The Federal government created documentation of aliens, immigrants living in the United States who were not naturalized, during times of war in the 19th and 20th century. Come learn about some of the applications, files, and lists utilized by a variety of Federal agencies during the Civil War, World War I, and World War II. This course will introduce underutilized records, highlight some of the most popular, and offer instructions for completing successful requests.
Elizabeth Burnes is an Archivist for the National Archives at Kansas City who serves as the lead archivist for Alien Files (A-Files) reference. Prior to joining the National Archives staff she held positions at Harry S Truman National Historic Site, Missouri History Museum, Herman T. Pott National Inland Waterways Library, and Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum. She received a Bachelor’s degree in History at Truman State University, and a Master’s degree in History and Museum Studies at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.
Friend or Foe?: Documenting Alien Ancestors during Times of War

Elizabeth Burnes
Objectives

- Discover some of the applications, files, and lists related to aliens available through the National Archives.

- Learn the best practices for searching and completing successful requests.
Overview
Definitions

• Alien – Any person who is not a citizen or national of the U.S.

• Enemy Alien – Any person who is a citizen of a country which is in a state of conflict with the U.S.
Definitions

- **Record Group (RG)** — a collection of organizationally related records designated by a number and the name of the federal agency, bureau, or activity that created them.

- **Series** — a set of documents accumulated and used together for a specific purpose, during a distinct period of time, and the records in a series are usually arranged in a particular order.
Alien Records Across the National Archives

- There are more than 3,000 series of records available related to aliens.
- Covering late 1700s to the 2000s
- From every National Archives facility

**Records Available Include**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manifests of Arrival</th>
<th>Naturalization Records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration Forms</td>
<td>Case Files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internment Records</td>
<td>Orders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorandums</td>
<td>Subject Files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation Records</td>
<td>Reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NOTE: Offices may use different titles for the same series of records. Do not expect to see the exact same language used between offices.*
I am an alien and a subject of the King of Hannover, that I immigrated to the United States in the year eighteen hundred and fifty-four and that I have been living since that time in the State of Missouri, that I have never declared my intention to become a citizen of the United States and that I have never exercised the right of suffrage at any election whatever and I demand to be exempted from the draft.
Record Group 110, Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau (Civil War)

• Records from RG 110 relevant to aliens will predominantly be lists related to enlistment and exemption of alien residents.

• States covered and types of records available will vary.
Lists of Aliens Residing in Various Counties, 1861? - 1866?
(NAID: 2723188)


- The information recorded includes the name of the county, the townships included in the county, and the names of the aliens residing in each.
- Arranged alphabetically by county. There is no name index.
Exemption Lists and Related Papers, 1863 – 1865
(NAID: 2751635)


- This series consists of certificates of exemption.
- Also included in this series are lists of men exempt for service, listing the individual's county; township; name; and cause for exemption including alien status, substitution, service in rebel army, underage, disability, or death.
- There is no name index.
Sample Exemption Record

State of Missouri
County of St. Charles

I, Henry Elish, do upon oath declare that I am an alien and a subject of the King of Hanover, that I immigrated to the United States in the year eighteen hundred and fifty seven and that I have been living here the time in the State of Missouri, that I have never declared my intention to become a citizen of the United States and that I have never exercised the right of suffrage at any election whatever and I demand to be exempted from the draft and any military service, because I am a subject of a foreign government, to wit of the King of Hanover, that I have never declared my intention to become a citizen of the United States and that I have never voted at any election in any of the United States.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this the 15th day of February 1865.

[Signature]

Notary public
List of Arrested Persons and Deserters, ca. 1863 - ca. 1863
(NAID: 2723250)


- Along with the list of arrested persons and deserters, the volume contains a list of men exempted from the draft. The information recorded includes name and reason for exemption (alien, overage, disabled, election).
- There is a name index available in the volume.
World War I
Record Group 118, Records of U.S. Attorneys

- Records from RG 118 that may be of interest:
  - Enemy Alien Registration Affidavits
  - Alien Application Permits
  - Reports on Aliens
  - Correspondence Relating to Enemy Alien and Espionage Act Violations

- Be aware, many of these records are only available for a limited number of states
During World War I, concern over potential espionage by German aliens living in the U.S. prompted the government to require each “enemy alien” to register with the U.S. Marshals Service. Registration involved completing a four-page form that required the registrant to provide family information, details of immigration, language spoken, a physical description, a photograph, and fingerprints.

KC maintains 5930 affidavits for individuals from Kansas (NAID: 286181). For the State of Kansas, the registered aliens represent a broad cross-section of the German-born population of the State. Some American-born women married to aliens also appear.

- The Kansas affidavits are name searchable in the Online Catalog.
- A successful request includes the individual’s name and National Archives Identifier.

