Using Emigrant Guides for Genealogical Research

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Emigrant guides are useful for gaining insight into the whys and hows of an ancestor's preparation, journey, and settlement in a new land. This resource will probably not include your ancestors' name, although it is possible, especially in the personal accounts. These guides provided essential information and practical advice to our ancestors about travel routes, weather, opportunities, and much more.

Whether the emigrant was contemplating moving across an ocean or across the country, guides were aimed at people who were literate and had the means to travel and start a new life in an unfamiliar land. The ideal guide had a table of contents, included maps, was cheap, and was compact so the emigrant could easily carry it.

TYPES OF EMIGRANT GUIDES

- Compilation–collection of information composed of material from other sources
- Personal account–more than facts, a personal perspective which could include letters
- Combination of a compilation and personal account

PRODUCED BY

- Individuals
- Organizations
- Governments
- Businesses

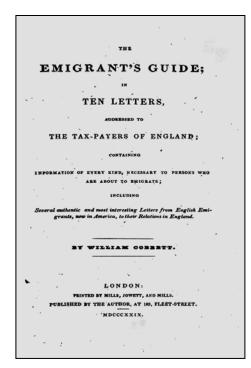
"... the Irish emigrant leaves his home and country without that amount of practical information necessary for him, or which would enable him to push his fortune with advantage to himself, in the country of his adoption. Hence the necessity of a guide to direct him, at least in the outset of his career; and the presentation of those statements and facts of a reliable nature which may enable him to surmount the difficulties, hardships and dangers of a new life, and to advance himself to a station of comfort, honor and independence."

Rev. J. O'Hanlon in *The Irish Emigrant's Guide for the United States,*1851.

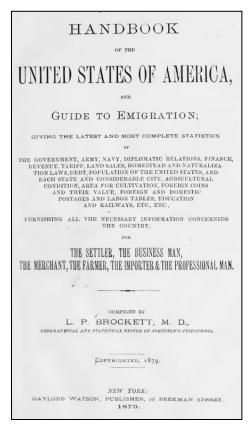
Some emigrant guides were published in the early nineteenth century but they became more popular starting about 1840. They contain information about numerous aspects of the emigrant experience, from major decisions about transportation and destination to directions on what type of crop to plant. Each guide is different but they have many features in common.

Common Topics in Emigrant Guides

- Why emigrate?-reasons they would leave their present world
- Who should emigrate and who should not?—what trades were needed, health necessary to survive both the journey and settling
- Best time to emigrate–calculating when to leave so that they arrived at a good time
- Laws affecting emigration
- General history of the new country and/or area
- Manners and customs of people in the new country
- Keeping expectations realistic
- Preparation
 - What to bring and what not to bring
 - Estimated costs
 - Carrying and transmitting currency
- Means of travel and schedules
 - Boat
 - Rail
 - Ship
 - Wagon
- The journey–what to expect
- Precautions
 - Along the way
 - Upon arrival in port cities or major transfer cities.
 - Warnings about frauds and scams
- Arrival
 - Lodging
 - Finding employment
- Geography of the land with maps and other diagrams
- Distances and cost of travel
- Roads
- Food supply
- Climate



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- Economic benefits
- Modes and cost of importing and exporting
- Business opportunities and decisions
- Government structure
- Land laws and how to obtain land
- Agricultural advice about climate, soil, minerals—what grows, growing season, available game, and types of livestock that thrives
- Housing decisions
- Educational opportunities
- Mail rates and schedule
- Health concerns specific to the area of settlement–diseases, fevers
- Indians residing in the area or along the route traveled
- Wild beasts found in the area
- Advice on how to succeed
- How to assimilate into a new society
- Naturalization laws and citizenship process
- Advertisements of businesses from the area where the emigrant was going



Emigrant Guides played a key role in influencing immigration and migration by encouraging people to move to a new location.

The guides were published in English and/or the language of the target audience.

Check publication dates to find a guide published close to the time an ancestor emigrated.

Some early publications that were called traveler's guides and trail guides had much of the same information as an emigrant guide.

Shipping lines, railroads, and state governments published emigrant guides as promotional material.

Emigrant Guides are still published today in many different languages.

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LOCATING EMIGRANT GUIDES

A large number of guides are no longer under copyright and have been digitized. Other guides that are considered to be of special historical significance have been reprinted.

Digital copy

- Google Books
- Internet Archive
- "Family History Books" at FamilySearch
- Other sites



Print copy

- Reprints are available at Amazon, Abe Books, and Barnes & Noble
- Original copies may be available
- Libraries
 - University libraries where guides are frequently used by history students
 - Public and private libraries and historical societies
 - Family History Library

Search

Using WorldCat, Library of Congress, FamilySearch catalogs, or any search engine.

Key Search Words: Emigrant Guide, Emigrant Guidebook, Emigrant Handbook, Immigrant Guide, Immigrant Handbook, Settlers' Guide, Settlers' Handbook, Trail Guide, and Traveler Guide.

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List of emigrant guides also at www.jpmresearch.com/jpm/downloads.html

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR USING EMIGRANT GUIDES FOR GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH JULIE MILLER, CG®, CGL™, FNGS

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Miller, Julie. "Inside emigrant guides." *NGS Magazine*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October–December 2014), pages 20-25.

KEY TO ABREVIATIONS

GB-available to download from GoogleBooks

IA-available to download from Internet Archive

HT- available to download from HathiTrust.

FS-available to download from FamilySearch

In general the place to download is a tip or where it I found it, the book may be available at other outlets.

United States including regions

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Alaska

Arizona

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Idaho

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Indiana

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Louisiana

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Michigan

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Mississippi

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Missouri

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Montana

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Nebraska

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Ohio

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Oklahoma

Oregon

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Pennsylvania

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Rhode Island

South Carolina

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