

Genealogy Workshop at KI Synagogue

Tips for Beginning Researchers May 02, 2022

By Donald Wittenberg

A. Where Do I Start?

1. Identify What You Know About Your Family
2. Decide What You Want To Learn About Your Family
3. Select Records To Search
4. Obtain and Search the Record
5. Use the Information

B. Beginning information about Your Family

1. Oldest Living Members – Contact them NOW!
2. Cemeteries – Visit your ancestors
3. Family Documents – Passports, Birth Certificates, School Records
4. Family Stories
5. Family heirlooms
6. Family Pedigree Chart
7. Old family photographs (front and back)

C. Beginning Steps

1. Mental Decision Time – Decide that you can succeed!
2. Record every factual detail – write and/or tape record. Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Source of Information?
3. Organize information into family groups. Decide on how you will keep your information.

D. Sources of Records or Information

1. Existing Family Histories – From relatives, published
2. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Family History Center.
Philadelphia - 2072 Red Lion Road, 215-673-2770. Doylestown – 1255 Ferry Road
[\(215\) 345-4430](tel:2153454430)

Morrisville – 1204 Pine Grove Road, 215-295-3317
Valley Forge (Broomall) – 721 Paxon Hollow Road, 610-356-3400
Know the Country, County and Town you are looking for!!!
CALL FIRST Before you go there!

3. National Archives * May be closed due to Covid 19 – CALL First
<https://www.archives.gov/philadelphia>
14700 Townsend Road,
Philadelphia, PA 19154-1096
Phone: 215-305-2044
Fax: 215-305-2052
Email: philadelphia.archives@nara.gov
4. Holocaust Sources –
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum - <https://www.ushmm.org>
Yad Vashem - <https://www.yadvashem.org>
Yizkor Books, Websites, Yad Vashem
5. Family Bibles

6. Internet Sources

- a. Jewish Genealogy Sites – jewishgen.org/
- b. Ellis Island Records – www.ellisland.org/
(Including Ship Manifests and Photos of Ships)
- c. Social Security Death Index (SSDI)
- d. Cemeteries
- e. www.RootsWeb.com
- f. www.Ancestry.com

7. Pennsylvania Historical Society

8. Philadelphia City Archives – Birth/Death/Marriage Records, City Directories

9. State Vital Statistics

10. Cemeteries

- a. Photograph Tombstones
- b. Contact Cemetery Offices – Nearest relative contacts

11. Obituaries in newspapers

12. Family letters

13. National Geographic Society “Genographic Project”

14. Telephone Directories

15. Military Records

16. Census Records

17. Other Jewish Sources: Synagogues, HIAS, Balch Institute, YIVO

E. How To Use the Information

1. Is the information complete? How can it be fleshed out? Stories about relatives? Favorite recipes? How and where did they die? Where buried? Any conflicting information?
2. Share discoveries with family members. It may jar additional memories!

F. Cautions

Family “Legends”, Invitations for Family Research to Be Done by others, Throwing away “things”

G. A Bissel of Helpful Resources

1. From Generation to Generation “How to Trace Your Jewish and Family History” by Arthur Kurzweil (In hard and paperback), Harper Perennial, A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, Revised 1994
2. Finding Our Fathers “A Guidebook To Jewish Genealogy” by Dan Rottenberg (In hard and paperback), Random House, 1977
3. The Encyclopedia of Jewish Genealogy, Vol. I (Sources in the United States and Canada), edited by Arthur Kurzweil and Miriam Weiner, Jacob Aronson Inc., Northvale, New Jersey, 1991
4. Jewish Roots In Ukraine and Moldova, Pages from the Past Archival Inventories, by Miriam Weiner, Published in Cooperation with the Ukrainian State Archives and Moldovan National Archives, YIVO Institute of Jewish Research, NYC, 1999
5. A Dictionary of Jewish Names and their History, by Benzion C. Kaganoff, Schocken Books, NY, 1977 (Paperback)

6. AVOTAYNU, The International Review of Jewish Genealogy, by subscription, 155 N. Washington Avenue, Bergenfield, NJ 07621-1742 (201)-387-7200, Gary Mokotoff, Publisher, \$35/one year
7. Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia, - <https://jgsgp.org>
Felicia Mode Alexander, President,

Genealogy Web Sites

Ancestry.com – Very good census, BDM, military records

Familysearch.org – From Church of Later Day Saints (Mormons)

Findmypast.com – Best for English or Irish ancestry

Genealogybank.com – Search 13,000 newspapers

Geni.com – Global database (connects with Myheritage)

Site related to...

