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INDEX AND MANIFESTS OF ALIEN ARRIVALS AT ROMA, TEXAS, MARCH 1928-MAY 1955

Introduction

On the five rolls of this microfilm publication, M1503, are reproduced an index, manifests, and other records of over 30,000 alien arrivals at Roma, Texas, from March 1928 to May 1955. The records are arranged in five separate record series: (1) Index to Statistical Manifests, Aug. 13, 1929-Aug. 19, 1954; (2) Statistical and Nonstatistical Manifests, Mar. 1, 1928-Nov. 30, 1929; (3) Statistical Manifests, Aug. 13, 1929-Aug. 19, 1954; (4) Nonstatistical and Temporary Manifests, Mar. 1, 1928-Oct. 1, 1929; and (5) Nonstatistical and Temporary Manifests, Mar. 1, 1928-May 30, 1955. These records are part of the Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group (RG) 85.

Background

Early records relating to immigration originated in regional customhouses. The U.S. Customs Service conducted its business by designating collection districts. Each district had a headquarters port with a customhouse and a collector of customs, the chief officer of the district. An act of March 2, 1819 (3 Stat. 489) required the captain or master of a vessel arriving at a port in the United States or any of its territories from a foreign country to submit a list of passengers to the collector of customs. The act also required that the collector submit a quarterly report or abstract, consisting of copies of these passenger lists, to the Secretary of State, who was required to submit such information at each session of Congress. After 1874, collectors forwarded only statistical reports to the Treasury Department. The lists themselves were retained by the collector of customs. Customs records were maintained primarily for statistical purposes.

On August 3, 1882, Congress passed the first Federal law regulating immigration (22 Stat. 214-215); the Secretary of the Treasury had general supervision over it between 1882 and 1891. The Office of Superintendent of Immigration in the Department of the Treasury was established under an act of March 3, 1891 (26 Stat. 1085), and was later designated a bureau in 1895 with responsibility for administering the alien contract-labor laws. In 1900 administration of the

Chinese-exclusion laws was added. Initially the Bureau retained the same administrative structure of ports of entry that the Customs Service had used. By the turn of the century it began to designate its own immigration districts, the numbers and boundaries of which changed over the years. In 1903 the Bureau became part of the Department of Commerce and Labor; its name was changed to the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization when functions relating to naturalization were added in 1906. In 1933 the functions were transferred to the Department of Labor and became the responsibility of the newly formed Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Under President Roosevelt's Reorganization Plan V of 1940, the INS was moved to the Department of Justice.

Keeping statistics on alien arrivals at U.S. land borders was not required by early immigration acts. Thus, the statistical treatment of Canadian and Mexican border immigrants at times has differed from that of other immigrants. When records of arrivals began to be kept at the Canadian border in 1895 and at the Mexican border, ca. 1906, the immigration authorities found it impractical to collect arrival information on lists as they did for ship passengers. Therefore, separate cards or "card manifests" for each person were used instead. These cards contained the same information as that collected on the traditional ship passenger arrival lists, such as full name, age, sex, marital status, occupation, point of arrival in the United States, and final destination.

An act of March 2, 1929 (45 Stat. 1512), which became effective July 1, 1929, and was amended on August 7, 1939 (53 Stat. 1243), allowed a record of lawful arrival-called a record of registry-to be made for certain aliens who had lawfully entered the United States at an earlier time but for whom the INS could find no record of arrival. In particular, if an alien had entered the U.S. before July 1, 1924, resided in the country continuously since that entry, was of good moral character, and was not subject to deportation, he or she could obtain a record of registry by making application to the INS and paying the requisite fee. The registry program was reauthorized by the Nationality Act of 1940 (54 Stat. 1137) under the name "Lawful Entry." Registry files cover the years 1929 to 1944; Lawful Entry paperwork after April 1, 1944, was placed in an alien's individual "A-File. " As of 1997, both Registry/Lawful Entry Files and A-Files remain in the legal custody of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and researchers interested in examining those records should direct a Freedom of Information Act request to that agency citing the Certificate of Registry number and, if available, a Bureau file number.

Immigration Statistics and Definitions

Beginning in 1895, immigrants who arrived at Canadian seaports with the declared intention of proceeding to the United States were recorded and included in the immigration statistics. Other alien arrivals at land borders began to be

reported in 1906, and reporting was fully established in 1908 under authority of an act of February 20, 1907 (34 Stat. 898).

