

Immigration and Emigration Records

1. You need to clearly identify the immigrant: A full name, both given and surnames. Make sure the name you have is not a nickname. The full name will help to identify a person in his home country and may also be a clue as to the immigrant's original country or region
2. A date: birth date is preferable but a marriage, a record of a religious event, a military release, etc. that occurs in the home country can be used. Sometimes these are not available which makes the work harder, but not impossible. Sometimes death records will also indicate where the immigrant was from.
3. Place of origin- available on some later records.
4. Friends and neighbors: Many immigrants traveled together or settled among friends from their native land. Use the census records to see if any in the neighborhood came from the same area.
5. Religion: If you know their religion, you may be able to find records in their home countries and narrow geographic location: ie: Protestant German=north Germany

When searching immigration records note:

1. Date of immigration: Census records for later immigrants
2. Port or city of Arrival
3. Name of ship
4. Original country or region
5. Place of departure.

First: look for death records. These include church records, vital, obits, cemetery, and probate. Watch for names of parents, relatives or even friends. May provide clues about religion, naturalization, length of residence, arrival and property in the old country.

Next: Other vital records; Marriage, birth of children. Look both in church and civil records. Look for occupation, neighbors, land and property.

If your ancestor was registered to vote in this country, try to find the voter registration for him. It will often list full name, address, birth date, birthplace and the naturalization court and date. Kept at the county level. If close in time you may need to contact the county to see if they are available

Types of Immigration sources:

1. Citizenship papers
2. passenger lists
3. immigrant aid society records
4. naturalization records- If the immigrant served in the military then there may be special naturalization records for that service. Available on the local and federal level.

Time Periods:

Colonial- before 1790 there was no need to list arrival so sometimes you need to go to the emigration records instead. Filby's passenger and immigration lists index published these records.

1820-1905

US Customs passenger lists. Filed by shipmasters with the collector of custom in each port. The shipmaster was supposed to also record births and deaths during the voyage

1820-1860

Castle garden: New York- largest port of entry- More than 2/3 of immigrants came through Castle Garden

1892-1924

Ellis Island

Emigration Records

When an immigrant left his country there were steps that had to be followed. Many countries required the emigrant to receive permission to leave. If they followed the law, they may be an application to leave (1/3 left without permission).

Next they had to book passage and board a vessel- Usually kept under the jurisdiction of the port city or by the state or national government where the emigrant lived.

Hamburg passenger lists:

Contain names of millions of Europeans who emigrated through Hamburg between 1850 and 1934 except 1915-1919. 1/3 of central and eastern Europeans came through Hamburg.