

Discovering Immigration Stories from Both Sides of the Pond

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There were a number of common “push-pull” factors that prompted mass migration from Europe during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Who stayed? Who left? What factors influenced their decisions? Through selected immigration stories, learn how personal beliefs, political factors, and private heartbreak separated families and impacted the generations that followed, and how to trace immigrant ancestors in key records to understand the “why” behind their choices.

European Immigration to North America

- Influenced by changing economic, religious historical and political circumstances
- Must look at factors on both sides of the ocean
- **Colonial Era**
 - 1600s-late 1700s – fewer than a million arrived (England, Scotland, France, Germany and Holland)
 - Not all left on own accord (freed convicts; indentured persons)
- **Second Great Wave**
 - Early 1800s-1860 – some 15 million emigrants to America (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Holland, Germany, and British Isles); 800,000 to Canada
 - 1880-1920 (industrialization and urbanization) – more than 20 million arrivals (Russia, Poland, Romania, Austria-Hungary, and Italy)
 - Peak year 1907 (over a million arrivals)

“Push-Pull” Factors

People migrate due to a combination of forces called push-pull factors.

- **Push:** Negative religious, economic, environmental or political conditions that drive people from their homelands.
- Common push factors influencing an ancestor’s decision to leave include:
 - Religious persecution
 - Natural disasters (earthquakes, storms, floods, famine, epidemics)
 - Military conscription (building armies)
 - Economic hardship (lack of available farm land, increased population)

- War (casualties, material damage, food and supply shortages, psychological distress); Expulsion and displacement
- **Pull:** Pull factors are positive conditions that draw people to particular destinations.
 - Religious and political freedom
 - Educational and cultural opportunity (better life)
 - Cheap land
 - High wages
 - Favorable climates—the proverbial “streets paved with gold”)
- **Considerations – those who left; those who stayed**
- Conditions for immigrant (travel, arrival and assimilation into the New World)
- Stories from those who stayed (living conditions, political climate, wars, family)
- Trauma (separation, heartbreak, and turmoil)
- Impact on future generations

Chain Migration

- Family members and neighbors following each other across the ocean
 - Immigrants settled in the same neighborhoods (cluster communities)
 - “Birds of Passage”: 30-40% returned to their homelands before another trip
 - Shipping trade more competitive
 - Networks of agents linked with American employers and booming steamship companies used promotional posters in villages to entice the emigrants.
 - Emigrants left villages by coach, cart, or on foot to get to nearest seaport.
 - Ports Europe: Bremen, Hamburg, Antwerp, Liverpool, La Havre, Rotterdam, etc.)
 - Arrival: New York, Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans, San Francisco, Galveston
 - Canada (Pier 21 Halifax, Quebec City, other ports)
- <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/search/Pages/ancestors-search.aspx>

Resources

“American Names: Declaring Independence” by Marian L. Smith
<http://www.ilw.com/articles/2005,0808-smith.shtm>

“A Guide to Interpreting Passenger List Annotations.” by Marian L. Smith
<http://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/manifests>

American Mosaic by Joan Morrison and Charlotte Fox Zabusky. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980.

They Came in Ships: A Guide to Finding Your Immigrant Ancestor's Arrival Record, 3rd ed. by John Philip Colletta. Ancestry.com, 2002.

"Immigrant Arrivals: A Guide to Published Sources." The Library of Congress.

http://www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/bib_guid/immigrant/intro.html

Research Write Connect Online Courses <https://www.researchwriteconnect.com>

Three Slovak Women by Lisa A. Alzo, CreateSpace, 2011.

