

REQUEST FOR RECORDS DISPOSITION AUTHORITY		JOB NUMBER <i>NI-566-04-3</i>	
To NATIONAL ARCHIVES and RECORDS ADMINISTRATION (NIR) WASHINGTON, DC 20408		DATE RECEIVED <i>7/20/2004</i>	
1 FROM (Agency or establishment)  Department of Homeland Security		NOTIFICATION TO AGENCY  In accordance with the provisions of 44 U.S.C. 3303a, the disposition request, including amendments, is approved except for items that may be marked "disposition not approved" or "withdrawn" in column 10	
2 MAJOR SUBDIVISION US Citizenship and Immigration Services (vice Immigration and Naturalization Service)			
3 MINOR SUBDIVISION Office of Records Management			
4 NAME OF PERSON WITH WHOM TO CONFER Marian Smith	5 TELEPHONE (202) 514-2837	DATE <i>9-13-04</i>	ARCHIVIST OF THE UNITED STATES <i>John W. Carl</i>
6 AGENCY CERTIFICATION I hereby certify that I am authorized to act for this agency in matters pertaining to the disposition of its records and that the records proposed for disposal on the attached <u>1</u> page(s) are not now needed for the business of this agency or will not be needed after the retention periods specified, and that written concurrence from the General Accounting Office, under the provisions of Title 8 of the GAO manual for Guidance of Federal Agencies,  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> is not required, <input type="checkbox"/> is attached, or <input type="checkbox"/> has been requested			
DATE <i>6-15-04</i>	SIGNATURE OF AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE <i>Teola Bause</i>		TITLE Director, Records Policy & Analysis Branch
7 Item No	8 DESCRIPTION OF ITEM AND PROPOSED DISPOSITION	9 GRS OR SUPERSEDED JOB CITATION	10 ACTION TAKEN (NARA USE ONLY)
1	<p><b>[Quota] Immigrant Visa Files, July 1, 1924-March 31, 1944</b> Official Immigrant Arrival Records</p> <p>Immigrant visas issued to aliens by American Consular Officers abroad under the Immigration Act of 1924, as amended, same being surrendered to this Service by aliens upon their admission to the United States for lawful permanent residence, and properly endorsed by a U.S. Immigrant Inspector at the port of arrival. The Immigrant Visa File set contains both Quota (white) and Nonquota (blue) Immigrant visas</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Retain PERMANENTLY Schedule transfer 75 years after closure of Visa Files series (April 1, 2019)</p>	<p>NC1-85-81-02 7/24/1981</p> <p>349-S217/04 6/29/1949</p>	

*SA 9/29/04 Copies sent to Agency NWMD, NARA, NR, NWET -1-*

### **Additional info**

Since July 1, 1924, the effective date of the Immigration Act of 1924, all arriving immigrants were required to present a visa (Form FS-257) when applying for admission to the United States. On July 1, 1924, visas (Visa Files) became the official arrival records for *immigrants* admitted for permanent residence.\* These files were first scheduled on June 7, 1949 (349-S217, item 4) to be retained until microfilmed. They were rescheduled on July 9, 1981, (NC1-85-81-2, item 1) to be destroyed 75 years from the date of retirement. The files were never microfilmed.

Today, Quota Immigrant Visas (including many, if not all Nonquota Immigrant Visas) comprise a set of less than 3.2 million Visa Files, dated 1924 to 1944, stored at the FRC in Suitland, Maryland, under accession number 085-52A0172. They are located by a USCIS (INS) index search based on name, date of birth, and place of birth (and the date and port of entry may be useful in that search). Note well that some Visa Files of this era may have been moved to/consolidated with an A-File or a C-File if the immigrant's case re-opened after April 1, 1944.

Approximate Volume. 6,790 cubic feet

### **Description and Justification for Permanent Retention**

Visa Files are official immigrant arrival records. Introduced by the Immigration Act of 1924, the Visa File consists of a copy of the immigrant visa application (FS 257) and all supporting documents. Each file is comprised of a large sheet of paper folded in half, and usually one or more documents attached. Personal information includes name, DOB, POB, and address for the subject, spouse, and minor children. Attachments may include vital records, a health certificate for the subject, as well as summary military or arrest records.

Immigrant Inspectors lifted the "visa packets" and filed them in one of two ways: *nonimmigrant* visas were filed temporarily at the ports of entry and were later destroyed. *Immigrant* (i.e., permanent admission) visas were sent to the Central Office in Washington for filing. At the Central Office, the immigrant visas were arranged by date and port of arrival, stamped with a unique, INS-generated Visa File number, and indexed by name, date of birth, and place of birth.

Visa Files have historical and genealogical value due to the biographical and family information contained on Form FS-257 and the attached vital records. The 1924 Act required that each immigrant visa application be supported by documents supplied by the applicant. These documents include birth records, marriage records, military records, police records, and/or any other record maintained on him/her by the government to which he owed allegiance. In many cases, sworn affidavits were accepted in lieu of official documents, especially in the late 1930's and early 1940's when applicants were displaced in Europe and unable to obtain standard documentation. All attached documents date prior to April 1, 1944, and a significant portion of them were issued by governments/nations no longer in existence.

\*For arrivals prior to July 1, 1924, ship passenger manifest lists were/are considered official *immigrant* arrival records. Passenger lists and border port manifests remained the official record of *non-immigrant* admissions between 1924 and 1944.

### **Privacy Act Restriction: 552a (b) (3)**