Through the Maze: Finding Elusive Immigration and Naturalization Records

By Marian Smith and Zack Wilske

The History Office of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) is often disappointed to hear researchers report on unsuccessful research trips to the National Archives (NARA) in Washington, DC. Many go to NARA to investigate Record Group 85, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, but leave confused and empty-handed. It is disappointing to us at USCIS because we know there are rich and voluminous records in Record Group 85 (RG 85), and with a little planning and preparation they can be coaxed to open and reveal their treasures.

Successful archival research requires time, patience, and sometimes mastery of obscure archival language—"magic words" that seemingly must be spoken to produce the records desired. For example, archivists can seldom retrieve records on a given topic. Rather, they respond to requests for records from a specific Record Group (RG) identifying the entry, box, and file numbers. While there is not enough space here to recount detailed instructions of the sort provided to researchers every day by USCIS historians, there is room to describe a few major resources and give directions to where help is available.

For scholars pursuing topical immigration and nationality research there are four major sets or collections of records at NARA in Washington, DC and in College Park, MD. The four sets vary by date and, to some extent, subject.

Early Correspondence, 1882-ca. 1912 (Immigration, RG 85, Entries 1-8). This grouping of records within RG 85 includes at least four sets (called "Entries") of correspondence files divided between letters received (arranged by file number, roughly chronological) and letters sent (arranged by date). There are also two entries of register books (1882-1987 and 1891-1903) and two quirky name and subject indices (ca. 1903-1910) that serve as finding aids.

Subject and Case Correspondence of the INS ("56000 Series") (Immigration 1906-1957, and Nationality ca. 1933-1957, RG 85, Entry 9). The Subject Correspondence Files (also known as the 56,000 series) was used to house all manner of immigration, nationality, and administrative correspondence and material for the years indicated. Prior to April 1944 Subject Correspondence files were also opened for those individual immigrant cases requiring a decision from Washington, DC. These included exclusion appeals, deportation warrants, investigations, and a wide variety of actions.

Some researchers are already familiar with a sampling of the earliest 56000 Series files published on microfilm by University Publications of America in the 1990s and edited by Rudy Vecoli and Alan Kraut. Sadly, USCIS historians hear from too many graduate students who mistakenly assume the entire series of records was filmed. There are in fact many files dated before 1933 not included in the microfilm publications, and in 1996 INS transferred an additional 8,000 boxes of this series (files dating 1906-1957) to NARA. Other researchers at NARA in DC find a binder listing less than 10,000 Subject Correspondence Files and mistakenly believe it to be a comprehensive finding aid. We estimate there are well over half a million 56000 Series files.

The sheer size of this collection can overwhelm even a seasoned researcher. The best place to start is with a subject index, available on NARA microfilm publication T-458, Subject Index to Correspondence and Case Files of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1903-1952 (actually 1957). This microfilm (31 reels) is available at NARA facilities in Washington DC, Chicago IL, New York NY, Seattle WA, and San Bruno CA, and can be borrowed for use at any of the Latter Day Saints’ Family History Centers across the country.

This index references both the Subject Correspondence and the Bureau of Naturalization correspondence discussed below. Anyone using the index should search every possible keyword for their subject and note (in a spreadsheet) the file number, reference text, and date of each interesting index entry. Once a list of file numbers has been compiled USCIS historians can help to interpret the list and assist in preparing the NARA file request.

Chinese Exclusion Act Records, 1882-1908, 1920 (Segregated Chinese Files) (RG 85, Entries 130-143). In 1903 the immigration Service assumed responsibility for enforcing the Chinese Exclusion law. The old Chinese Service, along with its records, transferred to the Immigration Service, and the new agency maintained a separate or "segregated" set of records for Chinese Exclusion matters until 1908. After 1908 Chinese Exclusion records began to be integrated into the 56,000 series. The Segregated Chinese Files at NARA in Washington, DC, should not be confused with INS’s separate series of Chinese Exclusion Act case files now found at regional archives across the United States.

The main Chinese Exclusion file series include Chinese General Correspondence, 1898-1908, and Chinese Letters sent, June 9, 1900 to August 9, 1908. These include correspondence related to the registrations, arrests, deportations, smuggling, and exclusion of Chinese immigrants; proposed changes in exclusion law; registration certificates; and the duties, jurisdiction, salaries, and appointment of service officials. Another major set within this category is Chronological Records Relating to Chinese Certificates of (Continued on p. 8)
News from Libraries, Museums and Research Institutes...

The Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota offers grants in aid for short periods of research and study in its archives. Graduate students and independent scholars may apply for grants of $500 for at least one week's research at the IHRC. Post-doctoral scholars may apply for a maximum award of $1000, to support a two-week residency at the IHRC. Deadline for applying for either award is June 1, 2010. Awards must be used between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2011. Full details are available on the web at: www.ihrc.umn.edu/educators/grantsinaid.php

The Society for German American Studies has established a new web-page: http://www.sgas.org

The Angel Island Immigration Station, part of Angel Island State Park in San Francisco Bay is currently celebrating the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the immigration station. Since 2005 it has been pursuing projects to restore the historical facility, receiving support from Congress, the Department of the Interior, the California state legislature, and the California Cultural and Historical Endowment. The site has been closed during May for work to complete Phase I of the restoration project. For information as to reopening, see http://www.aiisf.org

The Field Museum, Chicago, is now displaying a traveling exhibition developed by the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. The exhibition, “kip fulbeck: part asian, 100% hapa,” explores through portraits and testimonies how people of mixed ethnic heritage define their identity. “Hapa” is a Hawaiian word meaning “half,” used to describe people of mixed Asian or Pacific Island descent. Information at www.fieldmuseum.org/exhibits

Denbsō, the Japanese American Legacy Project located in Seattle, has established an on-line exhibition, “Sites of Shame,” chronicling and explaining the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans. It includes information on the specific cites at which they were interned. Information at the website: www.densho.org

At the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, another new exhibit will explore the Japanese-American experience in World War II, with emphasis on Japanese-American soldiers serving in the armed forces. “Go for Broke: Japanese-American Soldiers Fighting on Two Fronts,” opens May 29, 2010 and runs through Sept. 6, 2010.

The Swedish American Historical Society offers the annual Franklin D. Scott prize of $250 for the best article submitted each year for the Swedish American Historical Quarterly. The award is open to all new contributors to the Quarterly. Deadline for submission is October 1. Manuscripts should be sent to the editor, Dr. Byron J. Nordstrom, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter MN 56082. E-mail: byron@gustavus.edu

Modest sums to help defray expenses for original research in Swedish-American immigration history are available through the SAHS's Nils William and Dagmar Olson Research Fund. Deadline for application: September 1. Letters of application should be sent to the chair of the Awards and Grants Committee, Dr. Philip J. Anderson, The Swedish-American Historical Society, 3225 W. Foster Avenue, Box 48, Chicago, IL 60625.

For further information about both the grant and the award, see the SAHS website at http://www.swedishamericanhist.org/Research/grants.html

The German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. offers short-term fellowships to German and American doctoral students as well as postdoctoral scholars in the fields of German history, the history of German-American relations, and the history of the role of Germany and the USA in international relations. Research projects must draw upon primary sources located in the United States. The next deadline for applications is October 15, 2010. See the GHI web-pages at http://www.ghi-dc.org/
From the IEHS President...

Greetings, IEHS members!

In April 2010, IEHS began a new annual cycle with activities held in conjunction with the OAH Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. Let me take this opportunity to recount what transpired there and in the months immediately before we met.

Under the capable direction of Nominations Committee chair Charles Zappia and IEHS Secretary Tim Draper, the Society concluded its first election using electronic balloting. Charlie accomplished the especially tedious task of finding email addresses for those members whose information was incomplete, but some of you are still missing from our electronic list. If you are reading this Newsletter and recall that you did not receive information about the election and annual meeting electronically, please send your email address—if you have one—to Tim at tdraper@waubonsie.edu.

Those elected to three-year terms on the Society’s Executive Board are Maddalena Marinari, Anna Pegler Gordon, and Raymond Mohl, all of whom will serve from 2010 to 2013. Outgoing Executive Board members Eiichiro Azuma, Maria Cristina Garcia, and Diane Vecchio, who served from 2007, deserve our thanks for their dedicated service, especially on the Society’s committees. However, as their committee terms have not yet concluded, Eiichiro and Maria Cristina will continue on the Saloutos Committee; Diane, on the Nominations Committee.

