

A3484

**NUNC PRO TUNC AFFIDAVITS TAKEN AT
NEW YORK, NEW YORK,
DECEMBER 1911–JUNE 1921,
RELATING TO ALIENS WHO ARRIVED IN THE
UNITED STATES
AFTER JUNE 29, 1906**

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
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INTRODUCTION

On the 12 rolls of this microfilm publication, A3484, are reproduced *nunc pro tunc* affidavits taken at Ellis Island, New York, New York, December 1911–June 1921, relating to the lawful entry of deserting alien seamen arriving in the United States after June 29, 1906. These records are a part of 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); 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. The INS was abolished, and its immigration and naturalization recordkeeping functions were transferred to the new Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services within the new Department of Homeland Security, established January 24, 2003, by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-296, § 471, 116 Stat. 2135, 2205).

RECORDS DESCRIPTION

The records consist of 32 bound, paginated volumes of affidavits—testimony taken under oath—at the Port of New York (Ellis Island), New York, to provide a record of

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entry into the United States. Within each volume, the affidavits are arranged chronologically by date of the affidavit. Each volume begins with an index arranged roughly alphabetically by the first letter of the alien's surname.

The aliens gave this testimony in order to obtain certificates of arrival for purposes of naturalization. The vast majority of the aliens included in this index were seamen who deserted or who, for a myriad of reasons, failed to rejoin the ship upon which they arrived or failed to rejoin any oceangoing vessel. Some aliens were vessel passengers, and some aliens entered the United States at the U.S.-Canada land border by train or automobile. Most of the aliens had resided in the United States several years.

The earliest testimony was typewritten as a free-form paragraph, but was soon typewritten in a question-and-answer format. By November 1917, a typewritten fill-in-the-blank form was used; after November 21, 1919, a printed fill-in-the-blank form was used. Answers were usually handwritten onto the fill-in-the-blank forms. The affidavits normally provide the alien's date and method of arrival, employment and residence in the U.S., date of birth or age, place of birth or nationality (citizenship), and physical description. Two typical examples of some of the earliest narrative testimony follow:

GUSTAV RICHTER, JAN. 6, 1913

I was born in Muskau, Germany, June 20, 1882. I arrived in this country on the SS "Grosser Kurfurst" May 2, 1907, having been employed on said vessel in the capacity of fireman and I deserted the ship on the following day. Upon my arrival here I went to a boarding house in Hoboken, N.J. and I obtained employment as a blacksmith with Brady & Sons, 213-215 Newark Street, Hoboken, N.J. where I worked for almost three years. I also worked for Knauer and Jokers as blacksmith, 65 Washington St., New York, where I am employed at the present time. I am married and reside at 103 Washington Street, Hoboken, N.J. I came here for the purpose of being registered in order to obtain a certificate of arrival for naturalization purposes. (*Roll 2, Vol. 2, p. 1*)

ALBERT BUTZ, JAN. 10, 1913

I was born in Freiberg, Germany, August 1, 1883. I arrived at the port of New Orleans, La. July 12, 1907, on the SS "Mayfield," which sailed under the British Flag from Barrie, Wales, to West Africa, Sant Lucia and New Orleans. I was employed as a fireman on said vessel and left the ship upon her arrival in port and returned three days later but the ship had departed. I went to a friend, named McCloskey, residing at 34 Hudson St., Jersey City, N.J. and I obtained employment on the tug boat "alma Keeler" of Keeler's Transportation Company, as fireman, and worked there about six months. I then worked for Lehigh Valley R.R. on the tug boats for about two years; after that I worked on the tug boat "Brittania" of the American Ice Co. for seven or eight months as fireman; then for the New York and College Point Ferry Co. for 3½ months, again for the Lehigh Valley R.R. on the tug boat "Genesee" four months and at the present time on the tug boat "Automatic" of the Tice Boats, for the past month as fireman. I reside at 37 Hudson St., Jersey City, N.J. I came here for the purpose

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of being registered in order to obtain a certificate of arrival for naturalization purposes. (*Roll 2, Vol. 2, p. 6*)