Not all aliens entering via the Canadian and Mexican borders were necessarily counted for inclusion in the immigration statistics. Before approximately 1930, no count was made of residents of Canada, Newfoundland, or Mexico who had lived in those countries for a year or more if they planned to enter the United States for less than 6 months. However, from about 1930 to 1945, the following classes of aliens entering via the land borders were included in immigration statistics:

- (1) Those who had not been in the U.S. within 6 months, who came to stay more than 6 months;
- (2) Those for whom straight head tax was a prerequisite to admission, or for whom head tax was specially deposited and subsequently converted to a straight head tax account; (A head tax was required to be paid by persons entering the U.S. who were not citizens of the U.S., the Dominion of Canada, Newfoundland, the Republic of Cuba, or the Republic of Mexico.)
- (3) Those required by law or regulation to present an immigration visa or reentry permit, and those who surrendered either, regardless of whether they were required by law or regulation to do so;
- (4) Those announcing an intention to depart from a seaport in the United States for Hawaii or other insular possession of the U.S. or for a foreign country, except arrivals from Canada intending to return there by water; and
- (5) Those announcing an intention to depart across the other land boundary.

These classes were revised in 1945 so that the statistics of arriving aliens at land border ports of entry for 1945-52 included arriving aliens who came into the United States for 30 days or more, and returning alien residents who had been out of the country more than 6 months. Arriving aliens who came into the United States for 29 days or less were not counted except for those who were either certified by public health officials, held for a board of special inquiry, excluded and deported, or were individuals in transit who announced an intention to depart across another land boundary or by sea.

From 1953 to at least 1957, all arriving aliens at land border ports of entry were counted for statistical purposes except Canadian citizens and British subjects resident in Canada who were admitted for 6 months or less; Mexican citizens who were admitted for 72 hours or less; and returning U.S. residents who had been out of the country for more than 6 months. Beginning in February 1956, residents returning from stays of less than 6 months in Western Hemisphere countries also

were not counted. Because of regulation changes in 1957, returning residents without reentry permits or visas who had been abroad for 1 year or less were not counted.

Summary: Statistical arrivals were immigrants or nonimmigrants who were subject to the head tax and generally not from the Western Hemisphere. By contrast, nonstatistical arrivals were immigrants or nonimmigrants who usually were natives of the Western Hemisphere and not subject to the head tax. Although arrival of the latter was not included in immigration statistics, a record of that arrival may still have been made. It cannot be said with certainty that the definitions of statistical and nonstatistical arrivals were applied uniformly at any particular port on the Canadian or Mexican borders during the period covered by this microfilm publication.

Definitions of Immigrants and Nonimmigrants

From 1906 to 1932, arriving aliens were divided into two classes: (1) immigrants, or those who intended to settle in the U.S.; and (2) nonimmigrants, who were admitted aliens who declared an intention not to settle in the U.S., and all aliens returning to resume domiciles formerly acquired in the U.S. From 1933 to at least 1957, aliens arriving to settle in the U.S. were further classified as quota or nonquota immigrants. **Quota immigrants** were those admitted under quotas established for countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Pacific Basin and the colonies, dependencies, and protectorates belonging to those nations. **Nonquota immigrants** were spouses and unmarried children of U.S. citizens; natives from the independent countries of the Western Hemisphere, their spouses, and unmarried children under 18 years of age; and members of the clergy who entered with their families to carry on their profession. From 1933 to 1952, professors and their spouses and children were also classified as nonquota immigrants.

Nonimmigrants were alien residents of the U.S. returning from a temporary visit abroad, or nonresident aliens admitted to the U.S. for a temporary period, such as tourists, students, foreign government officials, those engaged in business, people representing international organizations, the spouses and unmarried children of all these individuals, and agricultural laborers from the West Indies.

For more information about the keeping of immigration statistics and definitions used therein, see *The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present* (Stamford, CT: Fairfield Publishers, Inc., ca. 1965), pp. 48-52. For further information about immigration and naturalization laws prior to 1953, see *Laws Applicable to Immigration and Nationality*, Edwina A. Avery and Catherine R. Gibson, eds., U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953).

Records Description

The arrivals included in this microfilm publication include permanent, temporary, statistical, and nonstatistical arrivals. They are arranged by record series. Series 1, 2, 4, and 5 are arranged alphabetically by surname, and then alphabetically by first name. Double names are filed as if the second part of the double name were not there. For example, "Jimenez De San Miguel, Petra" is found among other persons named "Jimenez, Petra" and Montalvo-Hernandez, Jose" is found among other persons named "Montalvo, Jose." Series 3 is arranged chronologically and thereunder numerically.

Series 1: Index to Statistical Manifests, August 13, 1929-August 19, 1954

This series consists of typewritten index cards that typically include the alien's name, age, sex, date of admission, manifest number, and destination. Some cards list more than one alien of the same name. The cards are arranged alphabetically by surname, thereunder by first letter of the first name. The date and manifest number (located to the left of the person's first name) enables the researcher to locate the alien's statistical manifest in series 3 (described below).