Thanks to the vision and hard work of IEHS Executive Board member Rachel Kranson, the Society inaugurated a reception for graduate students and junior career scholars in U.S. immigration and ethnicity on Thursday afternoon at the OAH. Bringing together those just starting their careers and those who have long been in the field for informal conversation over candle-laden plates, “Dessert before Dinner” proved so successful that it will become an annual event. Following the annual JAEH Editorial Board meeting, annual business meeting, and Executive Board meeting on Friday afternoon, approximately forty-five members and guests dined lavishly nearby at Lebanese Taverna and heard Professor Tyler Anbinder of George Washington University deliver a thought provoking address, “Moving Beyond ‘Rags to Riches’: Immigrants and the American Dream Reconsidered.”

To continue the work of upgrading the Society’s website—www.iehs.org, the Executive Board approved the appointment of seemingly tireless Rachel Kranson as website editor. Rachel will chair the Society’s ad hoc Website Committee to which I have also appointed Denise Rautmann, the Society’s webmaster, Tim Draper, Anna Pegler Gordon, and Maddalena Marinari, all of whom have wonderful ideas for improving the Society’s online presence. If you have suggestions for the website, please send them to Rachel at Rachel@booksandsirens.com.

Finally, let me congratulate the winners of the Society’s latest award competitions. Anna Pegler Gordon won the 2009 Theodore Saloutos Book Award for In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy; some years ago, Anna received the Pozzetta Dissertation Research Award for this project! Let us wish Jared Toney, this year’s Pozzetta winner, similar success with his dissertation, “Locating Diaspora: Afro-Caribbean Migration and the Transnational Identities of Community in North America, 1910-1929”; he is writing it under the direction of Russell Kazal at the University of Toronto. OAH-IEHS John Higham Travel Grants enabled graduate students Aaron Cavin (University of Michigan), Shira Miriam Koll (New York University), and Julian Lim (Cornell University) to attend the OAH Annual Meeting and the Society’s Annual Dinner.

I hope that you continue to enjoy reading the Newsletter that Jim Borgquist prepares every six months for the Society’s members. I certainly do!

Best wishes,
Barbara M. Posadas
President, IEHS

PERSONALS

Cheryl Greenberg (Trinity College, Hartford), IEHS treasurer, has received a Fulbright Distinguished Lectureship for China for the academic year 2010-2011.

Nancy Carnevale (Montclair State University) has been awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for 2010-2011 to research a comparative study of African-American and Italian-American relations in urban and suburban New Jersey from the early 1900s through the 1960s. She also recently became co-editor (with Laura E. Roberto) of "Critical Studies in Italian America," a new series from Fordham University Press.

David Hollinger (University of California, Berkeley) a member of the IEHS, has become president of the Organization of American Historians. Another IEHS member, Albert Camarillo (Stanford University), has been elected OAH vice president.

NECROLOGY

Hans L. Trefousse, Professor Emeritus of History at Brooklyn College, CUNY, died Jan. 8, 2010 at his home in Staten Island, New York. He was 88. Born in Germany, he came to the United States as a teenager in 1935. He received his bachelor’s degree from the City College of New York. After serving in the United States Army in World War II, he received his doctorate from Columbia University. He joined the Brooklyn College faculty in 1950. Much of his research and publication centered on the era of Reconstruction. That led him to the subject of the German-American leader Carl Schurz; he published Carl Schurz: A Biography in 1982. He was also active in other areas of German-American studies.

FROM THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The IEHS Program Committee is asking IEHS members to start thinking about the next round of "calls" from scholarly conferences. Please consider forming full panels for the Organization of American Historians, which will meet in 2012 in Milwaukee (theme to be announced at the end of July or early August). Proposals will be accepted as of October. The American Historical Association will meet in Chicago, January 5-January 8, 2012; deadlines and themes will be announced in the September 2010 Perspectives. The American Studies Association will meet in San Juan, Puerto Rico, November 15-18, 2012. Despite the early date now, it is worth beginning to think about panels which can be sponsored by the IEHS. For further information, please contact Hasia Diner, chair of the Program Committee.

E-mail: hrd1@nyu.edu
Conferences and Meetings...


