

Publication Number: M1770

Publication Title: Indexes and Manifests of Alien Arrivals at Rio Grande City, Texas, November 1908-May 1955

Date Published: 1998

INDEXES AND MANIFESTS OF ALIEN ARRIVALS
AT RIO GRANDE CITY, TEXAS, NOVEMBER 1908-MAY 1955

Introduction

On the six rolls of this microfilm publication, M 1770, are reproduced, over 28,000 statistical and nonstatistical manifests of alien arrivals at Rio Grande City, Texas, November 16, 1908-May 30, 1955, and related statistical index cards, November 16, 1908-January 15, 1952. They are arranged in seven record series: (1) Index to Statistical Manifests, November 16, 1908-November 30, 1929; (2) Index to Statistical Manifests, December 1, 1929-January 15, 1952; (3) Statistical Manifests, November 16, 1908-June 28, 1926; (4) Statistical Manifests, July 1, 1926-January 15, 1952; (5) Nonstatistical Manifests, March 22, 1916-December 31, 1928; (6) Nonstatistical Manifests, January 1, 1929-June 30, 1940; and (7) Nonstatistical Manifests, July 1, 1940-May 30, 1955. These records are part of the Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group (RG) 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 these 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.

Keeping statistics on alien arrivals at U.S. land borders was not required by early immigration acts. Thus, the statistical treatment of Canadian and Mexican border immigrants at times has differed from that of other immigrants. When records of arrivals began to be kept at the Canadian border in 1895 and at the Mexican border, ca. 1906, the immigration authorities found it impractical to collect arrival information on lists as they did for ship passengers. Therefore, separate cards or "card manifests" for each person were used instead. These cards contained the same information as that collected on the traditional ship passenger arrival lists, such as full name, age, sex, marital status, occupation, point of arrival in the United States, and final destination.

An act of March 2, 1929 (45 Stat. 1512), which became effective July 1, 1929, and was amended on August 7, 1939 (53 Stat. 1243), allowed a record of lawful arrival-called a record of registry-to be made for certain aliens who had lawfully entered the United States at an earlier time but for whom the INS could find no record of arrival. In particular, if an alien had entered the U.S. before July 1, 1924, resided in the country continuously since that entry, was of good moral character, and was not subject to deportation, he or she could obtain a record of registry by making application to the INS and paying the requisite fee. The registry program was reauthorized by the Nationality Act of 1940 (54 Stat. 1137) under the name "Lawful Entry." Registry files cover the years 1929 to 1944; Lawful Entry paperwork after April 1, 1944, was placed in an alien's individual "A-File. " As of 1996, both Registry/Lawful Entry Files and A-Files remain in the legal custody of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and researchers interested in examining those records should direct a Freedom of Information Act request to that agency citing the Certificate of Registry number and, if available, a Bureau file number.

Immigration Statistics and Definitions

Beginning in 1895, immigrants who arrived at Canadian seaports with the declared intention of proceeding to the United States were recorded and included in the immigration statistics. Other alien arrivals at land borders began to be reported in 1906, and reporting was fully established in 1908 under authority of an act of February 20, 1907 (34 Stat. 898).

Not all aliens entering via the Canadian and Mexican borders were necessarily counted for inclusion in the immigration statistics. Before approximately 1930, no count was made of residents of Canada, Newfoundland, or Mexico who had lived in those countries for a year or more if they planned to enter the United States for less than 6 months. However, from about 1930 to 1945, the following classes of aliens entering via the land borders were included in immigration statistics:

- (1) Those who had not been in the U.S. within 6 months, who came to stay more than 6 months;
- (2) Those for whom straight head tax was a prerequisite to admission, or for whom head tax was specially deposited and subsequently converted to a straight head tax account; (A head tax was required to be paid by persons entering the U.S. who were not citizens of the U.S., the Dominion of Canada, Newfoundland, the Republic of Cuba, or the Republic of Mexico.)
- (3) Those required by law or regulation to present an immigration visa or reentry permit, and those who surrendered either, regardless of whether they were required by law or regulation to do so;
- (4) Those announcing an intention to depart from a seaport in the United States for Hawaii or other insular possession of the U.S. or for a foreign country, except arrivals from Canada intending to return there by water; and
- (5) Those announcing an intention to depart across the other land boundary.

These classes were revised in 1945 so that the statistics of arriving aliens at land border ports of entry for 1945-52 included arriving aliens who came into the United States for 30 days or more, and returning alien residents who had been out of the country more than 6 months. Arriving aliens who came into the United States for 29 days or less were not counted except for those who were either certified by public health officials, held for a board of special inquiry, excluded and deported, or were individuals in transit who announced an intention to depart across another land boundary or by sea.