Series 2: Statistical and Nonstatistical Manifests, March 1, 1928-November 30, 1929

This series consists of card manifests, INS Forms 621 and 629 (described below under "Forms Used"), as well as some blank cards upon which same the information was typed or handwritten. The INS target sheet describes these records as "statistical" manifests only, but roughly half of the cards are "nonstatistical" manifests.

Series 3: Statistical Manifests, August 13, 1929-AuQust 9, 1954

This series consists of card manifests, INS Forms 548 and 1-448, and a few applications for resident alien's border crossing identification cards, Form 1-189, filed immediately after the person's Form 548 or 1-448 (all forms described below under "Forms Used") One card was used for each alien's arrival. These records are arranged chronologically by date and thereunder by manifest number. Some manifests were not extant at the time the records were filmed in 1956, so there are gaps in the numerical sequences. The researcher should first locate the month and year of arrival and then locate the manifest number in the upper right-hand corner. See the Roll List for further details concerning arrangement.

Series 4: Nonstatistical and Temporary Manifests. March 1, 1928-October 1, 1929

This series consists of card manifests, INS Forms 629 and Spl. 442 (described below under "Forms Used"), as well as some blank cards upon which the same information was typed or handwritten. One card was used for each alien's arrival.

Series 5: Nonstatistical and Temporary Manifests, March 1, 1928-May 27, 1955

This series consists of card manifests, INS Form 548 and 1-448, and applications for nonresident alien's border crossing identification cards, Form 1-190 (described below under "Forms Used"). One card was used for each alien's arrival. This series includes many residents of the Mexican cities of Mier and Ciudad Miguel Aleman-located across the Rio Grande River from Roma, Texas—whose manifests indicate "local crossing, 1 day trips," "to shop and visit," and similar wording indicating temporary admission to the U.S. for business and pleasure.

Forms Used

The manifest cards consist of several types of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) forms. Both the front and reverse side of each card-size form were filmed. The most common forms are described below.

Form 548 or Form 1-448, *Manifest*, generally includes the person's name, age, sex, marital status, place of birth, physical description, occupation, citizenship ("nationality"), race, ability to read and write and in what language, place of last permanent residence, port and date of arrival, destination, purpose for entering U.S., intention of becoming a U.S. citizen or of returning to country of previous residence, head tax status, and previous citizenships. It also includes the name and address of the friend or relative whom the alien intended to join, persons accompanying the alien, and the name and address of the alien's nearest relative or friend in the country from which he or she came. If the alien had ever been in the U.S. in the past, the dates and places of such residence or visitation are indicated. Additional information may be recorded if the alien appealed a decision deporting or barring him or her from entering the U.S. Form 548 or 1-448 is generally a card manifest. However, during some periods at some ports, the INS used an entire sheet of paper for the Form 548 manifest. Both sizes of manifests generally included the same information. The reverse side of the card manifest Form 548 sometimes includes the alien's photograph.

Form 1-1 89, *Application for Resident Alien's Border Crossing Identification Card*, includes the person's name, permanent U.S. address, date and place of birth, sex, marital status, occupation, ability to read and write, citizenship ("nationality"), physical description, and the date, place, and means of lawful entry into U.S. for permanent residence. It also includes the alien's signature and fingerprint. Also included are the border crossing identification card number and its date of issuance.

Form 1-190, *Application for Nonresident Alien's Border Crossing*

Identification Card, includes the alien's name, date and place of birth, sex, marital status, occupation, ability to read and write, place of residence, citizenship ("nationality"), physical description, purpose of U.S. visit, and fingerprint. The number, date of issuance, and place of issuance of the person's passport may also be noted. Also included are the border crossing identification card number and its date of issuance.

Form 621, *Statistical*, includes the following information about each person: name, age, sex, marital status, race, occupation, ability to read and write, last place of residence, future place of residence, name of person he or she plans to join, port and date of admission, physical description, place of birth, citizenship ("nationality"), and names of persons accompanying him or her.

Form Spl. 442 or Form 629, *Nonstatistical*, includes the person's name, age, sex, marital status, occupation, race, ability to read and write, place of last permanent residence, port and date of arrival, and destination. It also indicates persons accompanying the alien, the amount of money the alien carried, and if he or she had ever been in the U.S. in the past. The reverse side of many cards are annotated with the dates of subsequent admissions to U.S., destination, and purpose for visiting, such as "6 days to Mission, TX, visiting."

General Remarks

The INS microfilmed these records in October 1956 and later transferred the microfilm to the National Archives. Although some of this film may be difficult to read, it is impossible to correct the situation since the INS destroyed the original records.

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