Beginning Genealogical Research at the National Archives: Civilian Records

Rose Buchanan, Archives Specialist

Updated 2018
What is NARA?

- **NARA** is the nation’s record keeper.

- We *hold, preserve, and make available* the permanently valuable records of the Federal Government.
  - Executive Branch
  - Legislative Branch
  - Judicial Branch & Federal Courts
  - Continental & Confederation Congresses
What We Do Not Have

- Vital statistics (birth, death, marriage, divorce)
- Prepared or published family histories
- Newspapers
- Few colonial (pre-Federal) records
- No single index to all of our holdings!
What We Have

- Census Records 1790-1940
  - Includes Non-Population Census
- Immigration Records
- Naturalization Records
- Passport Applications
Census Records

- 1790-1940
- Every 10 years
- Closed for 72 years after they are taken
- Arrangement:
  - Year
  - State
  - County
- Start with the most recent census and work backwards
Census Records

- 1790-1840
  - Lists the head of the household
  - Gives statistics on the household members
Samuel Yoder

male 10 and under 15: 2
male 15 and under 20: 1
male 30 and under 40: 1

female under 5: 1
female 5 and under 10: 1
female 15 and under 20: 1
female 20 and under 30: 1
1840 Census

Samuel Yoder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 Slaves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 people in household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--- really 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 people work in Agriculture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Census Records

- 1850-1870
  - List all members of the household
  - Does not give relationship to head of household

- 1850 & 1860
  - Separate Free and Slave Schedules
1850 Slave Schedule
Maryland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF SLAVE OWNER</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>VALUE</th>
<th>NOTE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIVE</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>VALUE</th>
<th>NOTE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franklin B. James</td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Obea Belt</td>
<td></td>
<td>186</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Israel B. Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>187</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Archibald B. Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>188</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacob B. Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>189</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George B. Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>190</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel B. Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>191</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>192</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>193</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>194</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>195</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>William Jones</td>
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<td>196</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>197</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebecca Jones</td>
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<td>198</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>199</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Color</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Place of Birth</td>
<td>State of Birth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Taylor Barnes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td></td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>Bondo White</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Maine</td>
<td></td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>Jackson Brown</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Census Records

- **1880-1940**
  - Relationships to the head of household
  - **1900-1940 Citizenship Information**
    - Year of immigration
    - Naturalization status (Naturalized – Na; filed first papers – Pa; Alien – Al)
  - 1920 – year of naturalization
- Arranged by Enumeration Districts
- Soundexing begins
## Andrew Davis
- **Occupation:** ship carpenter
- **Born in MA**
- **Father born MA**
- **Mother born MA**

## Mary
- **Age:** 41
- **Occupation:** teacher

## Lucinda
- **Age:** 55
- **Occupation:** keeps house
William Finn
Served in the 1st Engineers, Co. J
Enlisted June 1862
Discharged Oct. 13, 1868 (served 6 years, 3 months)
### 1940 Census

**Population Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
<th>Exempted from Registration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Supplementary Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

- Page 1 of 1
- Microfilm: D671311850
- Reporting District: 105
- County: St. Clair
- Enumeration District: 106

(Additional details and data entries would be present in the full census schedule.)
1940 Census

- Release date: April 2, 2012
- Digital (no microfilm)

More information:

→ 1950 Census will be released in 2022.
Census Records – Related Records

- Descriptions of Enumeration Districts (EDs)
- Enumeration District Maps
- 1885 Territorial Censuses
- 1935 Puerto Rico Census
Census Records – Availability

- **Microfilm**
  - National Archives Building & Regional Archives
  - FamilySearch Centers [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

- **Online**
  - [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) ($)
  - [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com) (partial) ($)

- **Mail Order:**
  - NATF Form 82 (for specific individual)
  - Fees apply
Immigration Records

- U.S. Customs Service
  - 1820-1890
    - Philadelphia starts in 1800

- Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)
  - 1891–1957
Immigration Records

- **Major Ports**
  - Philadelphia 1800 – 1952
  - New York 1820 – 1957
  - Baltimore 1820 – 1957
  - Boston 1820 – 1943
  - New Orleans 1820 – 1952
  - San Francisco 1882 – 1957

- **Border Crossings**
  - St. Albans 1895 – 1954
  - Mexican ca. 1903 – ca. 1955
Immigration Records – What Can I Find?

