

Index to Naturalizations in Nebraska and some Iowa Counties, 1906 and Prior

NOTES ON NATURALIZATION

The first federal law regarding naturalization was passed in 1790, establishing the basic procedure for naturalization throughout the 19th century. The courts were designated as the agency for implementing this law. Each immigrant desiring to begin the process of naturalization was required to appear in a court of record to complete a Declaration of Intention, sometimes called first papers. After a mandatory residence, generally a period of five years, he was again required to present himself in court, with witnesses, to fill out a petition for citizenship, take an oath of allegiance, and prove he had met the residency requirement. These documents, together with the certificate of naturalization, are known as the final papers. It was not necessary that he complete both steps in the same court. Many persons probably filled out the first papers in a court near where they lived after arrival in the country, and then filed the final papers in some other court. Wherever the immigrant went he had his choice of courts, and generally he went to the nearest one, whether it was federal, state or local in jurisdiction.

Wives and children of naturalized males generally became citizens automatically. There were provisions, however, for later naturalization of persons who arrived in this country while still minors. Those who served in the United States military also could become citizens after honorable discharge without filing a Declaration of Intention in advance.

The administration of the naturalization laws was substantially altered by a federal statute effective September 27, 1906. This law created the Immigration and Naturalization Service within the Department of Commerce and Labor. This agency is now in the Department of Justice. Until 1906 federal laws did not designate specific courts to engage in naturalization. Many state and local courts naturalized for a time and then discontinued doing so because they wanted to reduce their work-loads. Others continued to naturalize and still do. Any court having a common law jurisdiction and possessing a clerk and a seal could naturalize foreigners provided they met the federal requirements for citizenship. The courts were of all types, ranging from a U.S. District Court or a Territorial Court to a local police court.

Under the law of 1906 all courts were required to make various reports to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and they were subject to federal regulations concerning fees to be charged. Some courts disliked the bureaucracy involved and ceased naturalization proceedings. From the effective date of that law, however, naturalization work became obligatory on the part of the federal courts.

The courts have generally retained the documents relating to naturalization. Occasionally local courts have transferred their records to a state repository or perhaps to U.S. court.

The federal law of 1906 required that copies of naturalization records be forwarded by the courts to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. A request for the search of naturalization records after September 27, 1906, may be made to the Service on special forms provided by that agency.

NOTES ON THE INDEX

The index was made on 3 x 5 cards and is arranged alphabetically by surname. The cards were filmed so that the front and back of each card appear side by side on the film. The front of each card contains the name, country of origin, date of naturalization, and the court, county and state of naturalization. (However, the name of the state does not appear on cards for many Nebraska counties). The reverse side contains the type of naturalization record (Declaration, Petition, etc.) and the volume and page number where the record is located. The bulk of the records are from District Courts but citations to other local and state courts also appear. The index covers all of the counties of Nebraska and western Iowa and some counties of eastern Iowa. A list of the Iowa counties found in the index together with the names of the county seats appears at the end of this description. There are some cards from locations outside Nebraska and Iowa but these are few. This index includes only individuals who received their final papers in Nebraska. It does not record those who received only their declaration of intention in Nebraska.

The card index was prepared in the 1930's and 1940's as a WPA project. The file is now kept in the Omaha office of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. History Nebraska filmed this index in October 1977.

IOWA COUNTIES FOUND IN THIS INDEX

(with names of County Seats)

ADAIR (Greenfield)

ADAMS (Corning)

AUDUBON (Audubon)

BENTON (Vinton)

BOONE (Boone)

BUENA VISTA (Storm Lake)

BUTLER (Allison)

CALHOUN (Rockwell City)

CARROLL (Carroll)

CASS (Atlantic)

CERRA GORDO (Mason City)

CHEROKEE (Cherokee)

CLAY (Spencer)

CLARKE (Osceola)

CRAWFORD (Denison)

DALLAS (Adel)

DECATUR (Leon)

DICKINSON (Spirit Lake)

EMMET (Estherville)

FRANKLIN (Hampton)

FREMONT (Sidney)

GREEN (Jefferson)

GUTHRIE (Guthrie Center)

HAMILTON (Webster City)

HANCOCK (Garner)

HARRISON (Logan)

HUMBOLT (Dakota City)

IDA (Ida Grove)

JASPER (Newton)

KOSSUTH (Algona)

LEE (Keokuk, Fort Madison)

LUCAS (Charton)

LYON (Rock Rapids)

MAHASKA (Oskaloosa)
MARION (Knoxville)
MARSHALL (Marshalltown)
MILLS (Glenwood)
MONONA (Orawa)
MONROE (Albia)
MONTGOMERY (Red Oak)
O'BRIAN (Primghar)
OSCEOLA (Sibley)
PAGE (Clarinda)
PALO ALTO (Emmetsburg)
PLYMOUTH (Le Mars)
POCAHONTAS (Pocahontas)
POLK (Des Moines)
POTTAWATTAMIE
(Council Bluffs)
POWESHIEK (Montezuma)
RINGGOLD (Mount Ayr)
SAC (Sac City)
SHELBY (Harlan)
SIOUX (Orange City)
STORY (Nevada)
TAYLOR (Bedford)

UNION (Creston)

WARREN (Indianola)

WEBSTER (Fort Dodge)

WINNEBAGO (Forest City)

WINNIESHIEK (Decorah)

WOODBURY (Sioux City)

WORTH (Northwood)

WRIGHT (Clarion)

The form on the next page provides all information appearing on the index card.

Original Records contain no more information than appears on the index card.

* Original records may still be held by the court listed on line three.

(**N.I.** - - - Information not indicated on index card.)

1. Family Name _____ Given Name _____
2. Address _____ Cert. No. or vol. page _____
3. Title and location of court _____
4. Country of birth or allegiance _____ When born or Age _____
5. Date & port of arrival in U.S. _____
6. Date of Naturalization _____
7. Name & address of witnesses _____
8. Certificate canceled (date & court) _____
9. Why canceled: expatriated _____ deceased _____
10. First papers of Declaration of Intention recorded vol. _____ page _____
11. Second of Final papers recorded vol. _____ page _____
12. Other facts of record: Copied by: _____

NOTE: PRE-1906 NATURALIZATION RECORDS DO **NOT PROVIDE TOWN OR PLACE OF BIRTH, NAMES OF PARENTS, OR PERSONAL DATA ABOUT THE PERSON BEING NATURALIZED.**