

# Worth More Than Gold or Silver:

## MyHeritage's *US Naturalization Records, Northern California, 1852-1989* Collection

This CARD INDEX is all about immigrants – over 544,000 of them – and spans 137 years! They came to California for various reasons and took a chance for a new life as a U.S. Citizen.

Due to the lengthy time span covered in this collection, an explanation of the process for naturalization in the United States and the courts that handled that process is necessary. The process had requirement changes and the courts had jurisdictional and name changes throughout the years. Court names and years covered are listed on the next two pages. This can assist in locating where an actual naturalization took place.

Before 1906, adult immigrants could file a **Declaration of Intention** after arrival in the United States. Basic requirements were good moral character, a one-year residency in the State and a two-year residency in the United States. A waiting period between the Declaration of Intention filing and a court Petition for Citizenship was three years during 1790 to 1824, and two years after 1824. In these earlier years, any municipal, county, state or federal court could grant citizenship.

The second part of the process was the filing of a **Petition for Citizenship**. This could be filed in the same or a different court or even in a different state. The Petition included depositions from witnesses (friends, neighbors, employers, family or associates) who could vouch for the immigrant's good character.

The immigrant lastly took an **Oath of Allegiance** to the United States and received a **Certificate of Naturalization**, which was recorded by the court.

Information in the Declaration of Intention, Petition for Citizenship, Oath of Allegiance, and Certificate of Naturalization was not standardized before 1906. There were no specific forms during those years.

Typical data before 1906 included the immigrant's Name, Residence, Application Date, and Country of Birth or Prior Allegiance. There are minimal instances of the

availability of the immigrant's Age and a Port of Arrival in petitions before 1906.

The naturalization process was greatly improved in 1906 with updated laws, a newly created Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, and standardized forms.

The new forms included additional information that is helpful for genealogical research:

- Name
- Age
- Application Date
- Residence
- Birth Date
- Birth Place
- Last Foreign Address
- Personal Description
- Marital Status
- Names of Wife and Children
- Birth Date and Birth Place for Wife and Children
- Port and Date of Arrival
- Vessel and Port of Embarkation
- Occupation
- Where and When Declaration of Intention was filed
- Witness Affidavits

The Bureau of Immigration & Naturalization was later changed to Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS). In March of 2004, it was re-named the U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

MyHeritage's CARD INDEX Collection contains naturalizations in circuit courts and district courts in Northern California, 1852 - 1989.

The Circuit Courts and years covered are:

- Special Circuit Court, 1855 – 1863
- Tenth Circuit Court, 1863 – 1866
- Ninth Circuit Court for the District of California, 1866 – 1886
- Circuit Court for the Northern District of California, 1886 – 1911

The District Courts and years covered are:

- Northern District of California, 1852 – 1916
- Southern Division of the Northern District, 1917 – 1966
- Northern District, 1966 – 1973
- Northern Division of the Northern District, 1973 – 1989

Information on these courts is found in NARA microfilm publication M1744.

The Research Room at the **National Archives at San Francisco** is open. Research visits are by appointment only. For Address, Telephone, Hours, Holidays, Directions, Public Transportation, Internet Sites, Databases, and Collection Descriptions, search online at <http://www.archives.gov/san-francisco>. Records in their collections were generated by the Federal courts and Federal agency field offices in northern and central California and other areas.

For naturalizations granted by state and lower courts, records may be found in a state archive. For naturalizations granted by a federal court, records may be found in the National Archives or Branches serving the state in which the Federal Court is located. The National Archives indicates that “No central index exists” for naturalization records. Copies can be purchased for files that are located.

To search MyHeritage’s *US Naturalizations, Northern California, 1852 – 1989* Collection:

- From the Home Page, Click on Research
- In the Drop-Down Menu, Click on Collection Catalog
- Under Collection Catalog, Click on Immigration & Travel
- Scroll Down to Click on Citizenship, Passport & Naturalization
- Scroll Down to Click on US Naturalization Records, Northern California, 1852 – 1989

The Search Box fields are First & Middle names, Last Name, Birth Year, Place, Naturalization Year, Place. Successful searches can be made using just a first name, or a last name, just a birth year, or a year of naturalization and just a place for birth or naturalization. These single box searches do get results! When you have adequate information to fill in more than one box, the results are even better.

The results will be displayed with available information and a record image on the right-hand side. Click on the record image to enlarge.

The image will contain naturalization file data for the individual. This can be used to locate additional information - the residence address where they lived at the time of their naturalization; the court that granted citizenship and where it was located.

Another source with information about naturalized citizens or foreign birth can be found in the U.S. Census in the years noted below:

- 1820-1830-1840 Foreigners not naturalized
- 1850 to 1950 Birthplace of individual
- 1870 If a person's father or mother was foreign-born
- 1870 If a person was a male citizen 21 years of age and older
- 1880 to 1930 Birthplace of parents
- 1900 to 1930 Year of Immigration
- 1920 Year of Naturalization
- 1940 Citizenship of foreign-born persons
- 1900 to 1940 Naturalization status – naturalized or alien