All Records

- Name of the Vessel
- Name of the Ship’s Master
- Ports of Arrival and Embarkation
- Date of Departure
- Date of Arrival
Immigration Records – What Can I Find?

Early Records (early to mid 19th century records)

- Name of individual
- Age
- Occupation
- Country of origin
- Destination
Brig *Experiment*, arriving in Philadelphia June 27, 1809

Henry Vogt and his wife and three children
1 trunk and bags of bedding

Partial Cargo List:
- 14 boxes linnen
- One chest glass
- One box sealing wax
Mary Callaghan
- 17 years old
- female
- Irish
- domestic servant
- going to Chicago
- traveled in “female steerage”

Pete and Maria Hausen (or Poulson)
- born at sea August 10, 1886
- Maria died August 17, 1886
- Pete died August 12, 1886
- both died of syncope

_S.S. Nova Scotian_ arriving Baltimore August 1886
Immigration Records – What Can I Find?

Later Records (late 19th century to 20th century records)

- Name of individual
- Names of traveling companions (if any)
- Age and personal description
- Occupation
- Last residence
- Name and address of relatives they are going to join
- Whether they can read or write
- Whether they are a polygamist or an anarchist
- Amount of money they are carrying
Seth Van Slaars

- 21 years old
- male
- married
- U.S. Passport #241469
- address in U.S.: c/o T.C. and Son, New York
S.S. Nieuw Amsterdam arriving New York June 11, 1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line No.</th>
<th>Family Name—Given Name</th>
<th>Age (Years)</th>
<th>Sex (M-F)</th>
<th>U.S. Passport No.</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Number and Description of Pieces of Baggage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ALEXANDER John</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63029</td>
<td>Van Ettenville</td>
<td>5 SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ALEXANDER Augusta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63029</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1 BX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

John Alexander
born Van Ettenville, NY
U.S. passport # 63029
5 SC
1 T

Augusta Alexander
born Germany
U.S. passport # 63029
1 BX
2 PKG
Border Crossings – St. Albans

Percival Burgess
- age 27
- wife Emily, age 27
- son William, age 4
- occupation: bricklayer
- last residence: Sheffield, England
- final destination: Detroit, MI
- paid for passage himself and is carrying $26.00
- has never been in the U.S. before
- not a polygamist or an anarchist

S.S. Canada arriving Montreal June 5, 1909
Border Crossings – Mexican

Daniel Bratton
- Age 24
- Electrician
- Carrying $15.00
- Lived in San Antonio, TX 1914 – 1919
- Returning to U.S. residence
- Final destination: Eagle Pass, TX
- Employed at the state theatre
- Personal Description:
  - 5’ 9”
  - Dark complexion
  - Brown eyes

Eagle Pass, Texas
Immigration Records - Availability

- **Microfilm**
  - National Archives Building & select Regional Archives
  - FamilySearch Centers [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

- **Online**
  - [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (database & digital images) ($)
  - [www.ellisisland.org](http://www.ellisisland.org) (database & digital images)
  - [www.castlegarden.org](http://www.castlegarden.org) (database)

- **Mail Order:**
  - NATF Form 81 (for specific individual)
  - Fees apply
Immigration Records – Related Records

- Naturalization records
- Passport Applications
- Seamen’s Protection Certificates
- Visa Applications, 1914–1940
Naturalization Records

- First naturalization act was passed in 1790
- Occur in Any Court of Record
  - Most Occurred in a County Court

- After 1906
  - Report to INS
  - For more information, see the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services’ Genealogy Program website
    www.uscis.gov/genealogy
2-Step Process

- Declaration of Intention
  - “First Papers”
  - Renounce Former Allegiance
  - Proof of Residence usually 2 years