"Tracing Immigrant Ancestors," and "Beyond the Arrival Date: Extracting More from Passenger Lists" by Lisa A. Alzo, Legacy Family Tree Webinars (subscribers only)

<https://familytreewebinars.com/lisaalzo>

Online Immigration Sources

Start with overview at: Genealogy Articles, Tips & Research Guides (Joe Beine)

<http://www.genealogybranches.com/passengerlists.html>

Ship Passenger Lists and Records Online: Internet Sources for Digitized or Transcribed Passenger Records & Indexes (Joe Beine)

<http://www.germanroots.com/onlinelists.html>

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) – ship manifests from 1820 and later cover dozens of ports around the U.S. <http://www.archives.gov>

Databases (listed alphabetically)

Ancestry.com immigration collection (\$) <http://ancestry.com> to (and images of) all of NARA's microfilmed passenger lists. Paid subscription required or access via a subscribing library.

CastleGarden <http://www.castlegarden.org> offers an index to earlier years, but for online copies of the actual passenger lists, you'll need to use Ancestry.com or microfilm.

Ellis Island <http://www.libertyellisfoundation.org> has indexes and record images from 1892 to 1924. Free to search, but must register with a username and password.

FamilySearch <https://familysearch.org> has some passenger lists in digitized collections. You may view microfilmed copies of passenger lists at the Family History Library (FHL) in Salt Lake City, UT.

Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild <http://www.immigrantships.net> offers a search of millions of names from 17,000 ships' passenger lists transcribed by volunteers.

MyHeritage.com (\$) <https://www.myheritage.com> offers expanded search fields for New York Passenger Lists, as well as other immigration records.

The Ship's List <http://www.theshipslist.com> has been online since August 1999. Over 3,500 totally free access web-pages. Immigration reports, newspaper records, shipwreck information, ship pictures, descriptions, shipping-line fleet lists and more.

Emigration Passenger Lists (Port of Departure)

Ancestry.com <http://www.ancestry.com> (\$) - includes 1850-to-1934 lists from Hamburg, Germany—one of the top departure ports for European emigrants.

Die MAUS <http://www.passengerlists.de> - Family History and Genealogical Society of Bremen - Bremen Passenger Lists - Unfortunately, all lists from 1875 - 1908 older than 3 years were destroyed due to lack of space in the Bremen Archives. With the exception of 3017 passenger lists for the years 1920 - 1939 all other lists were lost in World War II. Some 1907/08 and 1913/14 lists and card index also transcribed. Search online.

FindMyPast <http://www.findmypast.com> (\$) - has outbound lists covering 1890 to 1960 for UK ports—where vessels originating at other European ports often stopped before crossing the Atlantic.

Brigham Young University's Immigrant Ancestors Project

<http://immigrants.byu.edu> - draws on emigrant records created in the old country, focusing on England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Scotland and Spain.

Other Resources

Ancestry.com <http://www.ancestry.com> (\$) Border Crossings: From Canada to U.S., 1895-1956 & Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935; U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925; selected Naturalization records.

Ellis Island Family Histories <https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/family-histories> - family immigration stories were submitted by Ellis Foundation members.

Emigrant Guides – Check Google Books, libraries, online catalogs.

Fold3 <http://www.fold3.com> (\$) – has a collection of digitized naturalization records from all over the United States.

Great Migration Study Project -Thoroughly researched biographical sketches provide migration details on thousands of Colonial New England settlers. Search volumes covering 1620 to 1633 on the New England Historic Genealogical Society site (\$): <http://www.americanancestors.org> and Ancestry.com (\$).

One-Step WebPages: Stephen P. Morse <http://www.stevemorse.org> - “Gold Form” lets you search the Ellis Island Database on additional criteria, including “sounds like” searches for first and last names and towns. Free to use. Must have user name and password to see results on the Ellis Island Site; Search tools for other ports (Castle Garden, Baltimore, Philadelphia, etc.) – must have access to Ancestry.com.

StoryCorps <https://storycorps.org/listen> - Listen to and share stories.

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Genealogy Program <http://www.uscis.gov/historyandgenealogy> - a fee-for-service program providing family historians and other researchers with timely access to historical immigration and naturalization records. Click the links to learn about services and records.

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