Immigration and Emigration
By Steve Packer

Value. These pages introduce the principles, search strategies, and record types you can use to identify an immigrant ancestor's original hometown. These principles apply to almost any country. Finding an immigrant ancestor's place of origin is the key to finding earlier generations of the family. It provides access to many family history resources in that home area. Once you know a former place of residence or a birthplace, you may be able to add more generations to your pedigree.

Key Immigration Links

- [Hamburg Passenger Lists](#) how to use the lists and indexes
- [Germans from Russia](#) research strategies, and record types
- [Ancestry.com](#) ($) passengers, naturalizations, convicts, passports, border crossings, ship images, crew lists, colonists, and aliens

[FrancoGen](#) links to early French Canadian immigration sources

Featured content

[**Country of Arrival Obituaries**](#). Obituaries are an excellent source of biographical information about immigrants. In addition to names and death dates, you can learn about surviving family members, church affiliations, spouses, parents, occupations, burial places, and hometowns in the old country. Even if a place of origin is not given, an obituary may provide additional research clues, such as the date or ship of immigration or traveling companions. Much of this information cannot be found in other sources. For many immigrants, an obituary is the only "biographical sketch" ever written about them.

Did you know?

- [Huguenots](#) (French Protestants) settled [Florida](#) in 1564, 43 years before [Jamestown](#).

- The [Statue of Liberty](#) was a gift from [France](#) to the [United States](#).
- [More people](#) have come from [Italy](#) and [Germany](#) to America than from any other nations.
- More immigrants arrived at [Philadelphia](#) than at [New York City](#) prior to 1800.
- More than 3/4 of American colonists arrived as [indentured servants,](#) [convicts](#) or [slaves](#).
- The U.S. National Archives has both [Canadian](#) and [Mexican](#) border crossing records.
- Library and Archives Canada has [border crossing records](#) of Americans into Canada.
- Some American colonists had their [last wil and testament sent back to England](#) for probate.
- Up to 90 percent of [Irish](#) and [Greek](#) immigrants [went back home](#) from America.

Related Sites

- [Am. Hist. Soc. of Germans from Russia](#)
- [BLM-GLO Land Patent Index](#) search homestead applications for immigrant data
- [Castle Garden](#) immigration search
- [Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System](#) some military records may give hometown
- [Ellis Island Record Search](#)

- [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society](#)
- [Immigration History Research Center](#)
- [Library and Archives Canada](#) searches
- [National Archives](#) immigration searches
- [Stephen P. Morse](#) arrival list searches
- [Swenson Swed. Immig. Research Center](#)
- [WorldVitalRecords](#) immigration searches

Tracing Immigrants Arrival Emigration and Immigration

From FamilySearch Wiki

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Passenger arrival lists are some of the best sources for documenting an ancestor's immigration. Most immigrants should be sought in arrival lists. However, lists were not kept for every immigrant, some lists have been lost, and others are not indexed.

Immigration lists vary in content and availability depending on the time period and the port of arrival. Earlier records seldom give the immigrant's town of origin. They often

give only the immigrant's name, age, and country of origin or the ship's last port-of-call. More recent lists tend to give more detailed information, often including the place of origin.

Some governments kept comprehensive arrival lists called manuscript ship manifests. However, these records vary from country to country. The United States did not require passenger arrival lists until 1820. Canada did not keep them until 1865. Australian lists date from 1826. However, some port authorities kept lists for earlier years because of local laws.

To find an immigrant on a passenger list, you need to know the immigrant's name, port of arrival, and the date of arrival. If you do not know the specific date, you may be able to find it by using a ship arrival list if you know the year of arrival and the ship's name.

Passenger arrival lists for most ports are indexed, so approximate dates are sufficient for these lists. Unfortunately, some ports, such as New York City (from 1846 to 1897) do not have complete indexes. Such records are so vast that a more precise date (within about a week) is needed. Various fragmentary indexes are available to partially overcome this problem.

Most early lists (prior to 1820) have been published, especially for North America. A growing number of later lists are being published. Significant published arrival lists for the United States include—

- Irish arrivals at New York from 1846 to 1852.
- Dutch arrivals from 1820 to 1880.
- German arrivals from 1727-1808; 1850-1870 (ongoing series).

These sources are generally found in the Family History Library Catalog under—

> [STATE], [COUNTY], [CITY] - EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION
> UNITED STATES - EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION

An excellent bibliography of over 2,600 published lists of immigrants is—

- Filby, P. William. *Passenger and Immigration Lists Bibliography 1538-1900*. Rev. ed. Detroit: Gale Research, 1988. (FHL book 973 W33p 1988.)

About half of the above lists are indexed in—

- Filby, P. William. *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1981-. (FHL book 973 W32p and supps.) This multi-volume set of indexes is now available on the Internet as part Ancestry.com and is easier to use there than the book edition.

The Family History Library has copies of most available arrival lists for most destination countries. Lists are also available from the national archives of the various countries. Specific lists are described in the portal or research outline for applicable countries.

Additional types of immigration records are available for some countries, including Canadian border crossings into the United States. There are also card indexes of Austrian settlers in Galicia (Ansiedlerkartei nach Galizien 1782-1805) and in the Banat (Ansiedlerakten 1686-1855). Passports may have been issued to immigrants by the country of arrival if they were returning to visit relatives in the country of origin. The records will usually indicate a birthplace or destination, which is likely near the place of origin. Passports were often not required until the twentieth century, but were available as early as 1795 for travelers from the United States.

Tracing Immigrants Origin Record Selection Table

**Country-of-Origin
Records Selection Table**

This table can help you decide which records to search. In Column 1, find the search tactic you selected. In Column 2, find the record types that are most likely to have the information you need. Then turn to that record type in this section. Additional records that may be useful are in Column 3. The terms used in both Columns 2 and 3 are the same as the record headings used in this portal and the subject headings used in the Family History Library Catalog.

1. Search Tactic...	2. Look First In...	3. Then Search...
1. Survey general previous research	Genealogy, Societies	Periodicals
2. Search nationwide records	Civil Registration, Census, Church Records, Names, Personal	Taxation, Directories, Periodicals
3. Search departure records	Emigration and Immigration, Population	History, Newspapers, Court Records, Military Records
4. Localize the surname	Names Personal, Directories, Societies	Civil Registration, Census, Periodicals
5. Search regional records	Church Records, Civil Registration, Genealogy, History, Societies, Periodicals, Court Records	Directories, Census, Newspapers, Taxation, Military Records, Land and Property
6. Search local records	Church Records, Civil Registration, History, Census	Genealogy, Periodicals, Societies, Newspapers, Probate Records, Taxation, Court Records, Population, Land and Property