The biennial Scholars’ Conference of the American Jewish Historical Society will be held at the Center for Jewish History in New York City, June 15-17, 2010. The organizers say that the conference “will examine the notion of American Jewish ‘exceptionalism,’ or uniqueness that has shaped conceptions of American Jewish history from its beginning.” Web information at http://www.ajhs.org/scholarship/conference.cfm


Northumbler University in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, will host a conference July 8-10, 2010. Theme: “Locating the Hidden Diaspora: The English in the Anglophone World.” Information on the web: http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/academic/sass/about/humanities/history/seminars_conferences/hiddendiaspora/


The 21st International Congress of Historical Sciences will convene in Amsterdam, Aug. 22-28, 2010. Among the themes for major sessions are:

“Mass Migration: A Global Perspective on Continuities and Discontinuities in the 19th and 20th Centuries.”


The Boston Seminar in Immigration and Urban History invites proposals for sessions in its 2010-2011 series. Programs take place at the Massachusetts Historical Society, usually on the third or fourth Thursday evening of the month between September and April. The seminar’s steering committee welcomes suggestions for papers dealing with all aspects of American immigration and urban history and culture. Programs are not confined to Massachusetts topics, nor are they limited to the research of historians. Papers comparing the American experience with developments elsewhere in the world are welcome. Contact Conrad Wright, e-mail cwright@masshist.org

Further information on the web at http://www.masshist.org/events/bsuih.cfm

The 15th annual Metropolis Conference will take place at The Hague, the Netherlands, Oct. 4-8, 2010. The annual conference deals with issues of migration, integration, and citizenship. Theme: “Justice and Migration: Paradoxes of Belonging.” Information at: http://www.metropolis2010.org


The Annual Meeting of the Polish American Historical Association will be held in Boston, Massachusetts, January 6-9, 2011, as part of the American Historical Association’s annual meeting. Web info: http://www.polishamericanstudies.org/

The Organization of American Historians will meet in Houston, Texas, March 17-20, 2011. Theme of the meeting is “Americans Divided and United: Multiple and Shifting Solidarities.” Information on the web at http://www.oah.org/

The Immigration and Ethnic History Society will hold its annual meeting in connection with the Organization of American Historians, in Houston, March 17-20, 2011.

The Norwegian-American Historical Association, Norway Chapter, will hold its twelfth seminar June 14-17, 2011 at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. Theme of the conference: “Migrant Journeys: The Norwegian American Experience in a Multicultural Context.” The conveners of the seminar solicit papers on a wide variety of subjects within Norwegian-American studies. Prospective participants should submit a half-page proposal and a one-page curriculum vitae to Terje Haas Johanger, Haslebræta, 2933 Reini, Norway. E-mail: tmh-jota@online.no For detailed information, contact him at the same e-mail address.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has launched a new initiative, “Bridging Cultures.” The initiative encourages projects that explore the ways in which cultures from around the globe have influenced American society. NEH welcomes proposals to plan and implement a program consisting of a forum and a workshop on one of two humanities themes: “Civility and Democracy” or “The Muslim World and the Humanities.” Web info: http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/BridgingCultures.html
Minutes of the 2010 Annual Business Meeting
Immigration and Ethnic History Society
Washington, DC, April 9, 2010

President Barbara M. Posadas called to order the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Immigration and Ethnic Society at 4:30 p.m., Friday, April 9, 2010, at the Washington Hilton. Twenty-four Society members were present, including six officers and a majority of the Executive Board.

President Posadas asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the 2009 meeting, which was seconded and approved. She then announced plans for the annual dinner following the business meeting and recognized the chairs of the Society’s various committees, giving special recognition to Rachel Kranzon, who organized the very successful Graduate Student and Junior Faculty Reception earlier in the week. The President’s report alluded to the various actions taken by the Board during the course of the past year to streamline Society operations, including a change of policy in communicating election results from the Secretary to the President and Nominating Chair in order to facilitate travel arrangements for new officers and Board members.

During the Secretary’s Report, Timothy Dean Draper provided the names of the three new Executive Board members: Maddeleena Marinari, Raymond Mohl, and Anna Pegler Gordon. Draper communicated some of the challenges encountered during the transition from exclusively paper balloting to electronic balloting, and President Posadas recognized the fine job Nominating Chair Charlie Zappia and his administrative staff performed in updating the Society’s membership email database. John Bukowczyk suggested that the updated database be sent to University of Illinois Press for communicating with subscribers.

