

Mysterious Codes: What Do Those Letters and Numbers Mean?

www.ChristineCohenGenealogy.com

Federal oversight of immigration began in 1891, and after that date is when more notations began to appear on the passenger lists. These letters and numbers can often provide significant and useful genealogical information about your ancestor's immigration experience.

ACRONYMS & NOTATIONS

XXXX = Number of Contract Ticket – (Left Margin)- A document entered into, by the emigrant and the shipping line (or an Agent of the shipping line). Ticket could be just port to port, or include overland travel. Visit <https://www.ggarchives.com/> for interesting references.

N.O.B/ Not Shipped/ Did not Sail / Cancelled = Not on Board - (Left Margin) – This change may have come too late to amend the passenger list before departure. Officials instead crossed them off the list, however, you should review each attempt for different information.

USB/ US Born / USC = United States Citizen - (Nationality Column)
Look for these added notes about citizenship status. Also, the Act of 1917 annotated Statutes to require description of “List of United States Citizens” on a separate schedule on the passenger manifests. Check to see if your immigrant obtained US citizenship and then traveled abroad again.

D /X /Held / S.I. / B.S.I =Board of Special Inquiry - (Left Margin) – These notations mean the immigrant was temporarily detained or perhaps, even excluded and sent back. A detainee answered questions about their age, occupation or job prospects, money in their possession and who will support them, to a three-person BSI panel. There was an interpreter and

witnesses, including family members present to testify. A decision was usually made on that day to admit or exclude. The New York and Philadelphia Passenger manifests should be checked for these separate schedules of “Record of Detained Aliens” and “Record of Aliens Held for Special Inquiry” these are often found at the end of the passenger lists.

It was common for women travelling alone or with children to be detained while waiting for a male to come to collect them at the port. The Philadelphia BSI reports (1893-1909) are on www.Ancestry.com and www.FamilySearch.org. Board of Special Inquiry Records MAY also be available, if the decision was appealed to Washington, D.C., between 1893 and 1944. Search in the National Archives Catalog for surname in NAID # 4709010 <https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog> and order the file, from NARA. Also, search Habeas Corpus Case Files 1828-1914 (NY) NAID # 6879982. However, Non-appealed cases did not survive and are not available to order.

L.P.C. = Likely Public Charge - (Left Margin) – Introduced in 1891 as an exclusion and it was the most common grounds for detention. The “Cause of Detention” would note to whom the immigrant was released, such as a Husband, Father, Brother, Uncle, Cousin, etc. The “Disposition” was the address where the immigrant planned to go after release. “Discharged” shows the date and time of departure. Often, immigrant aid societies assisted travelers like the YMCA, DAR, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Salvation Army, Traveler’s Aid Society, Roman Catholic church, and ethnic groups. Search <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/> for records.

Dep. Excl. = Deported and Excluded – (Left Margin) – Contact <https://www.uscis.gov/records/genealogy> to search their index and then if a reference is found, email the archives1reference@nara.gov with the reference details to order the file, IF it still exists. Also, review the database “The U.S. Subject Index to Correspondence and Case Files of Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1903 - 1959” found on www.Ancestry.com and www.FamilySearch.org for reference numbers to orders files from USCIS.

Med. Cert. = Medical Certificate – (Left Margin) – Immigrants could be detained or excluded for medical conditions. The notations will list the type of illness, disease, or disability. The port medical facility could treat and release the immigrant or exclude them and they were returned home.

V / L = Verification of Landing – (Name Column) – Pre-1924, there were no re-entry permits for an immigrant who traveled abroad. So, they would contact the INS to ask for a pass for a re-entry guarantee. **V/L ####/###** would be noted on the original passenger list. After 1924, the laws changed and immigrants could apply for a Permit, this was noted as **P-#####**, often with a city name. Both could suggest the immigration may appear on a later passenger list, so look forward in time after initial landing.

Forms # 404/# 505 / CL / CA = A verification form used to reply to a request from INS – (Occupation Column) C/L meaning “Certificate of Landing”, a note for naturalization for pre-1906 passenger arrivals. This was due to the 1906 naturalization law change requiring the immigrant’s arrival to be found before naturalization can be completed. A “Certificate of Arrival” was sent to the court house and this document can often be found with naturalization documents. However, clerks did not always make notations until after 1926.

