

Foreign Passenger Records and Telling the Immigrant Story

SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. Discover what foreign passenger lists exist and how to access and search them.
2. Explore ways to tell the immigrant story of your ancestor.

FOREIGN PASSENGER LISTS, 1780–1924

Genealogists typically encounter records of arriving passengers, such as those available for the Port of New York beginning in the 1890s. In addition to these lists, records of outgoing passengers gathered at the port of departure are also sometimes available. Though the contents and availability of these records vary over time, they can offer critical genealogical details. Many are online, though not all are indexed, and most exist in the original language in which they were created. Usually, these lists include departures for all destinations, including the Port of New York.

Irish Customs Lists, 1803–1806

An 1803 statute mandated the recording of outbound ships from Ireland. Although the original records were lost, departures between March 1803 and March 1806 were duplicated by Lord Hardwicke. The lists are accessible online and in print:

- Mitchell, Brian *Irish Passenger Lists, 1803–1806*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1995.
- *Ancestry*, [ancestry.com/search/collections/48482](https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/48482)

Board of Trade Lists, 1890–1960

For vessels departing England, Wales, Ireland (before 1921), and Northern Ireland, records created by the Board of Trade exist from 1890 through 1960. Records often contain the port of departure, year of departure, name, occupation, gender, marital status, age, and nationality of each passenger. The lists are accessible online and in their original format at The National Archives (UK):

- U.K. National Archives at Kew, Board of Trade: Commercial and Statistics Department and Successor: Outward Passenger Lists [BT27]
- *Ancestry*, [ancestry.com/search/collections/2997](https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2997)
- *Findmypast*, search.findmypast.com/search-world-records/passenger-lists-leaving-uk-1890-1960

Hamburg Passenger Lists, 1850–1934

Millions departing Northeastern Germany, Eastern Prussia, Eastern Europe, the Russian Empire, and elsewhere passed through Hamburg. Outbound lists, including those who left directly from Hamburg for their final destination (direct) and those who stopped at another port before reaching their final

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destination (indirect) were kept from 1850 to 1934. Eighty percent of these passengers traveled to the United States. These detailed lists generally include a passenger's name, gender, age, occupation, last town of residence, nationality, marital status, relationship, religion, military service, the purpose of the trip, ship, date of departure, and place of departure. The lists are handwritten and in German. Lists from 1850 to 1854 are arranged alphabetically, while those from 1855 to 1934 are arranged chronologically. Multiple indexes have been created that can assist when searching these records:

- Klüber Indexes are typed and handwritten cards (often one card per household). Cards include the name, age, town of origin, and occupation, and are available on microfilm at the FamilySearch Library and online at select libraries affiliated with FamilySearch. (search for *Index von Karl Werner Klüber zu den Passagierlisten der Auswandererschiffe, 1850–1871*). Individual indexes include:
 - Direct passengers, 1856–1871 and indirect passengers, 1866–1867
 - Direct passengers, 1850–1871 [entries not included in the index above] and indirect passengers, 1854–1865
- Family History Library Indexes, created in the 1970s and include an index of direct lists, 1856–1871 and direct and indirect lists, 1872. These indexes are available on microfilm at the FamilySearch Library and online at select libraries affiliated with FamilySearch.
- Handwritten Index, 1855–1934, separated into direct and indirect indexes and sorted by the first letter of each surname. This index is browsable on *Ancestry* (ancestry.com/search/collections/1166).

The original passenger lists have been microfilmed and digitized and are available on *Ancestry* (ancestry.com/search/collections/1068). The online collection is searchable in German and has not been translated.

Bremen Passenger Lists: 1850, 1907, 1908, 1913, 1914, 1920–1939

An estimated 3.9 million passengers left Bremen between 1881 and 1920. Original lists of departure from Bremen were largely destroyed; however, a few select years are accessible as follows:

- 1850, reprinted in a newspaper and later transcribed
 - Smith, Neal Clifford. *From Bremen to America in 1850: Fourteen Emigrant Ship Lists* (Baltimore, MD: Clearfield, 2004).
- 1920–1939, accessible in an online database and includes the passenger's name, class of travel, age, gender, family status, town and state of residence, occupation, nationality, and destination.
 - *PassengerLists.de* <http://www.passengerlists.de>

