

NATIONAL ARCHIVES MICROFILM PUBLICATIONS
PAMPHLET DESCRIBING M1371

**Registers and Indexes
for Passport Applications**



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Record Group 59

REGISTERS AND INDEXES
FOR PASSPORT APPLICATIONS

On the 13 rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced 33 volumes of registers and indexes for passport applications, 1810-1906. These registers and indexes were created by the Passport Office of the Department of State and its predecessor offices to aid in finding specific passport applications. The registers and indexes, as well as the passport applications, are among General Records of the Department of State, Record Group (RG) 59. Additional passport records appear among Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, RG 84.

Since 1789 the Department of State has issued passports to U.S. citizens traveling abroad. The department, however, did not have sole authority to do so until August 18, 1856, when an act of Congress (11 Stat. 60) for the first time regulated the issuance of passports. The Chief Clerk's office issued passports until 1833, when the duty was transferred to the Translating and Miscellaneous Bureau. From then until 1870, the passport function was transferred from one bureau to another. The Passport Bureau was established in 1870, but ceased to exist 3 years later when its duties were transferred to a passport clerk. In 1895 the Bureau of Accounts took over the issuing of passports, and on July 3, 1902, the function was assigned to a new Passport Bureau. That bureau's name has since changed several times: Bureau of Citizenship, 1907; Division of Passport Control, 1918; Passport Division, 1926; and Passport Office, 1952.

With two exceptions, U.S. citizens were not required to have a passport for travel abroad until 1941. Passports were required for a short time during the Civil War (August 19, 1861-March 17, 1862). Executive Order 2285 of December 15, 1915, stated that all persons leaving the United States should have passports, and an act of Congress of May 22, 1918 (40 Stat. 559), made it unlawful for U.S. citizens to travel abroad without a valid passport. This law lapsed with the formal termination of the war through treaties with Germany, Austria, and Hungary in 1921. On June 21, 1941, the act of May 22, 1918, was revived (55 Stat. 252), and U.S. citizens have since been required to have passports for foreign travel.

Passport applications may provide information regarding an applicant's family status, date and place of birth, naturalization (if foreign born), occupation or business, and physical characteristics. Early passport applications were sometimes accompanied by supporting letters and affidavits from friends

and relatives concerning the applicants' citizenship, residence, and character. Each passport application series is arranged chronologically, with a number assigned to most applications to facilitate identification. There are no applications for the years 1813-29 and 1832 even though there are some originals and copies of passports for those years. Registers and indexes are used to determine an application's date (and number, where applicable), thereby making it easier to locate a particular application. For additional information on passports issued by the State Department, see The United States Passport: Past, Present, Future (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976).

Rolls 1-9 reproduce registers and indexes for passport applications, December 21, 1910-October 7, 1817, February 22, 1830-November 15, 1831, and November 14, 1834-February 1906. The usual register or index entry shows the date and number (where applicable) of the application, the name of the applicant, and (for 1834-49) the applicant's age and physical characteristics. Some of the register or index volumes have overlapping dates, and some entries appear in more than one volume. A special register covers Civil War passports, 1861-65. In some volumes the entries are arranged chronologically; in others, alphabetically by the first three letters of the applicant's surname and thereunder chronologically.

Rolls 10 and 11 reproduce indexes to emergency passport applications, 1874-1906. Emergency passports were issued to U.S. citizens by U.S. consular and diplomatic officers abroad. The entries in each index volume show the date and number of each application as well as the location of the U.S. diplomatic or consular post that received it; the entries are arranged alphabetically by surname of applicant.

Roll 12 reproduces indexes to special passport applications, 1829-94. Special passports were issued to U.S. diplomatic and consular officers, military attaches, secretaries of legations, and other government officers and their families. Each index entry shows the name of an applicant, the date of application, and the volume and page numbers where the application can be found. The entries are arranged alphabetically by surname of applicant.

