

## Frequently Asked Questions – Naturalization Records

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The Nevada State Archives has NO naturalization records. Naturalization records are among the worst kept of all civil records. Some are found in district or federal courts and many just do not exist.

The background of the naturalization process sheds some light on why this is so. The first Act, in 1790, made naturalization possible for any free, white adult with four years of U.S. residency. From then, until 1906, any federal, state or local Court of Record could confer citizenship. At that time, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, established to bring order to the process, began reporting its findings to the judge of the relevant court, who then signed the Order. Naturalization of women and children differed in that, before 1952, children under 21 years of age received derivative citizenship and have no separate file. Women, on the other hand, received automatic citizenship by marriage after one year of residency, and needed no Declaration of Intent.

Many persons were granted citizenship outside the normal process. Blacks became citizens by constitutional amendment in 1868. Indians, who were wards of the state until 1924, became citizens by an Act of Congress. Citizens who were living in territories which were brought into the U.S. as a block, by treaty, were often awarded citizenship en masse. The incorporation of Texas in 1845 is a case in point.

The forms used for Naturalization documents have also varied. Before 1906, each court had its own form, usually one which required only the forswearing of allegiance to the Head of the State from which the applicant came, and the signature of two witnesses. The Immigration and Naturalization Service required forms to include name, age, date and place of birth, occupation, physical description, current and former residences, Ports of Debarkation and Arrival, name of the ship, date of arrival in the U.S. In 1912, names and birth dates of spouses and children were added. Beginning in 1930, photographs were often included.

The normal process has required two classes of documents. The Declaration of Intent was often filed upon arrival in order to begin establishment of residency without delay. With a copy of this filing in hand, final papers could be obtained from any court after residency requirements had been met. A two-to-seven year lapse between the Declaration and final papers is common. The final paper has four parts: **Petition**, which carries the most information; **Affidavits** of witnesses and petitioner; **Oath of Allegiance**; and **Court Orders** of admitting denial, or continuance. Name changes often occurred at this time.

**In Nevada, naturalization records may be found with the state district court and U.S. District Court Records at the National Archives at San Francisco.**

### **U.S. District Court**

District of Nevada  
400 South Virginia St.  
Reno, NV 89701  
<http://www.nvd.uscourts.gov/>

### **National Archives at San Francisco**

Leo J. Ryan Memorial Federal Building  
1000 Commodore Drive  
San Bruno, CA 94066-2350  
(650) 238-3501  
<http://www.archives.gov/san-francisco/>