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- 1907, 1908, 1913, and 1914, a card index that includes name, occupation, ship name, place of last residence, and destination.
 - *FamilySearch*, familysearch.org/search/collection/1787826
 - *Ancestry*, ancestry.com/search/collections/9734

Other records from the Bremen archives available on *Ancestry* include:

- Births on ships, 1867–1911, ancestry.com/search/collections/1272
- Deaths of sailors and ship passengers, 1834–1875, ancestry.com/search/collections/1273
- Desertions of sailors, 1855–1874, ancestry.com/search/collections/1271

Pomeranian Passenger Lists, 1869–1901

Though a few passengers passed through the Prussian state of Pomerania, outgoing passenger lists provide a passenger's name (and sometimes maiden name), age, and occupation. The lists are accessible on *Ancestry* (ancestry.com/search/collections/2452).

Antwerp Passenger Lists, 1855

More than 1 million passengers departed from Antwerp between 1843 and 1905. However, the outgoing lists were largely destroyed except for lists from 1855. They are available in print at Hall, Charles M. *Antwerp Emigration Index*. Salt Lake City, UT: Heritage International, 1986.

Rotterdam Passenger Lists, 1900–1974

Records of passengers traveling on the Holland-America line between 3 May 1900 and 14 October 1974 were kept. The lists contain the passenger's name, place of departure, destination, ticket price, cabin class, and other details. Organized by route, departure date, and the name of the ship, the records are available on microfilm (FamilySearch Library) and online at select *FamilySearch* affiliated libraries (familysearch.org/search/collection/1916283).

Swedish Passenger Lists, 1869–1951

More than 1 million passengers left Sweden between 1869 and 1951. Those departing were required to register with the police, creating outgoing passenger lists that include a passenger's name, birth date, birthplace, departure date, ship, and other details. These lists are accessible online:

- Gothenburg departures, *Ancestry*, ancestry.com/search/collections/1910
- Other ports, *Ancestry*, ancestry.com/search/collections/1189 (includes other lists)

Danish Passenger Lists, 1869–1940

Beginning in 1869, passengers traveling from Copenhagen (either directly or indirectly) were required to register. These lists include a passenger's name, occupation, age, place of birth (beginning in 1899),

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last known residence, and destination. These lists are accessible online from the Danish Emigration Archives (<https://www.udvandrerkartivet.dk/udvandrereprotokollerne/>).

Norwegian Passenger Lists, 1869–1933

Outbound passenger lists of those leaving Norway began in 1869. They include the passenger's name, occupation, age, gender, residence, and destination. These items are available online from the Norwegian National Archives (<https://www.digitalarkivet.no/en/>).

TELLING THE IMMIGRANT STORY

Tracing the immigration of an individual or family requires genealogists to examine all available records, including family records, census returns, vital records, customs and passenger lists, naturalizations, and foreign passenger lists. Extending this search to all family members is necessary to gather the whole story. In addition, it is key to remember a family's immigration within a broader historical context. Consider what steps might have been taken before, during, and after their immigration. These details—alongside social, economic, political, and other factors (both at their place of origin and in the United States)—are essential to consider as you tell the story of an immigrant ancestor.

Tracing the Vessel

Resources also exist to assist in tracing the vessel an individual or family traveled on, including:

- *Registers of Vessels Arriving at the Port of New York from Foreign Ports, 1789–1919* (National Archives and Records Administration micropublication M1066) online at *FamilySearch* (familysearch.org/search/catalog/115379)
- *The Ships List* (<http://theshipslist.com>) is a free website that includes histories of some vessels, drawings, images, and other details.

Other Resources

- Castle Garden, <https://www.castlegarden.org>
- Filby, P. William, et al., eds. *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index: A Guide to Published Arrival Records of More Than 3,806,000 Passengers Who Came to the New World between the Sixteenth and the Twentieth Centuries*. Detroit, MI: Gale Research Co., 1981.
- Glazier, Ira A., and P. William Filby, eds. *Germans to America: Lists of Passengers Arriving at U.S. Ports...* Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1989.
- Glazier, Ira A., and P. William Filby, eds. *Italians to America: Lists of Passengers Arriving at U.S. Ports, 1880–1915*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1992.
- *Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation*, <https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org>