Similar testimony on the fill-in-the-blank forms is less detailed since it mimics the language of the standard ship passenger list form. These forms include the alien's name, Ellis Island file number, date, name of inspector conducting hearing, and the following about the alien: age, marital status, race (nationality), place of birth, height, eye color, hair color, complexion, name and date of steamship or railroad of arrival, steamship line to which the vessel belonged, port of entry, ability to read and write, port of embarkation, occupation, last permanent address, destination, name and address of nearest relative in the country of origin, whether in possession of \$50 or exact amount if less than \$50, whether in U.S. previously, and whether intends to remain in U.S. permanently. If the alien was a seaman, he was asked whether deserted or was paid off (paid all wages due him). The alien was also asked whether he was an anarchist, polygamist, or ever in prison, almshouse, insane asylum, or any institution supported by charity, or coming to the U.S. by reason of any offer or promise of employment. The alien's current employer's name and address are given, and sometimes previous employers are also named. Whether "buying ticket to final destination" and "by whom passage paid" are also answered when applicable.

Volume 11 includes some INS Forms "Spl. 187," *Primary Inspection Memorandum* ("Short Form"), which was used for alien arrivals at land border ports. These forms appear to have been inserted into the volume at their correct chronological location, and were annotated with page numbers just like the affidavits. Form "Spl. 187" includes the person's name, gender, age, marital status, occupation, ability to read and write and in what language, citizenship, race, place of last permanent residence, and destination. It also includes the name and address of the friend or relative whom the alien intended to join, 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 date of arrival and departure and the places of such residence or visitation are indicated. (The date may be a year, month and year, or day, month, and year.) Other details noted include the date, port, and ship of prior arrival in North America, and the amount of money shown to the immigration inspector. The reverse side was annotated with the person's place of birth (town/city and country) and physical description, including height, and color of complexion, hair, and eyes.

The records were filmed in 1944 by the INS using the contractor University Microfilms, and later transferred to the National Archives as negative 35mm 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.

RELATED RECORDS

A related index to these affidavits, arranged by soundex code, has been reproduced in National Archives Microfilm Publication A3483, *Index to Nunc Pro Tunc Affidavits Taken at New York, New York, December 1911-June 1921, Relating to Aliens Who Arrived in the United States After June 29, 1906* (1 roll).

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ROLL LIST

ROLL	VOLUME	DATES
1	1	Dec. 2, 1911–Dec. 31, 1912
2	2	Jan. 1–Oct. 16, 1913
	3	Oct. 17, 1913–May 31, 1914
	4	June 1–Dec. 31, 1914
3	5	Jan. 1–Apr. 26, 1915
	6	Apr. 27–Sept. 30, 1915
4	7	Oct. 1, 1915–Mar. 18, 1916
	8	Mar. 19–July 7, 1916
	9	July 8–Nov. 13, 1916
5	10	Nov. 14, 1916–Mar. 7, 1917
	11	Mar. 8, 1917–June 27, 1918
	12 (part)	June 28–July 31, 1918 [pp. 1–118]
6	12 (part)	Aug. 1–Sept. 9, 1918 [pp. 119–225]
	13	Sept. 10–Dec. 10, 1918
	14	Dec. 11, 1918–Mar. 5, 1919
	15	Mar. 6–May 14, 1919
7	16	May 15–July 22, 1919
	17	July 23–Nov. 14, 1919
	18	Nov. 14–Dec. 31, 1919
8	19	Jan. 1–Feb. 20, 1920
	20	Feb. 20–Apr. 5, 1920
9	21	Apr. 6–May 10, 1920

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ROLL	VOLUME	DATES
9 (cont.)	22	May 10–June 18, 1920
	23	June 19–July 22, 1920
10	24	July 21–Sept. 13, 1920
	25	Sept. 13–Nov. 16, 1920
	26	Nov. 17–Dec. 22, 1920
11	27*	Dec. 1920 – Jan. 1921
	28*	Jan.–Feb. 1921
	29*	Feb.–Mar. 1921
12	30*	Mar.–Apr. 1921
	31*	Apr. 1921
	32*	Apr.–June 1921

*These volumes are chronologically disarranged.