



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Collection CIR

Series: Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Germans to the United States

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I. Questions about the records

What information is in these records?

This series consists of records of 4,048,907 passengers who arrived at the United States between 1850 through 1897; about 90 percent identified their country of origin or nationality as Germany or a “German” state, city, or region. In about 10 percent of the records, passengers identified their country of origin or nationality as France, Luxemburg, Switzerland, United States, and other places. There are records of passengers who were U.S. citizens or non-U.S. citizens planning to continue their travels, returning to the U.S., or staying in the U.S. There are records of passengers arriving at the following ports: Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans, New York, and Philadelphia; the bulk of the records are of passengers arriving at the Port of New York.

What are the two files in this series on AAD?

The Germans to America Passenger Data File contains information on the passengers (i.e. the passenger records). Each of the passenger records may include name, age, town of last residence, destination, and codes for passenger’s sex, occupation, literacy, country of origin, transit and/or travel compartment, and the manifest identification number for the ship. For information about each ship, such as date of arrival, you must search the Manifest Header Data File using the manifest identification number listed in the passenger record.

The Manifest Header Data File contains information on the ships and includes the ship manifest identification number, the name of the ship, the code for its port of departure, and date of arrival. The ship manifest identification number indicates the port of arrival (see below). The same Manifest Header Data File is also part of the series Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Italians to the United States and the series Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Russians to the United States.

Why were these records created?

The Center for Immigration Research (CIR) created this series to promote access to information about German immigrants to the United States. The information was extracted from ship passenger lists in the records of the U.S. Customs Service (NARA Record Group 36).

How do these records relate to the published *Germans to America* series?

Although the donor material indicates that portions of the Germans to America Passenger Data File are directly related to the published *Germans to America* volumes and some of documentation for the data files echoes the criteria provided in the published volumes, NARA staff do not know the extent to which the donor used the same criteria for the data bases as for the published volumes. There appear to be ship manifests included in the data files that are not included in the respective published volumes and the time periods covered differ. For additional information about the published volumes and the Germans to America Passenger Data File, please see Supplementary User Note 2, available via AAD as part of the scanned technical documentation for these records.

What other series of passenger lists are available on AAD?

There are a total of four series of passenger lists available on AAD:

- Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Germans to the United States, for the years 1850 - 1897
- Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Italians to the United States, for the years 1855 - 1900
- Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Russians to the United States, for the years 1834 - 1897
- Records for Passengers Who Arrived at the Port of New York During the Irish Famine, for the period 1/12/1846 - 12/31/1851

How are the series of passenger lists related and how do they differ?

The Center for Immigration Research (CIR) created all four of the series of electronic (digital) passenger lists by extracting information from ship passenger lists (manifests). They donated the resulting data files and associated code lists to NARA.

Each of the four series has a file consisting of passenger records and a file containing information on the ships (manifest header records). The passenger records in all four series include mostly the same information. The manifest identification or identifier number links the passenger and manifest header records.

The Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Germans to the United States, Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Italians to the United States, and Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Russians to the United States have the same Manifest Header Data File in common. The Records for Passengers Who Arrived at the Port of New York During the Irish Famine has a separate file containing manifest header records. However, the manifest identification or identifier numbers and corresponding ship information found in the series Records for Passengers Who Arrived at the Port of New York During the Irish Famine seem to be included in the Manifest Header Data File used by the other three series.

The series primarily differ in the time period of the records and the “nationality” or countries of origin for the majority of the passenger records in each series. However, each series also includes records for passengers listing a variety of countries or places for country of origin. While the Records for Passengers Who Arrived at the Port of New York During the Irish Famine only has records of passengers who arrived at the Port of New York, the other three series of passenger records include records from the ports of Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans, New York, and Philadelphia.

I found an error in one of the passenger records available on AAD. Can it be corrected?

No. We are aware there may be errors in some of the passenger records and the records on the ships. The donors created these electronic versions of the passenger records by transcribing extracts from the original passenger lists (ship manifests). Errors may have been introduced during the transcription process and it is also possible the information was recorded incorrectly on the original passenger lists. As an archives, NARA's role is to preserve the integrity of the records that Federal agencies transfer and organizations donate for archival preservation, even if the records include objective inaccuracies. For that reason, NARA does not correct or revise accessioned records.