From 1953 to at least 1957, all arriving aliens at land border ports of entry were counted for statistical purposes except Canadian citizens and British subjects resident in Canada who were admitted for 6 months or less; Mexican citizens who were admitted for 72 hours or less; and returning U.S. residents who had been out of the country for more than 6 months. Beginning in February 1956, residents returning from stays of less than 6 months in Western Hemisphere countries also were not counted. Because of regulation changes in 1957, returning residents without reentry permits or visas who had been abroad for 1 year or less were not counted.

Summary: Statistical arrivals were immigrants or nonimmigrants who were subject to the head tax and generally not from the Western Hemisphere. By contrast, nonstatistical arrivals were immigrant or nonimmigrants who usually were natives of the Western Hemisphere and not subject to the head tax. Although arrival of the latter was not included in immigration statistics, a record of that arrival may still have been made. It cannot be said with certainty that the definitions of statistical and nonstatistical arrivals were applied uniformly at any particular port on the Canadian or Mexican borders during the period covered by this microfilm publication.

Definitions of Immigrants and Nonimmigrants

From 1906 to 1932, arriving aliens were divided into two classes: (1) immigrants, or those who intended to settle in the U.S.; and (2) nonimmigrants, who were admitted aliens who declared an intention not to settle in the U.S., and all aliens returning to resume domiciles formerly acquired in the U.S. From 1933 to at least 1957, aliens arriving to settle in the U.S. were further classified as quota or nonquota immigrants. **Quota immigrants** were those admitted under quotas established for countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Pacific Basin and the colonies, dependencies, and protectorates belonging to those nations. **Nonquota immigrants** were spouses and unmarried children of U.S. citizens; natives from the independent countries of the Western Hemisphere, their spouses, and unmarried children under 18 years of age; and members of the clergy who entered with their families to carry on their profession. From 1933 to 1952, professors and their spouses and children were also classified as nonquota immigrants. **Nonimmigrants** were alien residents of the U.S. returning from a temporary visit abroad, or nonresident aliens admitted to the U.S. for a temporary period, such as tourists, students, foreign government officials, those engaged in business, people representing international organizations, the spouses and unmarried children of all these individuals, and agricultural laborers from the West Indies.

For more information about the keeping of immigration statistics and definitions used therein, see *The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present* (Stamford, CT: Fairfield Publishers, Inc., ca. 1965), pp. 48-52. For

further information about immigration and naturalization laws prior to 1953, see *Laws Applicable to Immigration and Nationality*, Edwina A. Avery and Catherine R. Gibson, eds., U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953).

Records Description

The arrivals included in this microfilm publication include permanent and temporary, and statistical and nonstatistical arrivals. They are arranged in seven record series: (1) Index to Statistical Manifests, November 16, 1908-November 30, 1929; (2) Index to Statistical Manifests, December 1, 1929-January 15, 1952; (3) Statistical Manifests, November 16, 1908-June 28, 1926; (4) Statistical Manifests, July 1, 1926-January 15, 1952; (5) Nonstatistical Manifests, March 22, 1916-December 31, 1928; (6) Nonstatistical Manifests, January 1, 1929-June 30, 1940; and (7) Nonstatistical Manifests, July 1, 1940-May 30, 1955.

Series 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 are arranged alphabetically by surname, then alphabetically by first name. Double names are filed as if the second part of the double name were not there. For example, "Jimenez De San Miguel, Petra" is found among other persons named "Jimenez, Petra" and Montalvo-Hernandez, Jose" is found among other persons named "Montalvo, Jose."

Series 3 and 4 are arranged chronologically by date and thereunder numerically by manifest number.

Series 1: Index to Statistical Manifests, November 16, 1908-November 30, 1929

This series consists of index cards, INS Form 621 or Spl. 259 (described below under "Forms Used"). The cards are arranged alphabetically by name; cards for Trujillo, Pez through the end of the alphabet are not extant. The date of arrival and manifest number are used to locate the alien's manifest in Series 3, for arrivals between November 16, 1908, and June 28, 1926, or in Series 4, for arrivals between July 1, 1926, and November 30, 1929. The alien's manifest number is located in the upper right-hand corner next to the person's sex, such as M-255 (male, manifest no. 255) or F-127 (female, manifest no. 127).

