

How do you find your ancestors' passenger ship manifest?

Previous research may have provided the name of your ancestor's village in Poland, but most researchers want the ship manifest to verify each person's passage. The easiest way to search for the passage is to put the given and surnames in their proper Polish form. There is an urban legend that names were changed by intolerant Ellis Island officials. Immigrants changed names informally or via probate court for political, economic, and religious reasons. Did the family anglicize their names in the U.S.? Estelle Adamski traveled as Stanisława Adamska, James Voight as Jakub Wojtkowiak, and Joseph Halper arrived as Jossel Dobroniewski from Białystok. Consult The Polish Genealogical Society of America publications *Polish Surnames: Origins and Meanings*, by William F. Hoffman and *First Names of the Polish Commonwealth: Origins & Meanings*, by William F. Hoffman and George W. Helon, for spelling variations.

The books list first and last names in Polish and include variations of the names in German, Hebrew, Latin, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian. The primer on the Polish language makes the researcher aware that the Polish alphabet has 32 letters, 9 vowels, 23 consonants; and that q, v, and x are not normally used. The additional letters with diacriticals (marks on the letters)—*ą, ć, ę, ł, ń, ó, ś, ź, and ż*—can be, and were often, misinterpreted. Unaware, transcribers of the Ellis Island database entered the given name Władysław as Władystaw. The surname Zdziebko is often listed as Fdziebko because the Z was written in the European manner with a short horizontal crossbar added through the middle.

Where can I find passenger list information?

Traditionally, indexes and manifests have been obtained via microfilm from NARA and LDS. But many Web sites are now offering digitized images and indices. If you choose to look at traditional microfilms, I would still recommend use of the internet to confirm which microfilms are available. Joe Beine offers superb links for determining what film number corresponds to the manifest information you are seeking. His introduction states: "*This is a listing of indexes of passenger lists (also called immigration records or ship manifests) for ships that sailed to the United States from 1820 to the 1940's, including microfilm, CD-ROMs, books, and online indexes. Microfilm records listed here are available from the National Archives (NARA) and some of its branches. Most are also available from LDS Family History Centers. Some public libraries (especially genealogy libraries) may also carry passenger lists from the National Archives microfilm, which can be viewed online at Ancestry. If you are only interested in the microfilmed passenger lists for offline research see: National Archives Passenger Lists on*

Some of the key ports and time frames for which passenger lists are available include:

New York (1820-1957)	Baltimore (1820-1952)	Boston (1820-1943)
Philadelphia (1800-1945)	New Orleans (1820-1945)	Galveston (1846-1948)

As mentioned above, Ancestry has all of the U.S. ports indexed in a text database and linked to images of the manifests and ships. Additionally, the Texas Seaport Museum has compiled a computerized listing of immigrants to Galveston, Texas called the *Galveston Immigration Database*. www.galvestonhistory.org/Galveston_Immigration_Database.asp

A useful site to learn the history of immigration is The Ships Lists. This Web site has immigration reports, newspaper records, shipwreck information, ship pictures, ship descriptions, and shipping-line fleet lists. You can view hundreds of passenger lists to Canada, the United States, and Australia. www.theshipslist.com

What are St. Albans Lists?

St. Albans Lists are the collective records of mostly European immigrants who crossed the border, whether by land or sea, from Canada into the United States between 1895 and 1954. (Canadian born immigrants were not recorded on the St. Albans Lists until 1906). A large number of ancestors arrived at Canadian ports including Quebec, Halifax, Saint Johns, and North Sydney. They continued their journey to the U.S. via train or ferry boats, with St. Albans, Vermont being only one of many portals of entry. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) records were originally filed in Montreal's INS office. When the INS moved their offices and records to St. Albans, this particular manifest collection developed its name. Information in this database generally includes: name, age, birth date, birthplace, gender, ethnicity/nationality, last residence, vessel or airline name, and ports of arrival and departure, and arrival date.

What about the Detroit Border Crossings and Passenger Crew Lists?

Ancestry has created an online database of aliens crossing from Canada and entering the United States through the port of Detroit, Michigan from 1905-1957. The information provided will vary over the years simply because of the variety of forms that were utilized to collect the original information.