Why do some fields say "Undefined Code?"

A meaning of "Undefined Code" indicates a value or code whose meaning is unknown or undefined in the donated materials.

II. Questions about searching the Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Germans to the United States and search results via the Access to Archival Databases (AAD) resource

How do I find records in the Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Germans to the United States?

Searching these records is similar to searching other files in AAD. However, you do need to search both the Passenger Data File and the Manifest Header Data File to obtain all the related information for a passenger record. The Passenger Data File contains information on the passenger, such as name and country of origin, while the Manifest Header Data File contains information on the ship, such as port of departure and date of arrival. The manifest identification number links records in the Passenger Data File and in the Manifest Header Data File. For example, to locate the ship information for a particular passenger record, search the Manifest Header Data File by the manifest identification number listed in the passenger record.

How can I retrieve all the passenger records for a ship?

To retrieve all the passenger records for a ship that are included in the file, search the Passenger Data File by the manifest identification number for the ship. **Please note that there will not be records for all passengers for all ships.**

Why can't I locate any passenger records for a specific ship (i.e. the manifest identification number)?

The Manifest Header Data File is the same for the following series: Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Germans to the United States, Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Italians to the United States, and Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Russians to the United States. However, not all of the ships included in the Manifest Header Data File appear in the records of each of the Passenger Data Files. A record of a ship may appear in one or more of the Passenger Data Files or in no Passenger Data Files. If you cannot locate passenger records for a specific ship in one Passenger Data File, try searching for passenger records for the ship in one of the other Passenger Data Files. It is also possible that the Passenger Data Files do not include records for all passengers on a ship (see Supplementary User Note 2, available via AAD as part of the scanned technical documentation for these records, for additional information).

How can I search the passenger records in the Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Germans to the United States by arrival date?

Because the passenger records do not have a separate field with arrival date information, you cannot search the passenger records by arrival date. We suggest trying to narrow your search in the passenger records as much as possible with known criteria, then sorting the search results by the Manifest Identification Number field for a list of possible manifest identification numbers, and then searching the Manifest Header Data File by the manifest identification numbers to obtain the arrival dates listed in the manifest records. Alternatively, if you know the date or the time period of arrival, you can search for records in the Manifest Header Data File by arrival date. This will return a list of manifest identification numbers for the ships that arrived on the day specified, which you can use to limit searches in the passenger records by specific manifest identification numbers and thus arrival date.

How do I identify the port of arrival for a ship and how can I search the passenger records in the Data Files Relating to the Immigration of Germans to the United States by port of arrival?

The manifest identification number, listed in the Manifest Identification Number field in both the Manifest Header Data File and the Passenger Data Files, indicates the Port of Arrival. The table below indicates the ranges of manifest identification numbers per port.

Port of Arrival	Range of manifest IDs for each port of arrival
New York	00000001 – 00011999
Boston	00012000 – 00014999
Baltimore	00015000 – 00017999
New Orleans	00018000 – 00020999
Philadelphia	00021000 – 00023999
New York	00024000 – 99999999

To search the passenger records by port of arrival, use the search operator “between” for the Manifest Identification Number field and enter the range of manifest identification numbers for a specific port.

III. Questions about obtaining copies of passenger lists (ships manifests)

How can I obtain copies of the original passenger lists or ships manifests?

NARA has microfilm copies of the original passenger lists (ship manifests or passenger arrival records) available at the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. Some of the microfilms are available at various National Archives regional facilities. Details about passenger lists in NARA’s custody are available online at:

<http://www.archives.gov/genealogy/immigration/index.html>.

You can order copies of passenger arrival records online via NARA’s Order Online resource at:

<http://www.archives.gov/research/order/orderonline.html>.

You can also order copies by submitting NATF Form 81 (Ship Passenger Arrival Records), which you can request online at: <http://www.archives.gov/contact/inquire-form.html> or by writing to:
National Archives and Records Administration

Attn: NWCTB

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