- Naturalization Petitions
  - Formal Application for U.S. Citizenship
  - Generally filed 3 years after the First Papers
  - Certificate of Citizenship was issued to Alien
Declaration of Intent

Pre-1906

- Name
- Country of Birth or Allegiance
- Date of the Application
- Signature

Post-1906

- Name
- Age
- Occupation
- Personal Description
- Date and Place of Birth
- Citizenship
- Present Address
- Last Foreign Address
- Vessel and Port of Embarkation
- Port and Date of Arrival
- After 1930 – May Include a Photograph of Applicant
### Naturalization Petitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre- September 26, 1906</th>
<th>Post- September 26, 1906</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Sovereign</td>
<td>Personal Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>Date of Emigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Ports of Embarkation and Arrival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and Country of Birth</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port and Date of Arrival</td>
<td>Information about Spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information about Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name Changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exceptions to the Rule

- **Derivative Citizenship**
  - Wives and Minor Children of Naturalized Men
  - Immigrant Wives of U.S. Citizens
    - 1790-1922
  - Children Under Age 21
    - 1790-1940

- **Minor Aliens**
  - If Living in the U.S. for 5 years prior to their 23rd Birthday
    - File Declarations & Petitions together
    - 1824-1906
Exceptions to the Rule

- Veterans
  - 1862 Law
    - Honorably Discharged Army Veterans
    - 1 Year of Residence
    - Not Required to File Declaration of Intent
  - 1894 Law
    - Extended to Honorably Discharged Navy or Marine Corp Veterans
    - Required 5 Years of Service
Location of Records

- County Court Records
  - County Court
  - County or State Archives
  - NARA Regional Facilities
    - If donated

- Federal Court Records
  - NARA Regional Facilities

- Post 1906
  - Select records at NARA Regional Archives
  - U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
MORISON   JOHN C.

U. S. DISTRICT COURT, BROOKLYN, N.Y.

NOV.10-1882  1  —  8/82

CITY OF BROOKLYN

ENGLISH

WILLIAM COOK BROOKLYN

HONORABLE DISCHARGE NAVY UNITED STATES
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
IMMIGRATION SERVICE

CERTIFICATE OF ARRIVAL

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the Immigration records of the Department of Labor show that the alien named below arrived at the port, on the date, and in the manner shown, and was lawfully admitted to the United States of America for permanent residence.

Port of entry: Baltimore, Maryland.
Name: Ellen Bresnan.
Date: September 3, 1879.
Manner of arrival: SS "Nova Scotian" from Liverpool, Eng.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that this certificate of arrival is issued under authority of, and in conformity with, the provisions of the Act of June 29, 1906, as amended, solely for the use of the alien herein named and only for naturalization purposes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this Certificate of Arrival is issued

September 20, 1922.

District Director of Naturalization,
Washington, D. C.

Acting Commissioner

Subscribed and sworn to before me in the office of the Clerk of said Court this 27th day of June, anno Domini 1927

Clerk of the said District Court.
IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF

Ellen Brennan, to be Admitted a Citizen of the United States of America.

AFFIDAVITS OF WITNESSES

Take Kearney, shoemaker, residing at 326 B. 28th St., Baltimore, Maryland.

Mrs. Anna A. Whiting, Housewife, residing at 514 E. 23rd St., Baltimore, Maryland.

each being personally, duly, and respectively sworn, deposes and says that he is a citizen of the United States; that he has personally known and has been acquainted in the United States with Ellen Brennan, the petitioner above mentioned since October 1st, 1924, and that to his personal knowledge the petitioner has resided in the United States continuously preceding the date of filing this petition of which this affidavit is a part, to wit, since the date last mentioned, as of Baltimore City, October 1st, 1924, and that he has personal knowledge that the petitioner is and during all such periods has been a person of good moral character, attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States, and that in his opinion the petitioner is every way qualified to be admitted a citizen of the United States.

[Signature]

[Signature]

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to the Emperor of Germany, the Kaiser of Germany, and the Holy Roman Emperor, and that I am, and from the time hereof am, a subject of the United States of America; that I have never directly or indirectly furnished or given aid or support to any foreign government, a foreign dictator, a foreign potentate, or a foreign state, as such aid or support may be unlawful; and that I shall support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will take upon me the administration of the office of citizen of the United States, in such manner as I am able.

