

## Where to start

- Look for naturalization record in the courts of the county and/or city where the immigrant lived
- Look for the Petition
- Look in the court records of neighboring cities, as the immigrant was allowed to naturalize in any court. They would often select the nearest court to where they worked rather than where they lived.
- The District Federal Court may contain your ancestor's records. Search the U.S. District Court Jurisdictions to identify to correct District Court.

## Finding an ancestor in naturalization records

### To find your ancestor's naturalization year, search:

- Passport applications
- City directories
- Alien registrations
- Land records
- Almshouse records
- Ship passenger lists
- Oaths of Allegiance
- Newspapers
- Census records
- Voter registrations

### Online searchable naturalization indexes and records

- [www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list](http://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/list)
- [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com) (subscription fee)

## Prepared by the Shrewsbury Genealogy Club



*Shrewsbury Public Library*  
609 Main Street  
Shrewsbury, MA 01545  
508-841-8609  
[www.shrewsburyma.gov/library](http://www.shrewsburyma.gov/library)

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# Did my ancestor become a Naturalized Citizen?



Naturalization is the process of granting citizenship and responsibilities to foreign-born residents. Naturalization papers are an important source of information about an immigrant's nation of origin, foreign and "Americanized" names, and date of arrival.

Immigrants to the United States have never been required to become citizens. An immigrant could become a citizen anytime after they arrived in the U.S. Of those who applied, many did not complete the requirements to become a citizen.

*(Information above from [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org)).*

## Colonial Times

Naturalization records began in colonial times. The requirements and process of naturalization have changed many times over the years. The basic requirements have been residency in the country for a given period of time, good moral character, and an oath of loyalty or allegiance given in a court of record.

British immigrants were automatically citizens of the colonials (British Empire). Seven of the original colonies had their own laws for naturalizing foreigners as citizens of the British Empire colony. After the Revolutionary War, the individual states established their own naturalization laws and procedures.

### Research sources

*Passenger and Immigration Lists Index 1600-1900s*

by P. William Filby

Contains passenger lists AND naturalization records (available for in-library use at Worcester Main and Hopkinton libraries)

*Denizations and Naturalizations in the British Colonies in America 1607-1775*

by Lloyd deWitt Bockstruck

(available for in-library use at Worcester Main and Leominster libraries)

## From 1790 to 1906

Naturalization records before 1906 are not likely to give town of origin or names of parents. They may contain:

- Port of arrival
- Date of arrival
- Age of immigrant
- Residence of immigrant
- Country of origin

## Requirements prior to 1906

- A filed Petition and Declaration of Intention
- 5 years of residency in the U.S.
- Residency within given state for 1 year
- Completion of process in a court of law
- Swearing in and conferral of Certificate of Citizenship or Certificate of Naturalization

## Naturalization after 1906

The INS was created in 1906 to process naturalization and keep track of immigrants in the U.S. The records are now in the possession of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS):  
[uscis.gov/records/genealogy](https://uscis.gov/records/genealogy)

## What you can expect to find via USCIS:

- **A-Files**  
Individual alien case files; became the official file for all immigration records created or consolidated since 4/1/44
- **Alien Registration Forms (AR-2s)**  
5.5 million forms completed by all aliens (age 14+) residing in or entering the U.S. between 8/1/40 and 3/31/44
- **C-Files**  
Naturalization Certificate Files are copies of records relating to all U.S. naturalizations in Federal, State, county, or municipal courts, overseas military naturalizations, replacement of old law naturalization certificates, and the issuance of Certificates of Citizenship in derivative, repatriation, and resumption cases
- **Registry Files**  
Records which document the creation of immigrant arrival records for persons who entered the United States prior to 7/1/24, and for whom no arrival record could later be found
- **Visa Files**  
Original arrival records of immigrants admitted for permanent residence under provisions of the Immigration Act of 1924
- **Other steps in the process:**  
Searching the Index, Requesting Records, Genealogy Notebook, Genealogical Records Help