Myheritage.com – Best for global database & family matching

Yadvashem.org. – Most comprehensive Holocaust records

Some of these sites are free for a period of time. Others have monthly and yearly charges.

"Just the fact Ma'am. Just the facts."

-Sergeant Joe Friday

Who? What? Why When? Where? How?

This only answers the skeleton questions

Filling in the Skeleton

How did your parents meet?

Who introduced them?

What is the story behind them meeting?

Were they related to each other?

What heirlooms do we have?

What medical conditions did they suffer from?

What did _____ die from?

What family stories exist?

How did they get here?

Why did they leave?

What color hair, eyes did they have?

How tall were they?

Did they have any hobbies?

What were their interests?

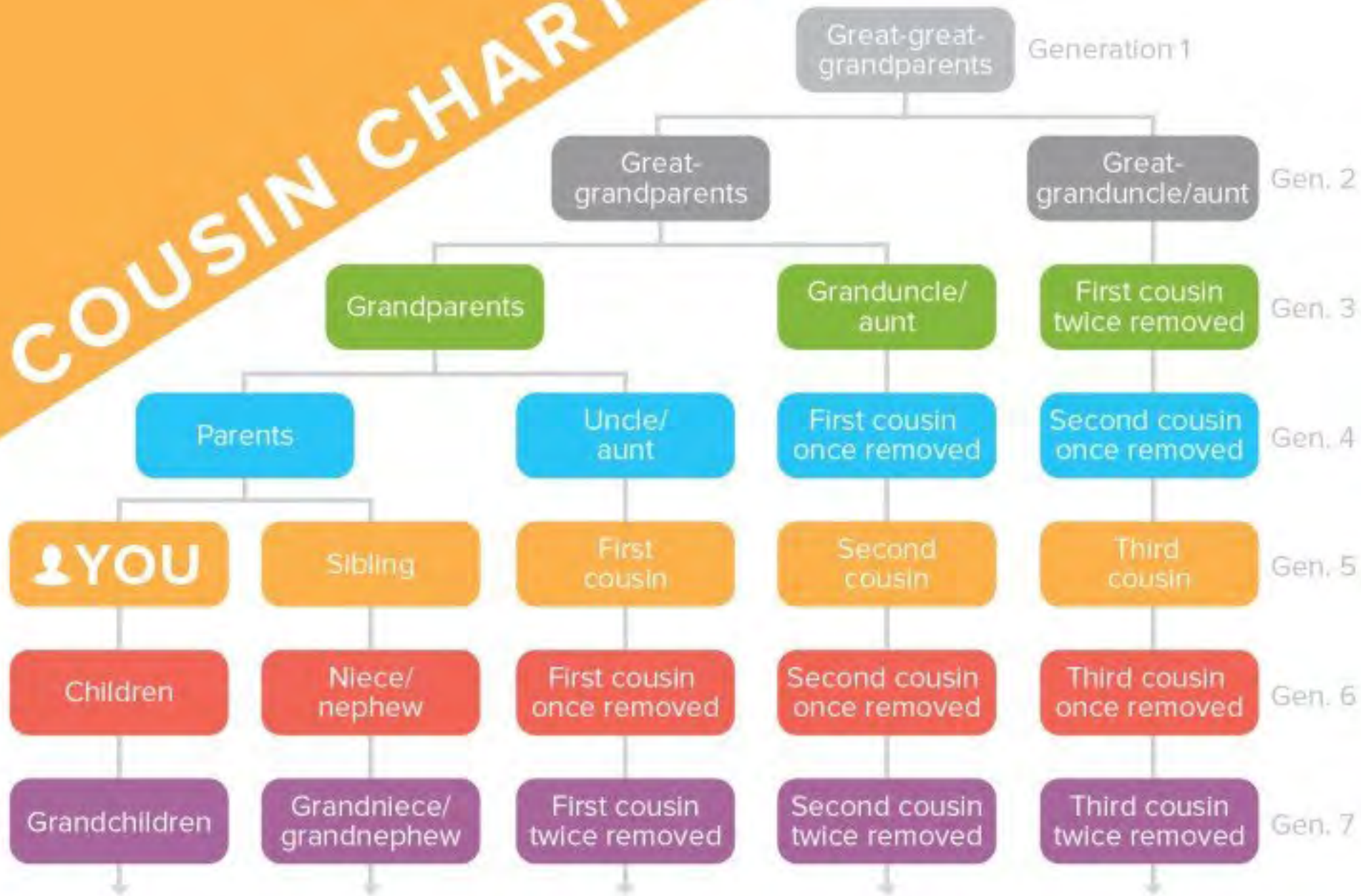
What special family traditions did they have?

