

# Finding and Using Alien Registrations for 20th Century US Immigrants

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## Check 1940 Census, column 16:

- Na = naturalized
  - Search for **petition for naturalization**
- Pa = “first papers”
  - Search for **declaration of intention AND alien registration**
- Al = alien
  - Search for **alien registration**
- *But remember that the census is simply a clue, not the objective truth.*
  - If you otherwise suspect your individual was not naturalized in 1940, or you’re not sure, by all means search for an alien registration!

## Search Flexoline:

<https://aad.archives.gov/aad/fielded-search.jsp?dt=3340&tf=F&cat=all&bc=sl>

### Show More Fields button

- Recommended fields to use for extensive searches:
  - Country of Birth (all formats)
    - Use “with any of the values” option in case the phrasing is different between formats
    - You can also observe how the different formats are recording country names to vary your search
  - County of Registration Meaning
  - Soundex code
- Keep in mind that some fields will limit results to one format of entry - they are marked in parentheses
- Ask NARA staff to search for you if you have tried everything you can manage.

## Request records from NARA:

Send email to [cer@nara.gov](mailto:cer@nara.gov) with the alien’s:

- Name
- Year of birth
- Country of birth
- A-number

Include a billing address and whether you would like PDFs or certified copies.

Two requests or more in one message can get you lower pricing on resulting files. Include up to 10 requests in one message.

### A-Files

- Some registration forms were moved to alien case files (A-files)
- INS created A-files for immigrants who arrived or naturalized after 1944
- Alien registration forms were usually consolidated into the A-file before microfilming
- **Always search the NARA Catalog for the A-number you find in Flexoline.**
- Check the 1950 Census, column 15
  - If the person naturalized between 1940 and 1956, there is a chance they have an A-file.
  - If the person naturalized after 31 Mar 1956, they definitely have an A-file.
  - If you find a Catalog entry, order file from NARA Kansas City or San Bruno
  - Some A-files were consolidated into C-files that are still at USCIS if the immigrant naturalized in or after 1944 and before 31 March 1956.
    - Order through the genealogy program using the C-number, NOT THE A-NUMBER
    - C-numbers can be found on the reverse of the naturalization petition or on certificate stubs
    - USCIS has additional rules about A-files above 8 million

**Further reading:** *note that resources published before 2024 might refer you to USCIS for Alien Registrations; you know they are now available through NARA.*

“Alien Registration Forms,” *National Archives*

(<https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/alien-registration-ar-2> : accessed 16 Dec 2024).

Elizabeth Burnes and Marisa Louie, “The A-Files: Finding Your Immigrant Ancestors,” *Prologue* 45:1 (Spring 2013); *National Archives*

(<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2013/spring/a-files> : accessed 16 Dec 2024).

“Soundex System,” *National Archives*

([https://www.archives.gov/research/census/soundex?\\_ga=2.123171213.761674985.1734398266-534598642.1633375791](https://www.archives.gov/research/census/soundex?_ga=2.123171213.761674985.1734398266-534598642.1633375791) : accessed 16 Dec 2024).

“Historical Records Series Available From the Genealogy Program,” *USCIS*

(<https://www.uscis.gov/records/genealogy/historical-records-series-available-from-the-genealogy-program> : accessed 16 Dec 2024).