INS District Numbers-numbers were changed over time, so to find the location by date and use these links:

1926-1929 <https://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/manifests/occ/do26-29.html>

1929-1933 <https://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/manifests/occ/do29-33.html>

1937-1943 <https://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/manifests/occ/do33-43.html>

QIV, NQIV, RP, PV – (Immigration VISA column) – The Act of 1924 required everyone to present a VISA prior to entry. Quota and Non-Quota Immigration Visas allocations were put in place based on nationality derived from US Census data. The immigrant would apply for a VISA at a US Embassy. Immigrant VISAS were for people intending to remain in the

US permanently. Non-Immigrant or Passport VISAS were for a temporary visit as a tourist, student, or visitor.

Immigrants legally allowed in the US would need a Re-Entry Permit. These Permits MAY be included in Alien Files created after April 1, 1944. Order this VISA application file from the www.USCIS.gov for arrivals **July 1, 1924 to March 31, 1944** using form G-1041A. (Do NOT include the VISA number from the passenger list).

C- #-##### - Nationalization Certificate Number – (Nationality or Occupation Column) - This notation will often consist the letter “C,” the 1-to-2-digit district number, followed by 5 numbers, and a date, which is often the verification of landing date or the naturalization date.

References:

Smith, Marian. “A Guide to Interpreting Passenger List Annotations”

<https://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/Manifests/>

https://www.iabsi.com/gen/public/imm_names.htm INS/USCIS Essays

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/summer/women-and-naturalization-1.html> Women and Naturalization, ca 1802 - 1940

<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5752154> An Act of May 26, 1924, Public Law 68-139, 43 STAT 153, to Limit Immigration of Aliens into the US for Other Purposes

<https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/charts-forms> - Immigration forms

<https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/passenger-manifest-annotations>

<http://www.avotaynuonline.com/2009/04/just-how-were-passenger-manifests-created-by-sallyann-amdur-sack-pikus-editor/>

www.HistoryHub.History.gov – Create a free account to ask questions and get answers from NARA archivists, historians, and genealogy experts.

<https://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/genealogy/historical-record-series/visa-files-july-1-1924-march-31-1944> VISA files information

<https://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/gus-toc.htm> 1916 Pamphlet

Abbreviations

AC:	American Consul, if lists a place name and date
ACL:	Alien contract labor
Ad:	Admitted
B/C:	Bureau correspondence
B-i-l:	Brother-in-law
Dcd:	Discharged
DO/do:	Ditto – same as above
DOS:	Department of State
Husb:	Husband
PP (#):	Passport Number
Rech:	Recheck
RR:	Railroad
W/A:	Warrant of Arrest
2-3 letters:	Could be the immigration inspector's initials

Reasons for Exclusion, about 1903-1924

13(c):	Aliens ineligible for citizenship (after 1924)
Acc:	Accompanying (an alien accompanying another alien who has been excluded)
ACL:	Contract laborer
Alcoholic:	Mentally or physically defective
Anarchist:	Anarchist or subversive alien
Asst:	Assisted alien
Beggar:	Pauper, professional beggar, vagrant
CD:	Contagious disease- mental or physical defective/diseased
Cert:	Certificate, usually medical, indicating illness or disability
CL:	Contract laborer
Const:	Constitutional psychopathic inferiority, mentally or physically defective or diseased

Cripple:	Likely to become a public charge
DCD:	Dangerous contagious disease
Epileptic:	Physically defective or diseased
Favus:	A fungal infection- loathsome, dangerous, contagious
Feeble minded:	Mentally defective
Idiot:	Mentally defective
Illit:	Illiterate
Imbilcile:	Mentally defective
Imm/Immoral:	Immoral class: prostitute, procurer, etc.
Inelig:	Ineligible for citizenship
Insane:	Mentally defective
LD:	Loathsome disease
LCD:	Loathsome contagious disease
MD:	Mentally defective
Mental:	Mental disqualification
Moral turp:	Convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude
PD:	Physical, educational, or economic concern
Pauper:	Pauper, beggar, vagrant
PG:	Pregnant (may have other meanings, as also sometimes appears for male aliens)
Physical:	Physical, educational, or economic concern
Polygamy:	Polygamist
Preg:	Pregnant
Prior:	Alien previously excluded from entry and excluded
Prost:	Prostitute, procurer, etc..
Psych:	Psychopathic inferiority
QE:	Quarantine (cholera, smallpox, typhus, plague, yellow fever)
Senile:	Likely to become a public charge
Stow:	Stowaway
Trach:	Trachoma – a contagious bacterial infection
Tuberculosis:	Physical defective
Under/ Un 16:	Unaccompanied child under 16, not meeting parents
Vagrant:	Pauper, beggar, vagrant
Workaway:	Person earning passage by working aboard the ship