What special meals did _____ prepare?

Genealogy Research in 5 Easy Steps

1. Here and Now
 - a. Organize Information
 - b. Interview Family members
 - c. Locate family photos, letters, documents
 - d. Visit cemeteries
2. Locate local vital records
 - a. City and State vital records
 - b. Jewish Archives (Local and elsewhere)
3. Other Sources
 - a. National Archives
 - b. Mormons (Church of Later Day Saints)
 - c. Ellis Island
 - d. Ancestry.com
 - * Many data-bases
 - e. Jewish Genealogical Society
 - f. Holocaust Records

COUSIN CHART



1

name:
born:
place:
married:
death:
place:

spouse:

2

name:
born:
place:
married:
death:
place:

3

name:
born:
place:
married:
death:
place:

4

name:
born:
place:
married:
death:
place:

5

name:
born:
place:
married:
death:
place:

6

name:
born:
place:
married:
death:
place:

7

name:
born:
place:
married:
death:
place:

8

name:
born:
married:
death:

9

name:
born:
married:
death:

10

name:
born:
married:
death:

11

name:
born:
married:
death:

12

name:
born:
married:
death:

13

name:
born:
married:
death:

14

name:
born:
married:
death:

15

name:
born:
married:
death:

16. name:
born:

death:

17. name:
born:

death:

18. name:
born:

death:

19. name:
born:

death:

20. name:
born:

death:

21. name:
born:

death:

22. name:
born:

death:

23. name:
born:

death:

24. name:
born:

death:

25. name:
born:

death:

26. name:
born:

death:

27. name:
born:

death:

28. name:
born:

death:

29. name:
born:

death:

30. name:
born:

death:

31. name:
born:

death:

Family Group Sheet		Husband's Full Name							
		Date of:	Day	Month	Year	Town	County	State or Country	Additional Info.
Information Obtained From:		Birth:							
		Marriage:							
		Death:							
		Burial:							
		Places of Residence:							
		Occupation:			Religion:		Military Record:		
		Other wives:							
		His father:			His mother:				
		Wife's Full Maiden Name							
		Date of:	Day	Month	Year	Town	County	State or Country	Additional Info.
		Birth:							
		Marriage:							
Compiler:		Death:							
		Burial:							
Address:		Places of Residence:							
City:		Occupation, if other than Housewife:					Religion:		
State:		Other husbands:							
Date:		Her father:			Her mother:				
Sex:	Children's Full Names:	Date of:	Day	Month	Year	Town	County	State or Country	Additional Info.
1.	Full Name of Spouse:	Birth:							
		Marriage:							
		Death:							
		Burial:							
2.	Full Name of Spouse:	Birth:							
		Marriage:							
		Death:							
		Burial:							
3.	Full Name of Spouse:	Birth:							
		Marriage:							
		Death:							
		Burial:							
4.	Full Name of Spouse:	Birth:							
		Marriage:							
		Death:							
		Burial:							
5.	Full Name of Spouse:	Birth:							
		Marriage:							
		Death:							
		Burial:							
6.	Full Name of Spouse:	Birth:							
		Marriage:							
		Death:							
		Burial:							
7.	Full Name of Spouse:	Birth:							
		Marriage:							
		Death:							
		Burial:							
8.	Full Name of Spouse:	Birth:							
		Marriage:							
		Death:							
		Burial:							



