

Alien Files (A-Files) for Genealogical Research

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What are Alien Files (A-Files)?

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) began issuing each alien an Alien Registration number in 1940, and on April 1, 1944, began using this number to create individual case files, called Alien Files or A-Files. A-Files contain all records of any case of an alien not yet naturalized as they passed through the United States immigration and inspection process.

A-Files are a rich source of biographical information in that they contain relatively modern immigration documents, all in one file. Since the early 20th century the United States collected increasing amounts of information from immigrants and A-Files from mid-century hold a wealth of data, including visas, photographs, applications, affidavits, correspondence, and more. Although the files were created beginning in 1944, documents and information included may be much older than that, and could date to the birth of the person. Documents may also be included that date up to the time of any final action related to the alien which could be deportation, permanent resident status, or citizenship.

Who should have an A-File?

	NO A-number	NO A-File	Likely A-File
Died before Aug 1, 1940	X	X	
Naturalized between Sep 27, 1906 and Aug 1, 1940 (likely a C-File)	X	X	
Naturalized between Aug 1, 1940 and Mar 31, 1956 (likely a C-File)		X	
Registered in 1940 but never came back to INS for any benefit or reason		X	
Registered in 1940 and came back to INS after Apr 1, 1944 for a benefit or some reason other than naturalization			X
Immigrated after Apr 1, 1944 (and did not naturalize prior to Apr 1, 1956)			X
Naturalized on/after Apr 1, 1956			X

The National Archives at Kansas City presently holds over 350,000 A-File records for individuals who were born 1909 and prior. Additional records will be accessioned to our holdings on an annual basis. Each accession will continue to increase the number of records available in the earlier date ranges, while also extending date coverage forward. The National Archives at San Francisco will also receive accessions of A-Files containing some of the files from United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) District Offices located in San Francisco, Reno, Honolulu, and Guam.

What is the request process for A-Files?

We receive requests either by e-mail, postal mail, or fax **only**. Appointments are required for onsite use of A-Files. Because these records are housed off-site and are subject to review for privacy concerns under the Freedom of Information Act, researchers must submit a written request at least 3 business days in advance.

Before submitting a request we ask that you search for the individual in ARC (<http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/>). ARC contains the names of every individual presently contained in our A-Files holding. If you do not have access to a computer, members of our staff can aid in this process. If the name of the individual you are researching does not appear within ARC we ask that you refrain from submitting a record request as we will be unable to provide reference service.

The image shows a screenshot of the Archival Research Catalog (ARC) search results page. The page title is "ARC Search Result". Below the title, there are three columns of information: "Individual's Name", "Alien Registration Number", and "Accession/Box Info". The search results show a single entry for "Alien Case File for Regina Pilus". The entry includes the ARC Identifier (5325346), Local Identifier (A5272291085-10-0128/Box 44), and the location of the record (NARA's Central Plains Region, Kansas City, MO). Red arrows point from the labels above to the corresponding fields in the search result: "Individual's Name" points to the title "Alien Case File for Regina Pilus", "Alien Registration Number" points to the ARC Identifier, "Accession/Box Info" points to the Local Identifier, and "Location of Record" points to the text "NARA's Central Plains Region (Kansas City), Kansas City, MO".

To make a Record Request you must provide (at minimum):

- the individual's complete name
- Archival Research Catalog (ARC) ID number
- Alien Registration number

Also helpful to include to aid in locating the file:

- Accession Number
- Box Number

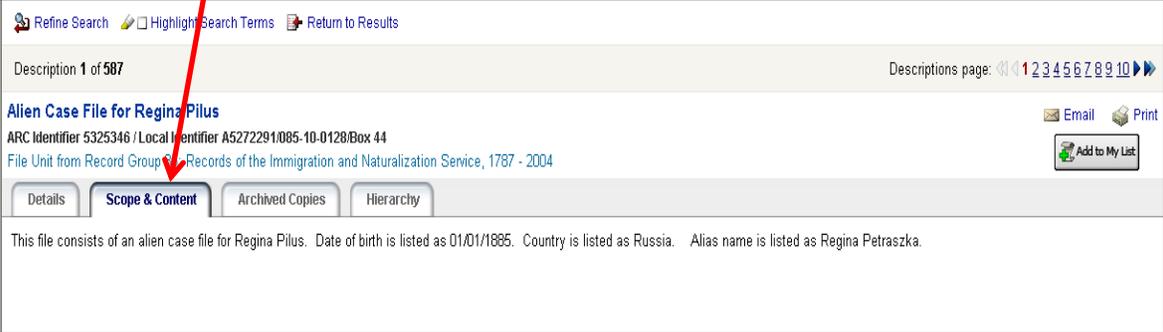
To confirm that we have referenced the correct file, it is helpful to provide other biographical information you may have (i.e. the individual's date and place of birth and date of entry into the United States; names of spouses and/or parents).

What information can be found in the Archival Research Catalog (ARC)?

The Scope and Content tab in ARC contains specific detail about the subject of the file which can include: Alien Registration number, Last Name, First Name, Alias, Date of Birth, Sex, Date of Entry, Country of Birth, Father's Name, Mother's Name, Naturalization Date, Naturalization Court, and Naturalization Location.

ARC Entry

NOTE: Always click on the Scope & Content tab to learn more about the subject of the file.



The screenshot shows the ARC interface for an entry titled "Alien Case File for Regina Pilus". At the top, there are navigation links for "Refine Search", "Highlight Search Terms", and "Return to Results". Below this, it indicates "Description 1 of 587" and "Descriptions page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10". The entry title is "Alien Case File for Regina Pilus", with "ARC Identifier 5325346 / Local Identifier A5272291.085-10-0128/Box 44" and "File Unit from Record Group 226 - Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787 - 2004". There are "Email" and "Print" icons, and an "Add to My List" button. Below the title is a tabbed interface with "Details", "Scope & Content", "Archived Copies", and "Hierarchy". The "Scope & Content" tab is selected, and a red arrow points to it. The content of the selected tab reads: "This file consists of an alien case file for Regina Pilus. Date of birth is listed as 01/01/1885. Country is listed as Russia. Alias name is listed as Regina Petraszka."

Why can't I find my ancestor in ARC?

If you cannot find your individual in ARC, it is because the National Archives does not currently maintain the record you are seeking. To continue your search contact the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) through their Genealogy Program: www.uscis.gov/genealogy. USCIS continues to maintain all active and inactive A-Files that have not yet been transferred into the holdings of the National Archives. The National Archives will accession new A-Files on an annual basis, so you can also continue to check back in ARC to see if your individual has been added to our holdings.

How do I contact the A-Files staff in Kansas City?

Website: <http://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/aliens/a-files-kansas-city.html>

E-mail: Afiles.KansasCity@nara.gov

Postal mail:

National Archives at Kansas City

Attn: A-Files Request

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