

A3393

INDEX TO MANIFESTS OF PERMANENT AND STATISTICAL
ALIEN ARRIVALS AT LAREDO, TEXAS,
DECEMBER 1929–APRIL 1955

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INTRODUCTION

On the nine rolls of this microfilm publication, A3393, are reproduced over 49,367 index cards providing information about permanent and statistical alien arrivals at Laredo, Texas, December 1, 1929–April 29, 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, 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 traditional ship passenger arrival lists, such as full name, age, sex, marital status, occupation, point of arrival in the United States, and final destination.

IMMIGRATION STATISTICS AND DEFINITIONS

Beginning in 1895, immigrants who arrived at Canadian seaports with the declared intention of proceeding to the United States by land were recorded and included in immigration statistics. (Some aliens may have chosen this route because of possibly lower fares from Europe to Canada.) All other alien arrivals at U.S. northern and southern land borders were reported beginning in 1906; and reporting was fully established in 1908 under authority of an act of February 20, 1907 (34 Stat. 898). “All other aliens” included Canadians, all aliens arriving at the Mexican border, and any alien resident or nonresident of Canada who had not, at a Canadian seaport, previously declared their intent to proceed to the United States.

Not all aliens entering via the Canadian and Mexican borders were necessarily counted for inclusion in the immigration statistics. Before about 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 six months, who came to stay more than six 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 account¹
- (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
- (5) Those announcing an intention to depart across the other land boundary.

¹ 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.

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 changed regulations 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 immigrant 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 IMMIGRANT (PERMANENT) AND NONIMMIGRANT (TEMPORARY) ARRIVALS

Since 1906, arriving aliens have been 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. Since 1924, aliens arriving to settle in the U.S. have been 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

These records consist of a typewritten card index to manifests of permanent and statistical alien arrivals at Laredo, Texas, December 1929–April 1955. The index cards are arranged alphabetically by surname, then by first letter of the first name. Several unrelated people may be recorded on the same card. For example, the “Abarca, S.” card includes information on Salud, Saturino, Sara, and Soledad Abarca, none of whom may be related to each other. If the first name/surname combination is common, such as *Juan Diaz*, then one or more index cards are dedicated to the name combination.

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.” Spanish surnames containing the letter “s” may be filed as if the letter were “z.” For example, persons surnamed Dias might be filed among those named Diaz, and those surnamed Espinosa might be filed among those named Espinoza.

The following information is given about each person: age, gender, place of last permanent residence, destination, date of entry into the United States, manifest number, and, sometimes, the paragraph of the immigration law under which the person was admitted to the United States. The manifest number is to the left of the person’s surname. For a few people, no manifest number is provided. A typical index card entry, such as the *Galdino, J.*, gives this information:

GALDINO, J.

2191 JOSE FIGUERO 38 m Torreson, Coah; Pueblo, Colo; 11/5/43; Par. I

which indicates that Jose Figuero Galdino, age 38, male, whose last permanent residence was Torreson [*sic*], Coahuila, Mexico, was destined for Pueblo,

Colorado, upon his admission to the United States on November 5, 1943, under Paragraph I of the immigration laws then in effect.

GENERAL REMARKS

The records were filmed by the INS in February 1956 and transferred to the National Archives on 16 mm microfilm. Although some of this film may be difficult to read, it is impossible to correct the situation since the INS destroyed the original records.

Roll 3 begins with “retakes” sections (records refilmed to ensure legibility).

RELATED RECORDS

Researchers can use the date of admission and manifest number to locate the person’s manifest in the related microfilmed permanent and statistical manifests.

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