![Enemy Alien Registration Affidavit for Fred Kurtz, 1917 - 1921](http://research.archives.govdescription/286278)
Sample Registration Affidavit

Front, Interior, and Back of Louise Giesen Affidavit
Alien Application Permits

• This series consists of permits to continue to reside, come within, pass through, be employed within, and conduct business within restricted zones.

• The applications include the name and residence of the applicant; district where applying; type of permit requested; definition of restricted area; place and date of birth; number of years resident in the U.S.; employment record since July 1, 1914, including place of employment, occupation, and employer; current employment status; arrest records; physical description including a photograph; and certificate or affidavit in support of application made by friend or employer.

• KC maintains applications for the U.S. Marshal for the District of Kansas (NAID: 5917758)
  • Name index is available in the research room.
Sample Permit

Front and Interior of Ed Gorzkiewitz Application
Reports on Aliens

• This series consists of reports, investigation summaries, letters and memoranda, fugitive circulars, and instructions received by the U.S. Attorney.

• The files relate chiefly to the investigations of individuals and groups suspected of violation of draft and espionage laws prior to and during World War I, conducted in response to complaints filed by private citizens and organizations, federal officials, and state and local law enforcement officers. The investigations relate to charges of draft resistance and evasion, loyalty of enemy aliens, citizenship of German and Austrian nationals, and accusations of conspiracy and sedition.

• KC maintains reports from the U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota (NAID: 5821666).
  • Arranged alphabetically by subject of investigation and thereunder by individuals or groups investigated. There is no name index.
Sample Report Content

Front and Back of an Application for Exception from the Classification of Alien Enemy for Fred Fisher

Fugitive Circular re: Max W. Berger

Department of Justice,
Bureau of Investigation,
Washington, D.C.

June 4, 1918.

TO ALL SPECIAL AGENTS, SPECIAL EMPLOYEES, AND LOCAL OFFICERS:

MAX W. BERGER, an alien enemy formerly detained under a Presidential warrant at Alton, Illinois, was released on parole on October 1, 1917, but failed to report and disappeared on March 18, 1918, leaving numerous unpaid bills.

MAX W. BERGER.

Mr. Berger is 44 years old, 5 ft. 2 in. in height, weighs 167 lbs., high forehead, blue eyes, flat nose, small mouth, round chin, light hair, sandy complexion, and full face. He has a tattoo mark on the right arm.

Mr. Berger is an experienced cook, but is an habitual drinker and a good deal of a drifter. He has formerly lived in St. Louis.

Will you kindly attempt to locate Mr. Berger and upon doing so immediately take him into custody and notify me by telegram?

Photographs of Berger, full face, is reproduced.

Very truly yours,

[Signature]

CHIEF, BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION,
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

[Date]

I hereby acknowledge the receipt of circular letter dated June 4, 1918.

[Signature]
This series consists of copies of letters sent and letters received assembled during the investigation of alleged threats to national security during World War I. The records reflect the inter-relationship, cooperation, and the exchange of information and assistance between the U.S. Attorney and officials of Federal, state, and local agencies, and patriotic local organizations active in maintaining national security on the home front.

KC maintains correspondence from the U.S. Attorney for the Judicial District of Nebraska (NAID: 5917191).

- Arranged alphabetically by surname of the subject under investigation. There is no name index.
Record Group 21, Records of District Courts of the U.S.

- The series “Alien Applications for Permission to Depart from the U.S.” consists of applications made by aliens to the Department of State for permission to leave the U.S. during World War I. The Bureau of Immigration investigated each applicant and sent the State Department a recommendation to either grant or refuse permission to depart.

- The applications contain in depth information about the subject, including but not limited to: date and place of birth; information about parents, spouse, and children; description of military service; details of immigration and travel; physical description; and a photograph.

- KC maintains applications retained in the US District Court at Ft. Scott, Kansas (NAID: 6051597)
  - Name index is available in the research room and online: http://www.archives.gov/kansas-city/finding-aids/alien-departure-applications.html
Sample Application for Permission to Depart

Front and Back of an Alien’s Application for Permission to Depart from the U.S. for Alexander Gardner
World War II
Record Group 147, Records of the Selective Service System

- The series “Alien’s Personal History and Statement Forms” provide the draft registrant's name, residential history, birthplace, citizenship, educational background, date of entry into the U.S., military or naval service, names of relatives, whether ever arrested, and organization affiliations.

- KC maintains forms from: IA, KS, NE, MN, MO, and ND
  - Name indexes are available in the research room and online: http://www.archives.gov/kansas-city/finding-aids/subject-list.html#aliens
    [Note: The KS index is only available in the research room]

- A correlating series is “Alien Record Cards” which document actions taken by alien registrants, including completion of a Personal History and Statement form. In KC we only maintain Record Cards from Missouri (NAID: 2635714).
Sample Alien's Personal History and Statement Form

Front and Back of Edward Barber Form
Record Group 21, Records of District Courts of the U.S.