Treasurer Cheryl Greenberg reported that the Society made money during the past fiscal year, finishing with funds of $142,000 after tabulating $90,000 in revenue and $60,000 in expenses. Past President Ron Bayor inquired about financing for the Pozzetta Award, which Greenberg stated was at $10,000 at the conclusion of 2009, which allowed the Society to pay for the amount of the award. Barbara Posadas pointed out that the amount of the award had been lowered from $500 to $250. Discussion ensued as to the desirability of restoring the award to its former amount. Alan Kraut asked in which type of banking account the Society held its funds, and Treasurer Greenberg explained that she had used both checking and interest-bearing savings accounts along with a nine-month CD. She then indicated that she had closed the CD after it came due because of its low rate of return. Victor Greene opined that with its large size the Society might consider how it might spend surplus funds, but James Bergquist and Barbara Posadas cautioned that unanticipated costs and rising publication expenses might require a continued surplus. Greenberg added that a significant part of the Society’s liquid assets were part of the one-time $50,000 settlement with Transaction Publishing. John Bukowczyk noted that the Polish American History Association utilized an investment house to help invest its funds and had done quite well, which might be an idea for the Society to pursue. Posadas added that, based on her experience with the Illinois State Historical Society, management of funds requires a knowledgeable investment committee and that maintenance fees might be high.

John Bukowczyk provided the *Journal of American Ethnic History* report, discussing the transition from the History Cooperative to JSTOR as an electronic repository for the Journal. He stated that the *Journal* had lost approximately one-third of its institutional members since 2003, which reflects a general trend in the publication of scholarly journals. Citing JSTOR’s higher rates, Bukowczyk maintained that this venue provided a better means of marketing the *Journal*, including new readership venues. He reported that Allan Austin, the Book Review Editor, will be stepping down at the end of 2011; therefore, the Society will need to find a replacement. Finally, he indicated that the quality and quantity of submissions are fine and there are future special issues planned.

Newsletter editor James Bergquist reported that IEHS is sending out about 800 newsletters at a time, running a bit ahead of membership totals due to free subscriptions. As always, he is interested in new articles, for example on ethnic stereotyping. The next newsletter will carry an article by Marian Smith, Senior Historian, US Citizenship and Immigration Services and her staff about the accessibility of immigration and naturalization records in the new federal archival environment.

Program Chair Hasia Diner revealed that the Society has submitted panels for next year’s meetings of the American Historical Association, American Studies Association, Berkshire Conference on Women’s History, and the Organization of American Historians. As he asked that Society members consider other conferences they attend so that the Program Chair might approach them for possible co-sponsorship of panels.

Maria Christina Garcia announced that this year’s Theodore Saloutos Book Award winner was Anna Pegler Gordon for her *In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy*. Raymond Mohl announced that Jared Toney had received the George E. Pozzetta Dissertation Award. Finally, Elliott Barkan announced that Aaron Ivan Cavin, Julian Lim, and Shira Miriam Cohen received the OAH/IEHS John Higman Travel Grants. Ron Bayor reported that his ad hoc committee, charged with exploring a new "best" dissertation award named after Rudolph Vecoli, is presently inactive until a possible contributor may be found.

Rachel Kranzon outlined the changes planned for the IEHS website, including a general redesign, online voting, online dinner reservations and payment, updated membership lists, better navigability, syllabus section, password protection, and other features, which would cost about $3,500 annually. General discussion of additional features, such as a discussion forum, followed, and Kranzon pointed out that an IEHS Facebook page, for example, might be the best solution for some of the alternatives. John Bukowczyk posed a query about a possible Web Editor, which Posadas replied would be taken up by the Executive Board meeting following the general business meeting. Posadas then suggested that members should email Rachel Kranzon any further suggestions they might have.

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THEODORE SALOUTOS BOOK AWARD, 2009

The annual Theodore Saloutos Book Award for the outstanding book of the year in American immigration and ethnic history was made to Anna Pegler-Gordon (Michigan State University) for her book In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy (University of California Press). The committee consisted of Maria Cristina Garcia (Cornell University), chair; Elichio Azuma (University of Pennsylvania); and Alan Kraut (American University). The award was made at the annual dinner of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society in Washington, D.C. on April 9, 2010. The citation follows:

In this multifaceted study, Anna Pegler Gordon argues that photography shaped the development of immigration policy in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially as it was implemented at official ports of entry. Beginning in 1875, U.S. regulations required that immigrants be observed, inspected, photographed, and documented at Angel Island, Ellis Island, and checkpoints along the US-Mexico border. These visual inspections and their photographic documentation were critical to controlling the influx of Chinese, Mexican, and eventually, European immigrants, and helped reinforce popular and official perceptions of the various immigrant groups. However, immigrants had more control over immigration photography than generally assumed, and Pegler Gordon also argues that immigrants used the photographic medium to create identities that would permit them to enter the United States, ultimately resisting the regulations that tried to control their movement.