Series 2: Index to Statistical Manifests, December 1, 1929-January 15, 1952

This series consists of typewritten index cards that typically include the alien's name, age, sex, date of admission, and manifest number. The card may also note the section of the immigration law under which the person was entitled to be admitted. The cards are arranged alphabetically by name; some cards list more than one alien of the same name. The date of arrival and manifest number (located

to the left of the name) are used to locate the alien's manifest in Series 4 (described below).

Series 3: Statistical Manifests, November 16, 1908-June 28, 1926

This series consists of sheet manifests, INS Form 548 (described below under "Forms Used"). One single sheet of paper is used for each alien's arrival. The manifests are arranged chronologically by date and then numerically by manifest number. The manifest number is the "serial number" noted in the upper right-hand corner of the form. This series is indexed by Series I (described above). Manifests for April 22, 1910-March 22, 1916 are not extant.

Series 4: Statistical Manifests, July 1, 1926-January 15, 1952

This series consists of card manifests, INS Form 548 or 1-448 (described below under "Forms Used"); use of Form 1-448 began ca. October 1941. One card is used for each alien's arrival. The cards are arranged chronologically by date and then numerically by manifest number. The manifest number is located in the upper right-hand corner. This series is indexed by Series 1, for arrivals between July 1, 1926, and November 30, 1929, and by Series 2, for arrivals between December 1, 1929, and January 15, 1952. Many manifests for the period July 10, 1936-February 26, 1941, are not extant; the only surviving arrival record for aliens whose manifests are missing may be an index card in Series 2.

Series 5: Nonstatistical Manifests, March 22, 1916-December 31, 1928

This series consists of card manifests, INS Form Spl. 442 (described below under "Forms Used"). One card is used for each alien's arrival. The cards are arranged alphabetically by name.

Series 6: Nonstatistical Manifests, January 1, 1929-June 30, 1940

This series consists of card manifests, INS Form 548 (described below under "Forms Used"). One card is used for each alien's arrival; "to visit" is frequently annotated as the alien's purpose for entering the U.S. The cards are arranged alphabetically by name.

Series 7: Nonstatistical Manifests, July 1, 1940-May 30, 1955

This series consists of card manifests, INS Form 548 or 1-448, and INS Form I-190, Application for Nonresident Alien's Border Crossing Identification Card (described below under "Forms Used"). One card is used for each alien's arrival. The cards are arranged alphabetically by name.

Forms Used

The manifest cards consist of several types of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) forms. Both the front and reverse sides of each form were filmed. The most common forms are described below.

Form 548 or Form 1-443, *Manifest*, generally includes the person's name, age, sex, marital status, place of birth, physical description, occupation, citizenship ("nationality"), race, ability to read and write and in, what language, place of last permanent residence, port and date of arrival, destination, purpose for entering the U.S., intention of becoming a U.S. citizen or of returning to country of previous residence, head tax status, and previous citizenships. It also includes the name and address of the friend or relative whom the alien intended to join, names of persons accompanying the alien, and the name and address of the alien's nearest relative or friend in the country from which he or she came. If the alien had ever been in the U.S. in the past, the dates and places of such residence or visitation are indicated. Additional information may be recorded if the alien appealed a decision deporting or barring him or her from entering the U.S. Form 548 or I-448 is generally a card manifest. However during some periods at some ports, the INS used an entire sheet of paper for the Form 548 manifest. Both sizes of manifests generally included the same information. The reverse side of the card manifest Form 548 sometimes includes the alien's photograph.

Form 621, *statistical cards*, includes the following information about each alien: name, age, sex, marital status, race, occupation, ability to read and write, last place of residence, future place of residence, name of person he or she plans to join, date and place of admission, physical description, place of birth, citizenship ("nationality"), and names of persons accompanying him or her. However, some statistical cards merely list the alien's name, age, sex, citizenship ("nationality"), race, place of last residence, destination, and date and place of admission to the United States.

Form Spl. 442, *Nonstatistical*, includes the alien's name, age, sex, marital status, occupation, race, ability to read and write, place of last permanent residence, port and date of arrival, and destination. It also indicates persons accompanying the alien, the amount of money the alien brought with him, and if he or she had ever been in the U.S. in the past.

Form 1-190, *Application for Nonresident Alien's Border Crossing Identification Card*, includes the alien's name, date and place of birth, sex, marital status, occupation, ability to read and write, place of residence, citizenship ("nationality"), physical description, purpose of U.S. visit, and fingerprint of right index finger. The number, date of issuance, and place of issuance of the person's passport may also be noted.

General Remarks

The INS microfilmed these records in October 1956 and later transferred the microfilm to the National Archives. Although some of this film may be difficult to read, it is impossible to correct the situation since the INS destroyed the original records.

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