



National Archives and Records Administration

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AT SAN FRANCISCO

ALIEN CASE FILES (“A-FILES”)

Created by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) beginning in 1944, Alien Case Files (“A-Files”) contain all records of any active case of an alien not yet naturalized as they passed through the United States immigration and inspection process. Alien residents of the United States who interacted with the INS after 1944 may have had an A-File. A-Files might also be created without any action taken by the alien; for example, if the INS initiated a law enforcement action against or involving the alien. (See the chart on the reverse of this handout.)

On June 3, 2009, the National Archives and Records Administration and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services signed an agreement to make the A-Files a permanent series of records. A-Files will be transferred in five-year blocks to National Archives custody 100 years after the alien's year of birth.

The National Archives at San Francisco and the National Archives at Kansas City currently maintain over 350,000 individual A-Files for persons born in 1910 and before. Because of strong interest and advocacy for the A-files by local research communities and their congressional representatives, the National Archives at San Francisco will maintain A-Files controlled by INS district offices located in San Francisco, Honolulu, Reno, and Guam. However, researchers seeking individuals who may have lived in these areas should check the holdings of both the San Francisco and Kansas City facilities.



Ok Nam Shin immigrated to Hawaii from Korea in 1920. He became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1962. A-File A008964764, NARA-SF.



A rich source of biographical information, A-Files may include visas, photographs, affidavits, and correspondence leading up to an alien's naturalization, permanent residency, or deportation. Some A-Files contain records consolidated from older immigration case file series – such as Chinese Exclusion Act era case files – currently open for public research at the National Archives.

For information about how the A-Files, including how to search for and request copies of individual A-Files, please visit <http://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/aliens/>.

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Born in Russia, Pasha Semenov immigrated to the United States through Harbin, China in 1923. She settled in San Francisco and became a naturalized citizen in 1965. A-File A003778882, NARA-SF.



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Does my immigrant ancestor have an A-File?

The A-Files do not document every immigrant to the United States. Use this chart to determine who may have an A-File or other type of record created by the former Immigration and Naturalization Service. (Adapted from chart created by Marian Smith, Chief Historian, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.)

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Genealogy Program can be accessed online at <http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy/>.

The immigrant....	
Died before August 1, 1940	Will not have an A-File nor an Alien Registration Number. Research other National Archives resources of genealogical interest, such as ship passenger manifest lists, for information about this individual.
Became a naturalized citizen between September 27, 1906 and August 1, 1940	Will not have an A-File nor an Alien Registration Number. However, you should inquire with the USCIS Genealogy Program regarding a possible "Certificate File" (C-File).
Became a naturalized citizen between August 1, 1940 and March 31, 1956	Will likely not have an A-File. However, you should inquire with the USCIS Genealogy Program regarding a possible "Certificate File" (C-File) or 1940 Alien Registration Form.
Immigrated to the United States after April 1, 1944	Will have an A-File. Check National Archives holdings if born in 1910 or prior. Otherwise, inquire with the USCIS Genealogy Program.
Naturalized on or after March 31, 1956	Will have an A-File. Check National Archives holdings if born in 1910 or prior. Otherwise, inquire with the USCIS Genealogy Program.
Registered in the United States as an alien in 1940 but never came back to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for any reason	Was likely assigned an Alien Registration Number but will not have an A-File. You can obtain a copy of their 1940 Alien Registration Form from the USCIS Genealogy Program.
Registered in the United States as an alien in 1940 and came back to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for any reason after 1944	Will have an A-File. Check National Archives holdings if born in 1910 or prior. Otherwise, inquire with the USCIS Genealogy Program.

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