Pegler-Gordon draws on a wide range of documentary and visual evidence for this engaging study, which is both a history of immigration policy and the various actors that enforced or contested regulations at entry points, as well as a history of the social construction of race. The book also offers a cultural history of American photography that will appeal to scholars of visual studies.

Other New Publications Noted...


De Witt, Petra. "'Drifting Back into their Old Ways': Local Efforts to Banish the German Language from Missouri during the Great War." Missouri Historical Review 103.3 (2009), 161-182.


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Residence, 1893-1920, containing applications for duplicate certificates of residence, together with sworn affidavits from the requesters, reports of Chinese Inspectors, and related correspondence. There is no separate index to the Chinese Files, though one of the quire card indices and the microfilm T-458 subject index both hold references to some Segregated Chinese Files.

Administrative Files Relating to Naturalization (Bureau of Naturalization Correspondence Files), 1906-1946 (Nationality, RG 85, Entry 26 and additional entries). As a separate service and agency, the Bureau of Naturalization opened and maintained a separate set of policy and administrative files from 1906 until 1934, and the series remained open for certain matters to 1946. In addition to a large set of correspondence files this group includes several smaller entries, for example, files of the Citizenship Education Program, an index to fraudulent naturalizations investigated, or boxes of oversized materials.

It can be much easier to use the Bureau of Naturalization files. The system itself is organized with a subject system relating to specific topics. For example, all the files in the 35/series relate to the general topic "soldiers and sailors." The file 35/gen contains agency policy and guidance regarding soldiers and sailors, while 35/1, 35/2, etc. cover cases of individual soldiers or sailors. The series is suited to policy research because it presents policy documents followed by interesting and/or precedent-setting case examples. Also, as noted above, the subject microfilm (NARA T-458) references topical files in this series. A name index to these files exists and is available for use in the USCIS History Office (NARA has assigned the name microfilm publication number A3388, Bureau of Naturalization Correspondence Index, but it is unpublished as of this date).

INS Central Office (CO) Subject Files, 1957-1975 (1995) (Immigration, Nationality, RG 85 Entry P-3A, and at USCIS). The newest addition to NARA's holdings of INS policy correspondence came with the transfer of most CO Subject Files 1957-1974. In the CO Subject system, the first 599 file numbers are keyed to related sections of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 and Title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Aliens and Nationality. For example, the files under CO 212.3 contain policy and correspondence concerning aliens excludable on medical grounds. Files above CO 599 were given subject headings and cover all other aspects of INS's administrative and operational functions.

Unclassified CO Subject Files at NARA, recently processed and made available to researchers, are stored in Washington, DC. Classified files with NARA are stored in the College Park facility and viewing them requires a request to the NARA Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Office. Files still in USCIS custody date from 1957-1995, though coverage is better for years prior the 1980s. Viewing CO files maintained by USCIS requires a request to the USCIS FOIA Program.

CO files are indexed by the Central Office Subject File Catalog, which lists the files numerically and alphabetically by subject. The Catalog also references the corresponding 56,000 series file for topics active prior to 1957. A copy of the Central Office Subject File Catalog is available to researchers in the USCIS History Office. Researchers who need assistance determining the location of a particular file should contact the History Office.