- **Myth #1: Most Ashkenazic family surnames can be traced to BEFORE the 18th century**
-
- **Myth #2: Spelling of surnames is important**
- **Myth #3: We have the same last name, so we are probably related**
- **Myth #4: Our family surname changed at Ellis Island**
- **Myth #5: All of the vital and other family records were destroyed in the Holocaust**
- **Myth #6: Our ancestral town no longer exists**
- **Myth #7: People knew their birthdates**
- **Myth #8: Family Stories (“bubbe meises”) are absolutely true**
-
- **Myth #9: DNA Analysis is THE way to find out who is in your family**
- **Myth #10: The United States Census provides the Truth about your American family**

Sources and Types of Genealogical Information

Websites

ancestry.com
facebook.co
familysearch.org
Family Tree DNA
geni.com
jewishgen.org
myheritage.com

Vital Records (Birth, Marriage, Death)

- Church of Later Day Saints
- City, State Governments

Census Records –US and/or Foreign

Government Agencies – Freedom of Information Act

City Directories

Telephone Books

Jewish Sources

- Synagogue Records
- Published Genealogies
- Mohel Books
- Ketubot
- Rabbinic: Dynasties; Descent; Sources; Texts
- Subscription Lists
- Yizkor Books
- Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS)
- Jewish Cemeteries

National Archives – 14700 Townsend Rd., Phila. PA 19154. 215-305-2044

- Passenger Arrivals
- Census 1790-1930
- Military Records
- Burial of Soldiers
- Land Records
- Veteran Benefits
- Pension Records
- Passport Applications

Adoption Records - Adoptees' Liberty Movement Association (ALMA)