[Signature]

[Signature]

Subscribed and sworn to before me by the above-named petitioner and witnesses in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Baltimore County, this 15th day of October, anno Domini 1929. I hereby certify that the above-named petitioner is a citizen of the United States of America, and that he has taken the above-mentioned oath of allegiance and has been duly sworn and administered to him according to law.

[Signature]

[Signature]
The United States of America

Original
To be given to
the person naturalized

Certificate of
Naturalization

Petition No. 12252

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Age: 46 years, sex: Male, color: White, complexion: Dark, color of eyes: Brown, color of hair: Black, height: 5 feet 7 inches, weight: 138 pounds, visible distinctive marks: Cast in right eye, marital status: Married, former nationality: British.

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereeto is a likeness of me.

Robert Crawford

Sign here

Complete and true signature of holder

United States of America

District of Columbia

It is known that ROBERT CRAWFORD
then residing at 412 E St. S.E., Washington, D.C.,
having petitioned to be admitted a citizen of the United States of America, and at
a term of the
District Court of the United States
for the District of Columbia

held pursuant to law at Washington on October 1, 1940

the court having found that the petitioner intends to reside permanently in the
United States and in all respects complied with the Naturalization Laws of the United
States in such case applicable, and was entitled to be so admitted, the court thereupon
ordered that the petitioner be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this 1st
day of October in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and

Forty

and Sixty-fifth.

Charles E. Stewart

Clerk of the U.S. District Court.

By: Daniel M. Ryan, Asst., Deputy Clerk.

Department of Labor
Passport Records

- 1795 – March 31, 1925
  - physical description of applicant
  - photograph (12/21/1914 and later)
  - date and place of birth of applicant
  - residence of applicant
  - citizenship and/naturalization information
  - immigration information of applicant
  - occupation of applicant
  - purpose & duration of travel as well as destination
  - copies of birth or baptismal records
  - notation of military service
  - names of family members
  - affidavits and/or letters from family members, friends, and/or business associates
New York Oct 16th 1830

My Dear Sir,

to the Collector of this Port I now have a certificate of departure, I have the freedom of troubling you to procure mine from the Secretary of State's Office, for it is the intention of myself & family to visit the continent of Europe during our absence. I should not like to go without them, I have resided in New York about 39 years, than lived a citizen 20 or 35 years. I am 62 years old. I have with me my third daughter, the eldest daughter aged 21, Grace M. aged 19, Charlotte aged 12, all that of our children the youngest who is ten months old. for 12 has still to grow. Excepting this troubling you will believe me your oblige Earnest friend

Jon. Ogden

Washington
Washington, 27th June '61

Sir,

Please lend me a passport for Robert Morris, of Boston, a citizen of the United States.

Faithfully,

[Signature]

The Secretary of the...
Elisabeth Kinsman Ware
passport application #333410
issued 08/17/1923
(M1490, roll 2352)

Storer Preble Ware
passport application #333411
issued 08/17/1923
(M1490, roll 2352)
Passenger Manifest for the S.S. *Bergensfjord*

arrival NYC 10/02/1922 (T715, roll 3191)
Margaret Hauberg’s passport applications
#125002 03/09/1922 (M1490, roll 1849)
#123578 10/01/1919 (M1490, roll 939)
DOCUMENT TRANSFER SHEET.

FOR PASSPORT APPLICATION NO. 360352

DATED Dec. 24, 1923

SEE

130 Bohmer, Grace E.

DATE OF TRANSFER May 17, 1926

Grace E. Bohmer
application #360352
issued 12/24/1923
(M1490, roll 2406)
Photographs

Chancy Frees
Passport Applications - Availability

- Microfilm
  - National Archives Building & select Regional Archives
  - FamilySearch Centers [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

- Online
  - [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (1795-1925) ($)
  - [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com) (1795-1905) ($)

- Mail Order:
  - Email: inquire@nara.gov
  - Fees apply