While nearly all INS subject and correspondence file series prior to 1975 have been transferred to the National Archives, most individual immigrant case file series remain with USCIS. Scholars doing biographical research or who seek records of immigrant cases must request them from USCIS under the Freedom of Information/Privacy Act or, for most files prior to ca. 1956, under the USCIS fee-for-service Genealogy Program. All requests for individual case files must identify the immigrant by full name (including alternate spellings or aliases), an exact or approximate date of birth, and the country of birth. Most successful requests also include information about when the immigrant arrived or was naturalized, and when and where he/she lived in the United States. Requests for records of individuals born less than 100 years prior to the request must include proof of the immigrant's death. Among the most significant case file series are:

- Certificate Files, 1906-1956 (Naturalization & Citizenship)
- Visa Files, 1924-1944 (Immigration, permanent resident admissions).
- Registry Files, 1929-1944 (Immigration, legalizations). A separate set of Registry Files for refugees legalized under the Act of June 8, 1934 or "White Russian Act," are at the National Archives in Washington, DC (NARA RG 85, Entry 12).
- Alien Registration Forms, 1940-1944 (registration under the 1940 Alien Registration Act)
- A-Files, 1944 to present (All Immigration, Nationality, and Enforcement matters).

All five of the file series listed above have been scheduled for permanent retention (the A-Files were recently rescheduled as permanent). All will eventually transfer to the National Archives.

The USCIS History Office staff traditionally offers custom research advice to each scholar who calls, writes, or sends an email. Currently we are working to prepare a more detailed research guide to be housed on our website. Researchers who can offer suggestions for that guide, or who have questions about anything mentioned here, or about researching the history federal immigration and nationality policy in general, are encouraged to contact the USCIS History Office at CISHistory.Library@dhs.gov.

Marian Smith is the Chief, Historical Research Branch, US Citizenship and Immigration Services. Zack Wilske is the Historian at the USCIS History Office. The USCIS History Office is located at 111 Massachusetts Avenue NW, First Floor (Room 1000), Washington DC 20529-2180

**IEHS MEMBER BENEFIT**

The University of Illinois Press has announced a special benefit for IEHS members. Individual members (not institutional members) may receive a 30% discount on any book ordered from the University of Illinois Press. Use code JRNLI10 when placing an order. Orders may be placed online at www.press.illinois.edu, or by phone at 800-621-2736 (in US only).
New Publications Noted...
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New Publications Noted...
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Radosz, Thaddeus C. “Father Jozef Dabrowski, the Orchard Lake Schools and Shaping of Polish American Catholicism.” U.S. Catholic Historian 27 (Summer 2009): 83-107.


Vigdor, Jacob L. From Immigrants to Americans: The Rise and Fall of Fils In. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009.


Annual Meeting Minutes...
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President Posadas then directed the Society Secretary to read the language of the pertinent section of the Bylaws and the proposed amendment which had been distributed in advance to the Society’s membership in accordance with the Bylaws. Following the reading, Posadas asked Bukowczyk to provide his rationale for the proposed change. Bukowczyk explained that due to the volatility of online publishing and need for the Society to be flexible with IJSTOR’s subscription schedule, the following language should be adopted:

That Amendment VI (which amended Article V, section 1), be replaced with the following language:

Amount of dues. Fees and amount of annual dues for all membership categories and sub-categories shall be established and changed by a majority vote of the Board.

The proposed amendment was carried unanimously.

Barbara Posadas adjourned the annual meeting at 5:30 p.m.
Activities Report for the Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter

Mail your information for the next Newsletter to:

James M. Bergquist, Department of History, Villanova University, Villanova PA 19085-1699
or FAX a copy to (601) 519-4450 or send information via E-Mail to: James.Bergquist@villanova.edu

Your name and affiliation:


IHS News Notes...

THEODORE SALOUTOS BOOK AWARD

Closing date for submissions for the annual Theodore Saloutos Book Award is December 31, 2010. To be eligible, a book must be copyrighted 2010. A book may be nominated by the author, the publisher, a member of the prize committee, or a member of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society. Inquiries and nominations should be submitted to the chair of the Saloutos Prize Committee, Maria Cristina Garcia, Department of History, 450 McGraw Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-4601, mcg20@cornell.edu.

Copies of the book must be received by all three members of the committee by Dec. 31, 2010. Send books to Professor Garcia at the address above, and also to Eiichiro Azuma, Department of History, 208 College Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6379, eazuma@sas.upenn.edu, and Alan Kraut, 6013 Sonoma Road, Bethesda, MD 20817, akraut@american.edu. The 2010 award will be presented at the annual dinner meeting of the Society in 2011.