Canadian Records

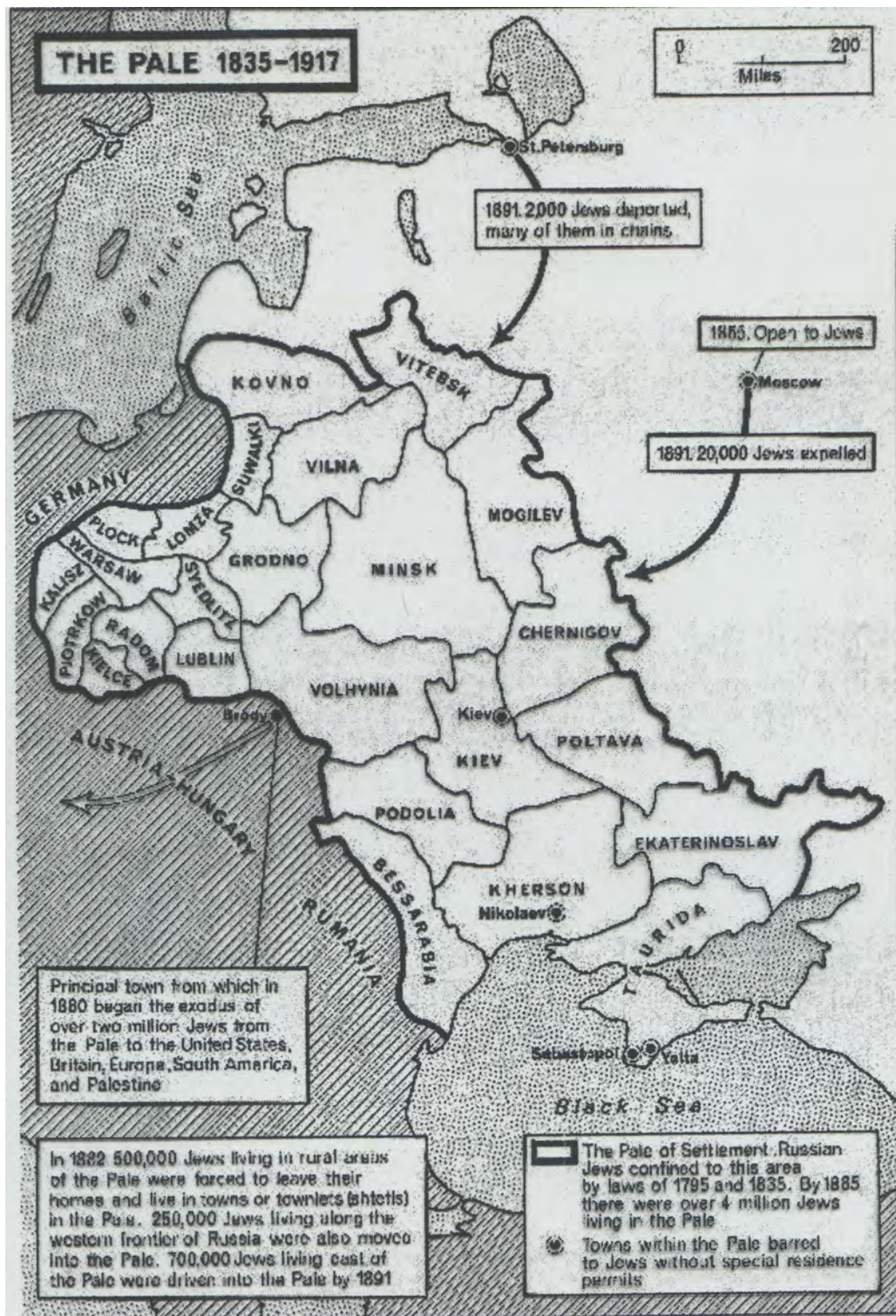
Libraries and Archives

- American Jewish Archives
- American Jewish Historical Society
- Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People
- Jewish Genealogical Societies
- YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
- LDS Family History Library – 2072 Red Lion Rd. Phila. PA 215-969-0559
- Leo Baeck Institute

Obituaries

New York Times – Microfilm at NE Regional Library

Wills



Microfilm Roll Numbers for USA Passenger Arrival Records

Many with NARA and FHL Catalog Numbers

Where to Find LDS Family History Library (FHL) and National Archives (NARA) Microfilm Roll Numbers for USA Passenger Arrival Records...

All links are to pages on this website except where noted -- external links will open in a new window

New York Passenger Lists

- [New York Passenger Lists 1820-1897](#)
- [New York Passenger Lists 1897-1942](#) at the Jewishgen.org website
- [New York Passenger Lists 1897-1957](#) at the National Archives website

New York Passenger Lists - Indexes

- [New York Passenger Lists Index 1820-1846](#)
- [New York Passenger Lists Index 1897-1902](#)
- [New York Passenger Lists Index 1902-1943](#)
 - [How to Read the New York Passenger Lists Index \(Soundex\) Cards After 1910](#)
- [New York Passenger Lists Index 1944-1948](#)

Other Major Ports

- [Baltimore Passenger Lists 1820-1891](#)
- [Baltimore Passenger Lists 1891-1948](#) (1921-1948 NARA only)
- [Boston Passenger Lists 1820-1943](#)
- [Philadelphia Passenger Lists 1800-1882](#)
- [Philadelphia Passenger Lists 1883-1945](#) (1921-1945 NARA only)

- [New Orleans Passenger Lists 1820-1902](#)
- [New Orleans Passenger Lists 1903-1945](#) (Spring 1921-1945 NARA only)
- [Galveston, Texas Passenger Lists 1846-1948](#) (with gaps)

Smaller Ports...

- [Charleston, South Carolina Passenger Lists and Index 1820-1828](#)
- [New Bedford, Massachusetts Passenger Lists 1902-1942](#) (and index 1902-1954)
- [Portland, Maine Passenger Lists 1893-1943](#) (and index 1893-1954)
- [San Francisco, California Passenger Lists 1893-1957](#)
- [San Francisco, California Index 1893-1953](#) (microfilm index goes to 1934; online index to 1953)
- [Seattle, Washington Passenger Lists 1890-1957](#) (1921-1957 NARA only)
- [Miscellaneous Atlantic, Gulf Coast and Great Lakes Ports on Microfilm 1820-1873](#) (with links to indexes, online and off)
- [Index for Ports in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina 1890-1924](#)
 - [Savannah, Georgia Passenger Lists 1906-1945](#)

[U.S. Ports of Arrival and their Available Immigration Records](#) [at the Genesearch website] includes many smaller ports not listed here