



Passport Applications, 1795–1925

During the Revolutionary War, American consular officers issued passports to citizens of some of the original 13 states. Passports included a description of the bearer and were valid for three to six months. After the Federal Government was established in 1789, the Department of State issued passports to U.S. citizens traveling abroad, although the Department did not have sole authority to issue passports until August 18, 1856.

With two exceptions, U.S. citizens were not required to have a passport for travel abroad until 1941. Passports were required for a short time during the Civil War (August 19, 1861–March 17, 1862) and during World War I (May 22, 1918–1921). After World War II began, passports became mandatory for all U.S. travelers. A 1978 amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 made it illegal to enter or leave the United States without an issued passport even in peacetime.

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) holds applications for United States passports issued between 1795 and March 31, 1925. Passport applications may provide information about the applicant's marital status, date and place of birth, naturalization (if foreign born), occupation or business, and names of other family members. Early passport applications sometimes contain affidavits and other supporting documentation.

Registers and Indexes

___M1371, *Registers and Indexes for Passport Applications, 1810–1906*. 13 rolls. DP.

There are no registers or indexes for passport applications before June 28, 1810, and there are no passport applications available for 1813–1829 and 1832.

The registers and indexes include applications for emergency passports (passports issued abroad), special passports, passports issued by the New York Passport Office, and miscellaneous special passports. (See **rolls 10–13**.)

The registers and indexes provide the applicant's name, the passport issuance date, and after 1834, the passport application number. For the passport applications, see National Archives Microfilm Publication M1372.

___M1848, *Index to Passport Applications, 1850–52, 1860–1880, 1881, 1906–1923*. 61 rolls. DP.

This card index to passport applications is arranged in four chronological sections: 1850–1852 and 1860–1879 (**rolls 1–28**); 1880 (**rolls 28–29**); 1881 (**roll 29**); and 1906–1923 (**rolls 30–52**). There is no index for passport applications issued between 1924 and March 31, 1925. All four sections are arranged alphabetically by the applicant's surname.

RR #400

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The last nine rolls of the index cover passport extensions, 1917–1920 (**rolls 53–57**); passports issued abroad, 1906–1918 (**rolls 57–59**); consular registrations, 1907–1921 (**rolls 59–61**); and registration certificates for widows, divorced women, and minors, 1907–1917 (**roll 61**).

Passport Applications

___M1372, *Passport Applications, 1795–1905*. 694 rolls. DP. Prior to June 28, 1810, there are no registers or indexes; therefore the researcher must search the records chronologically. There are no passport applications available for 1813–1829 and 1832. Early passport certificates may be written in French, the diplomatic language of the time. No translations are provided. The records are arranged chronologically by passport issuance date.

The applications may provide the applicant's name, dates of application and issuance, age, marital status, date and place of birth, naturalization information (if foreign born), and a physical description.

___M1490, *Passport Applications, January 2, 1906–March 31, 1925*. 2,740 rolls. DP. These records are arranged chronologically by passport issuance date, then by passport application number. There is no index for passport applications issued between 1924 and March 31, 1925.

The applications include the applicant's name, age, date and place of birth, and naturalization information (if foreign born). Beginning on December 21, 1914, passport applications include a photograph of the applicant.

Digital Copies of Passport Applications—Ancestry.com & Fold3.com

The passport applications, which are indexed by name, are available on Ancestry's "U.S. Passport Applications, 1795–1925" and Fold3's "Passport Applications, 1795–1905." These websites are subscription-based, but access is available free-of-charge at any NARA research facility.

Passport Applications Issued after March 31, 1925

Applications for passports issued after March 31, 1925, remain with the Department of State.

For additional information, see the following reference report: *How to Order Copies of Passport Applications*.