JOHN HIGHAM TRAVEL GRANT

Applications are now being received for the 2011 John Higham travel grants, which provide three $500 grants for graduate students to attend the 2011 meeting of the Organization of American Historians in Houston, Texas. OAH and the Immigration and Ethnic History Society will award these grants in memory of John Higham (1920-2003), past president of both organizations, and a towering figure in immigration, ethnic, and intellectual history. The successful candidates will have a preferred area of concentration in American Immigration and/or American Ethnic and/or American Intellectual history. Applications should be received by December 1, 2010. For full information and guidelines for application, see www.oah.org/activities/awards/higham/

Committee members for the 2011 prize are Elliott Barkan (California State University, San Bernardino), chair; Lon Kurashige (University of Southern California); and Dominic A. Pacyna (Columbia College, Chicago).

GEORGE POZZETTA DISSERTATION AWARD

At the annual dinner meeting of the IEHS in Washington on April 9, 2010, the George Pozzetta Dissertation Award was given to Jared Toney (University of Toronto). His dissertation project is entitled “Locating Diaspora: Afro-Caribbean Migration and the Transnational Dialectics of Community in North America, 1910-1929.”

The Immigration and Ethnic History Society invites applications for the 2011 George E. Pozzetta Award. Eligible are Ph.D. candidates who will have completed qualifying examinations by Dec. 1, 2010, and whose thesis focuses on American immigration, emigration, or ethnic history. The award provides $500 for expenses to be incurred in researching the dissertation. Applicants must submit a 3-5 page descriptive proposal in English, discussing the significance of the work, the methodology, sources, and collections to be consulted. The application must also include a proposed budget, brief curriculum vitae, and a supporting letter from the major advisor. All materials must be received by each committee member by December 1, 2010, which is the submission deadline.

Send materials in hard copy (no FAXes accepted) to Raymond A. Mohl, Department of History, University of Alabama, Birmingham, Birmingham, AL 35294-0001, rmohl@uab.edu; to Nancy Green, 32 Bis Rue Lacepede, 75005 Paris, FRANCE; and to Nancy Carnevale, Department of History, Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ 07043. Inquiries may be sent to the committee chair, Prof. Mohl, at rmohl@uab.edu.

NEW IEHS BOARD MEMBERS

In the 2010 elections for the IEHS executive board, three new members were elected: Maddalena Mariati (American University), Anna Pegler-Gordon (Michigan State University), and Raymond Mohl (University of Alabama, Birmingham).
THE IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HISTORY SOCIETY

...was founded in 1965 as the Immigration History Group. It was chartered in 1972 as the Immigration History Society. In 1998 the Society, which had traditionally dealt with ethnicity as well as immigration, changed its name to the Immigration and Ethnic History Society.

The purpose of the Society is to promote the study of the history of immigration to the United States and Canada from all parts of the world, including studies of the background of emigration in the countries of origin; to promote the study of ethnic groups in the United States, including regional groups, native Americans and forced immigrants; to promote understanding of the processes of acculturation and of conflict; to furnish through the Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter information as to research, organizations, meetings and publications in the field of immigrant history; to help organize sessions on immigration and ethnicity at meetings of learned societies; and generally to serve the field of immigration/ethnic history with special reference to professional scholarship.

MEMBERSHIP:

Annual dues: Individual (print or electronic), $45, $55 (Canada & Mexico), $80 (other foreign addresses); Student (print or electronic), $25, $35 (Canada & Mexico), $60 (other foreign addresses); New member (print or electronic), first year $35, $45 (Canada & Mexico), $70 (other foreign addresses). Institutional members (print or electronic), $245, $255 (Canada & Mexico), $280 (other foreign addresses). For print and electronic delivery, add $10 to individual rate, $50 to institutional rate. Electronic subscribers may have access to archives of all issues of the Journal of American Ethnic History for an additional $10 for individual subscribers, $20 for institutional subscribers.

New memberships and membership renewals should be sent to Journals, University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak St., Champaign, IL 61820. They may also be sent via the web-page:

http://www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/iaeh.html

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Inquiries about the Society should be directed to the appropriate officer. Newsletter submissions and questions about editorial matters should be sent to the newsletter editor at the address above. Requests for back issues of the newsletter should be sent to the editor, send $2.00 per copy (by check made out to Villanova University).

Subscriptions to the Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter and the Journal of American Ethnic History are part of membership in the Society. Members' changes of address should be sent to Journals, Univ. of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak St., Champaign IL 61820, or via the web at

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Visit the IEHS web pages at www.iehs.org