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PASSENGER LISTS OF VESSELS ARRIVING AT TAMPA, FLORIDA,
NOVEMBER 2, 1898-DECEMBER 31, 1945

Introduction

On the 65 rolls of this microfilm publication, M1844, are reproduced lists of ship passenger arrivals at Tampa, Florida, from November 2, 1898 through December 31, 1945, with the exception of two major gaps for which no lists exist: (1) December 21, 1902-September 2, 1904 and (2) May 1, 1915-November 30, 1915. These lists were submitted to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) by the captain or master of each vessel at the port of entry, the Port of Tampa, Florida. These records are part of the Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85.

Background

Early records relating to immigration originated in regional customhouses. The U.S. Customs Service conducted its business by designating collection districts. Each district had a headquarters port with a customhouse and a collector of customs, the chief officer of the district. An act of March 2, 1819 (3 Stat. 489) required the captain or master of a vessel arriving at a port in the United States or any of its territories from a foreign country to submit a list of passengers to the collector of customs. The act also required that the collector submit a quarterly report or abstract, consisting of copies of passenger lists, to the Secretary of State, who was required to submit such information at each session of Congress. After 1874, collectors forwarded only statistical reports to the Treasury Department. The lists themselves were retained by the collector of customs. Customs records were maintained primarily for statistical purposes.

On August 3, 1882, Congress passed the first Federal law regulating immigration (22 Stat. 214-215); the Secretary of the Treasury had general supervision over it between 1882 and 1891. The Office of Superintendent of Immigration in the Department of the Treasury was established under an act of March 3, 1891 (26 Stat. 1085), and was later designated a bureau in 1895 with responsibility for administering the alien contract-labor laws. In 1900 administration of the Chinese-exclusion laws was added. Initially the Bureau retained the same

administrative structure of ports of entry that the Customs Service had used. By the turn of the century it began to designate its own immigration districts, the numbers and boundaries of which changed over the years. In 1903 the Bureau became part of the Department of Commerce and Labor; its name was changed to the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization when functions relating to naturalization were added in 1906. In 1933 the functions were transferred to the Department of Labor and became the responsibility of the newly formed Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Under President Roosevelt's Reorganization Plan V of 1940, the INS was moved to the Department of Justice.

INS passenger lists include the names of foreign visitors, immigrants, and U.S. citizens returning from abroad. They also usually indicate names of vessels and shipmasters, ports of arrival and embarkation, and dates of arrival. The lists normally contain the following information about each passenger: full name; age; sex; marital status; occupation; last residence; port of arrival; final destination in the United States; if the passenger has been in the United States before (if so, when and where); and if the passenger is going to join a relative (if so, the relative's name, address, and relationship). Beginning in 1903, race was included; in 1906, personal description and birthplace, and in 1907, the name and address of the alien's nearest relative in the country from which he or she came.

The INS typically bound passenger lists in volumes, arranged by port and thereunder chronologically. These records from Tampa were bound in 80 volumes.

As noted in the introduction, these records have two major gaps for which no passenger lists exist: (1) December 21, 1902-September 2, 1904 and (2) May 1, 1915-November 30, 1915. The reason for these gaps is unknown.

Related Records

These records are indexed, in part, by National Archives Microfilm Publication T517, Index to Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Ports in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, 1890-1924 (26 rolls).

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* Passenger lists are occasionally out of chronological order.