

Alien Files (A-Files) for Genealogical Research

What are 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?

THE IMMIGRANT....	
Died before August 1, 1940	Will not have an A-File or an Alien Registration Number. Research other National Archives resources of genealogical interest.
Became a naturalized citizen between September 27, 1906, and August 1, 1940	Will not have an A-File or an Alien Registration Number. Inquire with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) Genealogy Program regarding a possible Certificate File (C-File).
Became a naturalized citizen between August 1, 1940, and March 31, 1956	May or may not have an A-File. Also inquire with the USCIS Genealogy Program regarding a possible C-File or 1940 Alien Registration Form.
Immigrated to the United States after April 1, 1944	Will have an A-File. Check National Archives holdings if born in 1910 or earlier. Otherwise, inquire with the USCIS Genealogy Program.
Naturalized on or after March 31, 1956	Will have an A-File. Check National Archives holdings if born in 1910 or earlier. Otherwise, inquire with the USCIS Genealogy Program.
Registered in the United States as an alien in 1940 but never came back to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for any reason	Was likely assigned an Alien Registration Number but will not have an A-File. Check with the USCIS Genealogy Program for a copy of the 1940 Alien Registration Form.
Registered in the United States as an alien in 1940 and came back to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for any reason (other than naturalization) after 1944	Will have an A-File. Check National Archives holdings if born in 1910 or earlier. Otherwise, inquire with the USCIS Genealogy Program.

The National Archives at Kansas City presently holds over 450,000 A-File records for individuals who were born 1910 and prior. Additional records will be accessioned to our holdings. 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 also maintains a small number 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 our online catalog (OPA) (<http://www.archives.gov/research/search/>). OPA 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 OPA we ask that you refrain from submitting a record request as we will be unable to provide reference service.

A-Files OPA Search Result

Individual's Name

National Archives Identifier

Alien Registration Number
& Accession/Box Info

Alien Case File for Regina Pilus,
National Archives Identifier: 5325346 **Local Identifier: A5272291/085-10-0128/Box 44**
Creator(s): Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service. (06/14/1940 - 03/01/2003)
file consists of an alien case file for Regina Pilus A-File for Regina Pilus
<http://research.archives.gov/description/5325346>

Note: Always read the "Scope and Content" note to learn more about the subject of the file.

Details	
Level of Description:	File Unit
Type(s) of Archival Material(s):	Textual Records
The creator compiled or maintained the series between:	1944 - 2003
Other Title(s):	A-File for Regina Pilus
General Note(s):	Requests for this file should include the alien name, Alien Registration number (e.g., A1234567), ARC Identifier, box number, and accession number.
Access Restriction(s):	Restricted - Possibly Specify Access Restriction: FOIA (b)(7) Personal Information Note: Some of the records may require screening for personal privacy concerns.
Use Restriction(s):	Restricted - Possibly Specify Use Restriction: Copyright Note: Some of the records may be subject to copyright restrictions. Researchers should contact the publisher for further information.
Accession Number(s):	085-10-0128
Subjects Represented in the Archival Material(s):	Emigration and immigration
Scope & Content	
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.	
Variant Control Numbers	
ARC Identifier:	5325346
Agency-Assigned Identifier:	A5272291 This is the assigned Alien Registration Number.
Search Identifier:	uAFile Pilus, Regina
Archived Copies	
Copy 1: Preservation-Reproduction-Reference	
Contact(s):	National Archives at Kansas City (RM-AC2A), 400 West Pershing Road Kansas City, MO 64108 Phone: 816-298-8000 Fax: 816-298-8038 Email: Afilekansascity@nara.gov
Copy 1 Media Information:	Specific Media Type: Paper Container ID: 44 Physical Restriction Note: Because these records are stored offsite, researchers must request the records 48 hours in advance.

Location of Record

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

- the individual's complete name
- National Archives Identifier
- Alien Registration number

Also helpful to include to aid in locating the file:

- Accession Number and 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 OPA?

The Scope and Content note in OPA 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.

Why can't I find my ancestor in OPA?

If you cannot find your individual in OPA, 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

400 W. Pershing Rd.

Kansas City, MO 64108

Fax: (816) 268-8038