GETTING STARTED

Approach tracing your immigrant ancestors the same way you would approach any other relative. Start with the same information, documents, and techniques you use in all genealogical research:

- Vital Records (birth, marriage, death)
- Federal and State Census
- Personal Records (family bible, wills, letters, etc.)
- Probate/Court Records
- Church Records
- Interview family members

Start with what you know and work your way back to the earliest immigrant ancestor in America.

Then use what you know about that ancestor to figure out when and where they arrived, where they came from, and eventually, where to start your search for more information using records from their home country.

CASS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
GENEALOGY BRANCH

400 EAST MECHANIC ST.
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(816) 884-6285
askgenealogy@casscolibrary.org

Hours
Monday
10:00am — 6:00pm
[CLOSED 12-1]

Tuesday & Thursday
12:00pm — 6:00pm

Wednesday
12:00pm — 8:00pm
[CLOSED 5-6]

Friday - Saturday
10:00am — 5:00pm
[CLOSED 12-1]

Research Inquiries:
askgenealogy@casscolibrary.org

Connect with your family history!
The Genealogy Branch has tons of resources and experienced genealogists to help you research your family history!

Visit us on Facebook!
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Cass County Public Library System
**BASIC RECORDS**

There are several types of records that can be used when researching your immigrant ancestors, but the most commonly used include:

- Passenger Lists
- Declaration of Intent
- Petition for Naturalization
- Passport Applications
- Vital Records

**COLONIAL RECORDS**

**Immigration Records**

*Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, Vol. 1-3, William P. Filby*

**Naturalization Records**

*Denizations and Naturalizations in the British Colonies in America, 1607-1775, Lloyd DeWitt Bockstruck*

**ONLINE RESOURCES**

**Ancestry Library Edition**

*Record collections include:*

- Passenger Lists
- Border Crossings
- Passport Applications
- Naturalizations

**NARA Immigration Records**


**Ellis Island Passenger Search**

[www.libertyellisfoundation.org/passenger](http://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/passenger)

**CLUES IN OTHER RECORDS**

**Birth and Death Certificates**

If your ancestor was born in America, but one or both parents were born outside the country, you should look for the parents’ immigration & naturalization records.

**Census Records**

Depending on the year, a census may provide an individual’s birthplace along with their parents’ birthplaces, the year of arrival, citizenship status, year of naturalization, etc.

**Military Records/Draft Cards**

Check to see if there are draft cards or enlistment records available for your soldier ancestors that provide birthplace and citizenship status.

**Passport Applications**

These can provide a plethora of information about birthplace, arrival year, citizenship status, year of naturalization, etc.

**IMMIGRATION RECORDS**

**Passenger Lists**

These are ship manifests of all passengers aboard a given vessel. Passenger lists can provide a multitude of genealogical information including age, occupation, marital status, nativity, citizenship, last permanent residence, and more. *Common ports:* New York, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans, the Great Lakes.

**Departure Lists**

These include the names of all passengers who boarded a departing ship. You may find an ancestor who purchased a ticket, but did not show up and was crossed off.

**Border Crossings**

These detail individuals who crossed the border into the US from either Mexico or Canada via a “port” or customhouse.

**NATURALIZATION RECORDS**

From 1790, naturalization was a two-step process intended to take at least 5 years.

*After living in the US for 2 years, an alien could file their “first papers” or a Declaration of Intent. After an additional 3 years, the applicant could then file a Petition for Naturalization.* Typically, the Declaration contains more genealogically relevant information.

**Exceptions:** (1) Wives and minor children of naturalized men automatically became naturalized citizens; (2) Veterans who had been honorably discharged were eligible for an expedited process.