- The series “Enemy Alien Notices and Objections” relates to enemy alien petitions for naturalization filed after the start of WWII.
- These court orders and notices list hearings dates and the names of aliens required to appear before the court for a decision on their admission as citizens. Entries for individual petitioners include petition number, filing date of petition, petitioner's name, country of birth, and date of declaration of intention to become a citizen.
- KC maintains notices and objections from the District Court at Topeka, Kansas (NAID: 6050376).
  - Arranged chronologically. There is no name index.
Record Group 566, Records of the
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service [USCIS]

- Alien Files (A-Files) can be extremely useful for research. In KC we currently have 456,333 files for individuals born 1910 and prior (NAID: 4488912). The National Archives at San Francisco maintains some files for individuals from Reno, Guam, Honolulu, and San Francisco.

- 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 which contain all records of any case of an alien not yet naturalized as they passed through the U.S. immigration and inspection process. A-Files hold a wealth of data, including visas, photographs, applications, affidavits, correspondence, and more.
## Who Should Have an A-File?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does my immigrant ancestor have an A-File?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The immigrant....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died before August 1, 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became a naturalized citizen between September 27, 1906 and August 1, 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became a naturalized citizen between August 1, 1940 and March 31, 1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrated to the U.S. after April 1, 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalized on or after March 31, 1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered in the U.S. as an alien in 1940 but never came back to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for any reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered in the U.S. as an alien in 1940 and came back to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for any reason (other than naturalization) after 1944</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All A-Files maintained by the National Archives are name searchable in the Online Catalog. If you do not locate the individual you are seeking, contact USCIS through their Genealogy Program: www.uscis.gov/genealogy.*
Requesting A-Files

- To make a Record Request you should provide:
  - the individual’s complete name
  - Alien Registration number and National Archives Identifier
  - Accession Number and Box Number

*NOTE: A-Files maintained in KC can be ordered by emailing Afiles.KansasCity@nara.gov
Sample A-File Content

Alien Registration Form (Form AR-2)

Address Report Card

Permit to Reenter the U.S.
Searching & Requesting
Online Catalog Search – Step 1

Go to www.archives.gov/research/search and select Advanced Search
Type the term “Alien” in the Search field

Click on the arrow next to Filter Archival Descriptions to open additional options

*NOTE: other broad search terms could include “Immigration” and “Naturalization”
Online Catalog Search – Step 3

Scroll down the page to type an RG# (if known) in the Record Group Number field.
Note the # of results to determine if further refinements should be made

- **Refine by Location** – if you know the state where the individual resided you can narrow down to the National Archives office that would maintain records for that state.
Location-specific Searches

- Additional finding aids may be available on the websites for each of the National Archives offices: http://www.archives.gov/locations/
Topical Searches

• Search topically to determine additional records of interest:
  
  http://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/aliens/
  *scroll to the bottom for links to resources

Additional topics may include:
• Immigration
• Naturalization
Identify Federal agencies that may have produced records about aliens.

Select agency from results list and review the full description to discover the kinds of records available.

*NOTE: Have you heard of the Office of Alien Property (RG 131)? Their agency administered all suits in Federal courts and all claims relative to seizure and vesting of enemy-owned or enemy-controlled property during WWII.
Access to Archival Databases (AAD)

Visit: aad.archives.gov/aad

Passenger Lists

- Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Russians to the U.S., documenting the period 1834 - 1897
- Records for Passengers Who Arrived at the Port of New York During the Irish Famine, documenting the period 1/12/1846 - 12/31/1851
- Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Germans to the U.S., documenting the period 1850 - 1897
- Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Italians to the U.S., documenting the period 1855 - 1900
General Tips and Troubleshooting

• Complete preliminary searches on the National Archives website. If you can reference specific series of interest when you place a request it helps narrow the search.

• When submitting a request, provide the individual’s name, general location of residence, and other basic biographical information as you are able (i.e. date of birth, country of origin, etc).

• Set your expectations.
  • The kinds of information recorded in each set of records vary – you will not always find in depth information about the subject and their family (e.g. parent names or exact city of birth), sometimes you may only find the subject’s name.
  • Keep in mind that not every kind of alien related record from each state survived, but it is always worth researching just to see what is out there.
  • Remember that every piece of information, no matter how small, helps build the story.
Learn More Online!

Website:  http://www.archives.gov/kansas-city/
Facebook:  http://www.facebook.com/nationalarchiveskansascity
Twitter:  http://twitter.com/#!/KCArchives
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Fax:  (816) 268-8038
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