

## SEARCHING FOR THE ANCESTOR'S MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON, NATURALIZATION FILE

Do you have an immigrant ancestor who lived in Multnomah County? Do you think he may have been naturalized in this county?

Naturalizations are some of the most-difficult records for a genealogist to locate. This is due to the cumbersome, disjointed processes that have prevailed. Prior to 1906, naturalization could take place in any court of record – at the city, county, state, or federal level. The various steps of the process might well have transpired in various courts across several states.

For the researcher who suspects their ancestor was naturalized in Multnomah County, Oregon, the process is complicated by the fact that naturalizations were granted by county courts and by federal courts – both located in Portland.

The first step is to determine if the ancestor really was naturalized. Get copies of the 1900, 1910, and 1920 censuses. These will tell you the answer.

Year	Brief Summary of the Naturalization Laws
1790	First United States Naturalization act enacted. Free white males over 21 years could apply for citizenship before any court of record after two years residence in the United States and one year in any state. No declaration of intention required. Naturalization could take place in any court of record.
1795	Three-year residence requirement for declaration of intent. Residency requirement for final papers increased to five years with one year in the state. Wives and children automatically became citizens (called derivative citizenship). Single women over 21 years could apply for citizenship.
1802	Citizenship bestowed upon widows and children of alien who had declared intent but died prior to final papers.
1862	Military veterans became citizens after honorable discharge.
1906	Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization formed. Aliens required to register upon entry. Residence: two years to declare intent, five years for final papers. Wives and minor children became citizens when father/husband was naturalized (derivative citizenship).
1922	Women aged 21 years could become citizens. Wives no longer became citizens upon husband's naturalization. Residency requirement for declaration of intent waived.

## **ONLINE**

**Ancestry.com.** Ancestry.com has several record collections that include Oregon naturalization records

“Selected U.S. Naturalization Records – Original Documents, 1790-1974” this collection includes Federal District and Circuit Court records.

“U.S. Naturalization Records Indexes, 1794-1995” This collection includes Federal District and Circuit Court indexes.

**Oregon State Archives.** The Oregon State Archives includes some naturalization indexes in its “Historical Records Index.” Multnomah County is not included in this collection.

## **NATURALIZATION AFTER SEPTEMBER 1906**

If your ancestor’s census information indicates he (or she) was naturalized after September 1906, and if you didn’t find the naturalization record online, the best thing is to contact the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). They have an index to naturalizations after September 1906, and they have the records. There is a cost, but the value of the record is enormous.

The USCIS website is at <http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>. You request an index search (\$20.00). The index search includes all of the naturalization files, visa files, and Alien Registration forms.

After the index search is completed, USCIS will provide you with the file numbers. For \$35.00, you will receive a copy of the naturalization files.

## **NATURALIZATION FILES IN FEDERAL LAND FILES**

Did your immigrant ancestor receive Federal land? If so, he or she was a citizen. Under the Homestead Act of 1862 and the Donation Land Act of 1850, applicants had to be citizens to receive Federal Land. A copy of the naturalization papers is included in their Land Case File. The Forum has the microfilmed set of Donation Land Claim case files, but the files do not include the naturalization files.

Search Land Patents at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) website, online at: <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov>. If you do not have Internet access, check the *Index to Oregon Donation Land Claims*, a book published by the Forum. Also, look at the BLM Tract Books, on microfiche, in the cabinets outside of the microfilm room in the Forum Library.

If you find that your ancestor had a Homestead or Donation Land Claim, fill out NATF Form 84, “National Archives Order for Copies of Land Entry Files.” The website for the form is <http://www.archives.gov/contact/inquire-form.html>.

## **DID YOUR ANCESTOR VOTE IN MULTNOMAH COUNTY?**

If your ancestor voted in Multnomah County, you will probably find their registration card on the *Foreign Registration Cards Prior to Sept. 1967*. A set of the 29 rolls is in the Forum microfilm cabinets.

The cards include the date and name of the court where the naturalization took place.

## **MULTNOMAH COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

If you have not found your ancestor's naturalization, and you are positive the naturalization took place in Multnomah County, here is the next step.

Contact the Multnomah County Circuit Court File room at the Multnomah County Courthouse, 1021 SW Fourth Ave., Portland, OR 97204. The court staff will check the Multnomah County Naturalization Indexes. Or, go to the Circuit Court File Room at the courthouse.

From the Oregon State Archive's "Oregon Historical County Records Guide", this is what Multnomah County has in the way of naturalization records. The inventory was made in October 2012 and is online at Oregon State Archive's website,

<http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/records/local/county/multnomah/inv/index.html> .

### Multnomah County Courthouse, Circuit Court File Room, Room 131:

Circuit Court Citizenship Journal, vol. 160-161, 1903-1905 (2 volumes); vol. 167-168, 1905-1906 (2 volumes)

Hearing of Petitions for Naturalizations Docket, 1908-1912 (1 volume)

Index to Citizen [title varies], 1854-1906 (2 volumes)

Index to Citizenship Journal, 1854-1906 (1 volume)

Index to Declaration of Intention, vol. 1, 1852-1912 (1 volume)

[Journal County Court Law-includes some citizenship and insanity cases], vol. 1-8, 1859-1934 (4 reels of microfilm)

Naturalization Index, 1906-1920 (1 reel of microfilm)

Naturalization Index, 1906-1920 (1 volume)

Petition and Record [with index], vol. 1-22, 1906-1920 (22 volumes)

Record of Declarations of Intention [title varies-with index], vol. 3-29, 1888-1920 (44 volumes)

### Multnomah Building, Multnomah County Recording Office Public Research Room, Suite 125:

Miscellaneous Books [includes some Certificates of Citizenship], vol. 3-87, 1887-1929 (12 reels of microfilm); vol. 1-40, 1929-ca.1940 (10 reels of microfilm)

### Towne Storage Building, Multnomah County Circuit Court Records Area:

Certificates of Naturalization, 1907-1921 (77 volumes)

Citizenship Records [Record of Citizenship], 1923-1929 (.40 cu.ft.)