Immigration Research Tools for the United States

Immigration is an important resource to explore for verifying how and where your ancestors came from. Especially is this important if you are having any difficulty in finalizing the origin of ancestors. These records can be a portal of opportunity to link the migration of ones ancestors to the USA. There are three resources that I want to share with you in beginning this family history odyssey.

- Earliest resources for establishing beginning research in the USA.
- On-line available researches for immigration to the USA
- On-line tutorials for The Family History Guide which provide specific tools to investigate to make this family history odyssey easier to manage with techniques that can be a difference-maker for you.

Beginning Research in United States Immigration and Emigration Records

What are United States immigration and emigration records?[**edit source**]

Immigration refers to people coming into a country. **Emigration** refers to people leaving a country to go to another. The records usually take the form of ship's **passenger lists** collected at the port of entry.

What time periods and locations do they cover?[**edit source**]

- The port of **Boston**,was the leading trading and passenger port 1630 to 1750.
- The port of **Philadelphia** was founded in 1682 and rivaled the port of Boston for a short time.
- The port of **New Orleans** was founded by the French in 1718, controlled by Spain from 1762 to 1803, then sold to the United States.
- The port of **Baltimore**, founded in 1729, was the best protected deep water port and the closest East Coast port to the Midwest.
- The port of **New York** was not the leading port until the Erie Canal opened in 1825. From 1855 through 1890, immigrants arriving in New York came through **Castle Garden.** Castle Garden processed approximately eight million immigrants.
- Smaller ports are found in several other states.

What can I find in them?[**edit source**]

- Passenger lists before 1820 included **name, departure information and arrival details**. The names of wives and children were often not included.
- Customs Passenger Lists between 1820 and 1891 asked for **each immigrant's name, their age, their sex, their occupation, and their country of origin**, but not the city or town of origin.

- Information given on passenger lists from 1891 to 1954 included:
  - name, age, sex,
  - nationality, occupation, marital status,
  - last residence, final destination in the U.S.,
  - whether they had been to the U.S. before (and if so, when, where and how long),
  - if joining a relative, who this person was, where they lived, and their relationship,
  - whether able to read and write,
  - whether in possession of a train ticket to their final destination, who paid for the passage,
  - amount of money the immigrant had in their possession,
  - whether the passenger had ever been in prison, a poorhouse, or in an institution for the insane,
  - whether the passenger was a polygamist,
  - and immigrant's state of health.
- In 1906, the **physical description and place of birth** were included, and a year later, the **name and address of the passenger's closest living relative in the country of origin** was included.

How do I access them?[**edit source**]

The records have been collected, digitized, indexed, and published by several organizations. A list of online links is available at U.S. Immigration Online Genealogy Records.

- One-Step Webpages by Stephen P. Morse effectively searches the records of the major ports at the same time.
- Ancestry.com has a very thorough collection of emigration and immigration records. ($)

Search strategies[**edit source**]

- You will usually find several possible entries for **immigrants with similar names and ages**. Learn everything you can so you can distinguish your ancestor from others of the same name. Knowing your ancestor's full name, approximate date of arrival in the United States, approximate age on arrival to the United States, the likely port of arrival, the name of their spouse, their religion, and their occupation will all help in identifying your ancestor in passenger lists.

- Many immigrants traveled in groups or settled among friends and relatives from their native land. Knowing the names of some **relatives, neighbors and friends** of your ancestor will help identify him on a passenger list.
- Remember it wasn't uncommon for **one member of the family** to come to the United States first and send for the rest of the family after getting established.
- It is important to understand that many **immigrant names were misspelled**, misunderstood because of heavy accents or the lack of the ability to speak English, or Americanized. A name may have been lengthened or shortened. Search each index creatively for name variations

Online United States Immigration Genealogy Records

Suggested Strategy**[edit source]**

1. Check the **partner website indexes,** as these cover many, many databases at once. The FamilySearch Historical Records databases is free to search with a free registered account. The other websites are subscription-based but can be searched for free at a **Family History Center** near you. Try to search each partner site because their search engines can often bring up slightly different results.
2. If it is difficult for you to get access to the subscription databases, next try **Additional Nationwide Collections Not Included in Partner Sites**. These websites have a lot of overlap with the subscription websites.
3. Search a **nationality, religious, or political group collection** that applies to your ancestor.
4. Search the **state collection for the first state where your ancestor lived.**
5. Read **Tracing Immigrant Origins** to learn about many other records that substitute for immigration records.

For the most definitive amount if immigration resources to use, go to https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_Immigration_Online_Genealogy_Records and you will not be disappointed.

The Family History Guide

Explore various types of U.S. **immigration** records

Goal D1: Explore various types of U.S. **immigration** records. Vault. **Immigration** and naturalization records can provide information clues for ancestors when they immigrated. Vast amounts of information presented for each state all with pertinent tutorials to utilize the pristine instruction available. URL is https://www.thefhguide.com/project-9-united-statesd1.html.