

# Some Resources for Researching 20<sup>th</sup> Century Immigration and Naturalization Records

## Alien Files (A-Files), 1944-Present

### Alien Case Files (A-Files) at the National Archives (National Archives webpage)

<https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/aliens>

This webpage is updated when there are significant additions to the A-Files collection. Check back periodically to see whether the number of A-Files in National Archives holdings have increased. If so, there will be new file-level catalog entries in the National Archives online catalog. This webpage also has instructions for requesting copies of A-Files and scheduling appointments to view them in-person at the National Archives.

### National Archives Online Catalog

<https://catalog.archives.gov/>

The National Archives online catalog has the most complete listing of A-Files in National Archives holdings. They are name searchable. You can also search by Alien Registration Number by inputting the Alien Registration Number in the format “A1234567” (no spaces, no hyphens between numbers, no preceding zeros) into the search box.

There are two separate series-level entries for the A-Files:

- **Alien Case Files, 1944-2003** (National Archives Identifier 4488912, National Archives at Kansas City): <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/4488912>
- **Alien Alien Case Files, 1944-2009** (National Archives Identifier 6105565, National Archives at San Francisco): <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/6105565>

You can click the “Search Within This Series” button to search within the holdings of a particular field office’s A-Files collection. This can be useful, for example, for San Francisco Bay Area-based researchers and scholars interested in A-Files of individuals from a particular country, if they wish to only access A-Files available at the National Archives at San Francisco.

Ancestry and FamilySearch both host A-Files indexes, but these indexes are not complete, nor do they provide all of the data fields available to search and verify whether you have the correct individual.

### “The A-Files: Finding Your Immigrant Ancestors” by Elizabeth Burnes and Marisa Louie (article in *Prologue* magazine, 2013)

<https://www.archives.gov/files/publications/prologue/2013/spring/a-files.pdf>

The third page of this article has a chart showing some types of records an immigrant may have had (A-File, C-File, Alien Registration Form) based on their life history. Note that 1918 (not 1910) is currently the year-of-birth marker for whether an A-File may have been transferred to the National Archives.

### U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) FOIA Requests

<https://www.uscis.gov/foia>

If an A-File remains in USCIS custody (all those for year of birth 1919 and after), file a FOIA request. You can use the online FIRST request system (recommended) or file the paper form G-639 ([https://www.uscis.gov/system/files\\_force/files/form/g-639.pdf](https://www.uscis.gov/system/files_force/files/form/g-639.pdf)) if preferred. Note that you may be directed to re-file your request with the USCIS Genealogy Program.

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## USCIS Genealogy Program

<https://www.uscis.gov/historyandgenealogy>

USCIS makes historical records that remain in its legal custody available through the USCIS Genealogy Program (see “Genealogy” → “Historical Records Series” in the left menu bar.) Staff also publish articles about INS and American immigration history.

## USCIS Genealogy Program - Index Search Requests

<https://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/genealogy/searching-index>

For a fee (\$65 per search as of August 2020), USCIS will search their master indexes for information about individual immigrants. The indexes identify records that remain in their legal custody as well as records transferred to the National Archives. A successful Index Search Request responses will include information about how to request copies of the records for an additional fee. These indexes are not available to the public because of privacy restrictions. These master indexes cover much more than the “U.S. Subject Index to Correspondence and Case Files of the INS” mentioned below. Using the Index Search Request program is especially recommended if you do not have the Alien Registration Number of the subject of the file.



## INS – San Francisco – Immigration Arrival Investigation Case Files, 1884-1944

### National Archives Online Catalog

Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (San Francisco District Office)  
“Immigration Arrival Investigation Case Files, 1884 – 1944”

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/296445>



## INS Subject & Policy Files, 1893-1957

### U.S. Subject Index to Correspondence and Case Files of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1903-1959 (name-searchable database on Ancestry)

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1946/>

Digital access to “Subject Index to Correspondence and Case Files of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1903-1952” (NARA microfilm publication T458). Contains references to the “Subject and Policy Files, 1893-1957” (National Archives Identifier 559947) and other types of INS case files. If you find a reference of interest, contact the National Archives to see if there is a file in their holdings.

### National Archives Online Catalog

Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service  
“Subject and Policy Files, 1893-1957”

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/559947>

Over 3000 file units are cataloged in the online catalog **by subject** – not by names of individuals

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**INS Subject and Policy Files, 1906-1957 (National Archives website)**

<https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/ins-subject-and-policy-files>

**Quick Guide to INS Case and Correspondence Files Related to Specific Individuals (USCIS History and Genealogy Program Website)**

<https://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/genealogy/genealogy-notebook/quick-guide-finding-ins-case-and-correspondence-files-related-specific-individuals>



## INS Bureau of Naturalization Correspondence Files, 1906-1946

**Research Guide to Selected Bureau of Naturalization Case and Correspondence Files, 1906–1946 (National Archives)**

<http://www.archives.gov/research/naturalization/naturalization-files.pdf>

**More information about the Name Index to Bureau of Naturalization Correspondence (USCIS)**

<http://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/research/topics-and-events/name-index-bureau-naturalization-correspondence>

The "**Directory of Courts Having Jurisdiction in Naturalization**" (the second half of National Archives microfilm publication M2033) is digitized on HathiTrust at

<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112063401464>

You can use this to make sense of Declaration of Intention case file numbers found in the "Name Index to Bureau of Naturalization Correspondence Files, 1906–1946" (National Archives microfilm publication A3388) and on the "Subject Index to Correspondence and Case Files of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1903-1952" (NARA microfilm publication T458).



## Naturalization Certificate Files (C-Files), 1906-1956

**Certificate Files (C-Files) (USCIS)**

<http://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/genealogy/certificate-files-september-27-1906-march-31-1956>

**Zack Wilske's comprehensive article "United States Citizenship Records: Derivative, Replacement, and Repatriation Certificate Files"**

(Wilske is Senior Historian for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.)

<http://americanjewisharchives.org/media/docs/wilskeZack.pdf>