP44> — This includes passenger data files for Russians, Irish, Germans and Italians traveling to America.

### FAMILYSEARCH.ORG

Go to “Browse by Location”, select “United States”, and then under “Collections” select “Migration and Naturalization”, [https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list#page=1&region=UNITED\\_STATES&recordType=Migration](https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list#page=1&region=UNITED_STATES&recordType=Migration). Here you will find a list of appropriate databases, which encompasses such titles as border crossings from Canada, passenger lists, and naturalization indexes and petitions.

Do the same searches for other regions of the world and you will find relevant information on immigration indexes, passenger lists, passport registers, passports and more.

### ANCESTRY.COM

Ancestry’s Immigration and Travel collection, <http://search.ancestry.com/search/category.aspx?cat=40>, includes passenger lists, citizenship and naturalization records, border crossings and passports, crew lists, emigration books, and ship pictures and descriptions.

### FOLD3.COM

Fold3.com’s collection of

naturalization records, [http://www.fold3.com/category\\_22/](http://www.fold3.com/category_22/), includes records for California, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania District or Superior Courts.

### OTHER RESOURCES: PASSENGER RECORDS

- Castle Garden, [www.castlegarden.org](http://www.castlegarden.org) — A database of information on 11 million immigrants from 1820 through 1892, the year Ellis Island opened.
- Ellis Island, <http://www.ellisland.org/> — From 1892 to 1954, more than 12 million immigrants entered the US through the portal of Ellis Island, a small island in New York Harbor.
- ISTG (Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild), [www.immigrantships.net/](http://www.immigrantships.net/) — Volunteers have transcribed more than 11,000 passenger manifests. This site is great if

you are seeking passengers who arrived in the 17th and 18th centuries, and it has extensive holdings for the 19th century and later.

- *The Global Gazette*: “Finding Passenger Lists and Immigration Records — North American (Canada and US)”, <http://globalgenealogy.com/globalgazette/gazed/gazed125.htm>

### OTHER RESOURCES:

#### NATURALIZATION RECORDS

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Genealogy Program, [www.uscis.gov/genealogy](http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy), is a fee-based service providing family historians and other researchers with historical immigration and naturalization records. Discussed on the website are Certificate Files 1906-1956, Alien Registration Forms 1940-1944, Visa Files 1924-1944, Registry Files 1929-1944 and A-Files numbered below eight million.

## RESEARCHING IMMIGRATION, EMIGRATION, NATURALIZATION AND CITIZENSHIP IN CANADA

Canada has several resources to help your research via Library and Archives Canada, including:

- **Genealogy and Family History, Immigration and Citizenship**, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/022/022-908-e.html>
- **Immigration and Citizenship Databases**, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/lac-bac/search-recherchelanc.php?Language=eng> — including:
  - Canadian Naturalization (1915-1951)
  - Citizenship Registration Records for the Montreal Circuit Court (1851-1945)
  - Home Children (1869-1930)
  - Immigrants at Grosse-Île (1832-1937)
  - Immigration Records (1925-1935)
  - Immigrants from China (1885-1949)
  - Immigrants from the Russian Empire (LI-RA-MA Collection)
  - Immigrants to Canada
  - Montreal Emigrant Society Passage Book (1832)
  - Passenger Lists (1865-1922)
  - Quebec City Passenger Lists Index (1865-1900)
  - Upper Canada and Canada West Naturalization Records (1828-1850)

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### MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS

- Definitions of Immigration and Emigration, <http://www.educationbug.org/a/immigration-vs-emigration.html>.
- Immigration to the United States, 1789-1930, <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/immigration/> — A web-based collection of selected historical materials from Harvard's libraries, archives and museums that documents voluntary immigration to the US, from the signing of the Constitution to the onset of the Great Depression.
- NYC Naturalization Database: Volunteer Efforts By The Italian Genealogical Group, [www.italiangen.org/databaselist.stm](http://www.italiangen.org/databaselist.stm) — A great collection of naturalization record indexes for naturalizations recorded in the Eastern District (consisting of Kings, Richmond, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties), Southern District (consisting of Manhattan, Bronx and Westchester Counties), as well as the Nassau and Suffolk Counties, and Bronx and Queen Boroughs, Supreme Courts. The collection is expanding to include other New York state naturalization records. Check back to see what's been added.
- US Immigration Map, [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/03/10/us/20090310-](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/03/10/us/20090310-immigration-explorer.html?hp)

[immigration-explorer.html?hp](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/03/10/us/20090310-immigration-explorer.html?hp) — Select a foreign-born group to see how they settled across the United States through time.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

As you can see, there are many resources available online to assist you as you research immigrants, their status as aliens and their eventual citizenship. Don't stop with what is listed here; these are only some of the collections containing relevant material. Use these as a spring board to see where material might be found for your ancestor. For example, many states use select universities as repositories (e.g., Wisconsin naturalization records are often kept in university archives, as are some Illinois ones).

This article only covered those resources specific to emigration, immigration, naturalization and citizenship. There are many other records of genealogical value that help us with immigrant ancestors, including, and not limited to, census records, WWI and WWII registrations, vital records, church records, cemetery records, military pensions, homestead land entry papers and newspaper articles listing those arriving on ships and receiving citizenship.

We are a nation of immigrants, whether modern or as the nation was founded. Given this, almost all of our ancestries involve immigration records. Check out these very rich and invaluable records.

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### RESEARCHING IMMIGRATION, EMIGRATION, NATURALIZATION AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE UK

The UK has several resources to help your research. Here are just a few of the resources, beyond what we have already discussed (which sometimes include relevant UK database information).

- Genuki: United Kingdom and Ireland Emigration and Immigration, <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/Emigration.html>
- The National Archives (UK), Passenger Lists and Other Migration Records, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/passenger-lists.htm>
- The National Archives (England), Naturalisation and British Citizenship, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/research-guides/naturalisation.htm>
- The National Archives (England): "Looking for Records of a Naturalised Briton", <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/looking-for-person/naturalised-britons.htm>
- Ancestorsonboard: Passenger lists, <http://www.ancestorsonboard.com/>
- Findmypast: Passenger Lists and Register of Passport Applications, <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/content/search-menu/travel-and-migration>
- AncestorsonBoard, <http://www.ancestorsonboard.com/> — records for the UK ports (most European emigrants traveled via a UK port, whether Liverpool, Southampton or others)
- FindMyPast, <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/passengerListPersonSearchStart.action?redef=0>

*Diane L. Richard has been doing genealogy research for over 25 years. As one with a modern emigrant*



*mutt ancestry, much has been learned from researching immigrant documents! She is currently a professional genealogist and can be found online at [www.mosaicrpm.com](http://www.mosaicrpm.com).*

*(Or scan the QR code above with your mobile phone or tablet device.)*