Immigration Laws

Steerage Act of 1819
- First law requiring passenger manifests for vessels entering the US

Immigration Act of 1891
- First law requiring documentation of Canadian and Mexican border crossings

Naturalization Act of 1906
- Uniform rules enacted, forms standardized, and Federal courts took sole responsibility for naturalization procedures

Immigration Act of 1924
- Imposed national-origins quota that required visas for legal entry to the US

Alien Registration Act of 1940
- Required all immigrants to register alien status with the Federal government

Immigrant Records for Genealogical Research

The National Archives has a number of online resources to aid in genealogy research on immigrant ancestors

Passenger Arrival Lists:
https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration

Border Crossing Records:
- Mexican –
https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/border-mexico
- Canadian -

US Passport Applications:
https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/passports

Visa Applications:
https://www.archives.gov/research/foreign-policy/state-dept/genealogy

Naturalization Records:
https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/naturalization

Alien Files (A-Files):
https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/aliens

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Genealogy Program (www.uscis.gov/genealogy) is another resource for immigrant records from the early 1900s (predominantly 1906–1956)