Roll 13 reproduces, on the first part of the roll, an index to the passport applications received by the New York Passport Office, August 24, 1861-February 24, 1862. Each index entry shows the date, name of applicant, and application or passport number. The entries are arranged alphabetically by first letter of applicant's surname and thereunder chronologically.

The remainder of roll 13 reproduces a volume containing registers of miscellaneous special passports, 1835-69. These are: (1) a register of special passports issued at New York, 1862-69, each entry showing the name and address of the recipient, the passport number, the fee paid, and the date of payment; (2) a register of "Special Passports Granted by John Forsyth, Secretary of State," and by successor Secretaries of State, 1836-64, showing the name and destination of the passport bearer and the number and date of the passport; (3) a register of "Special Courier Passports," 1865-69; (4) "Passport Account of J. B. Nones," which is a record of fees received for passports, 1867; and (5) "Passport Account of George F. Baker," 1864-69. Each section of the volume is arranged chronologically.

A 3" x 5" card index to passport applications, 1850-52 and 1860-80, arranged alphabetically by surname of applicant, has been prepared by the National Archives staff. This card index contains information similar to that given in the registers and indexes reproduced on rolls 2-4 of this microfilm publication. The index shows for each applicant his date and place of birth and application number and date, gives references to the date and place of naturalization (if foreign born), and identifies previous applications for which passports were received. Each card also indicates the volume and number for each application.

Rolls 1-9 of Microfilm Publication M1371 may be used in conjunction with Microfilm Publication M1372, which reproduces passport applications, 1795-1905.

The following roll breakdown for Microfilm Publication M1371 includes the title and date span of all registers and indexes reproduced.

This introduction was written by J. Dane Hartgrove, who was also responsible for production of the microfilm publication. Mary J. Simms assisted in the production process.

CONTENTS

<u>Roll</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	Register of Passport Applications Dec. 21, 1810-Oct. 7, 1817 Index Feb. 22, 1830-Nov. 15, 1831 Register of Passport Applications Nov. 14, 1834-May 8, 1843
2	Index to Passport Applications May 11, 1843-Sept. 30, 1846 Register of Passport Applications Oct. 7, 1846-Feb. 14, 1849 Register of Passport Applications Oct. 1, 1846-Feb. 16, 1856
3	Index to Passport Applications Feb. 16, 1856-Dec. 30, 1865 Register of Passports Issued by Secretary of State William H. Seward Mar. 1861-Dec. 1865 Index to Passport Applications Jan. 2, 1866-Dec. 31, 1871
4	Index to Passport Applications Jan. 1872-Dec. 1880 Index to Passport Applications Feb. 22-June 29, 1872 Index to Passport Applications Apr. 1875-Dec. 1880
5	Index to Passport Applications Vol. 1, Jan. 1881-June 1886 Vol. 2, July 1886-Sept. 1889
6	Index to Passport Applications Vol. 3, Oct. 1889-Dec. 1891 Vol. 4, Jan. 1892-Dec. 1894
7	Index to Passport Applications Vol. 5, Jan. 1895-June 1896 Vol. 6, July 1896-June 1898 Vol. 7, July 1898-Mar. 1900

<u>Roll</u>	<u>Description</u>
8	Index to Passport Applications Vol. 8, Apr. 1900-June 1901 Vol. 9, July 1901-June 1903
9	Index to Passport Applications Vol. 10, July 1903-June 1905 Vol. 11, July 1905-Feb. 1906
10	Index to Emergency Passport Applications (Passports Issued Abroad) Vol. 1, June 1874-94 Vol. 2, 1894-98
11	Index to Emergency Passport Applications (Passport Issued Abroad) Vol. 3, 1899-June 1904 Vol. 4, July 1904-Dec. 1906
12	Index to Special Passport Applications Vol. 1, 1829-87 Vol. 2, Jan. 1872-Apr. 1878 Vol. 3, Apr. 8, 1878-Sept. 18, 1887 Vol. 4, 1887-94
13	Index to Passport Applications Issued by the New York Passport Office Aug. 24, 1861-Feb. 24, 1862 Registers of Miscellaneous Special Passports 1835-69