

# Alien Files Boot Camp

Alec Ferretti: [AncestorArchivist@gmail.com](mailto:AncestorArchivist@gmail.com)

Alien Files (A-Files) were created to streamline record-keeping within the INS. Since 1 April 1944, an individual A-File would hold all of the records related to the immigration and naturalization status of an alien with an active case. Prior to this point, it could have been that there were several files (perhaps in several places and accessed via several different indexes) all related to the same individual – a visa file, an AR-2, and a C-File, for instance. The INS began issuing non-citizens an A-number under the Alien Registration Program in 1940. These A-numbers would be the basis to create these individual A-Files.

An A-File should have been opened or consolidated for:

- All immigrants who arrived after 1 April 1944
- Immigrants who naturalized on/after 1 April 1956 (this is when the C-File series closed)
- Reopened cases of immigrants in-country registered under the Alien Registration Act
- Immigration and/or law enforcement matters
- Included in this category would be when an immigrant had their naturalization cancelled or revoked, or a citizen expatriated himself
- Included in this category would be when an immigrant applied for a Certificate of Derivative Citizenship after 31 March 1956 to prove their derivative citizenship status (but they may have been a citizen for decades at that point)

A-Files were (and still are) for \*active\* immigrant cases. Prior to 1 April 1956, completed naturalizations would be filed as a C-File. As such, an immigrant who had an A-File opened, say, in 1947, but then naturalized in 1953, would likely exclusively have a C-File, not an A-File. However, there are some cases, especially for individuals who naturalized between 1944 and 1950, where a C-File was created, but a non-consolidated A-File also remains.

## What may be in an A-File?

- Vital Records from home country or the US
- Visa File
- Police Reports
- Naturalization Petition
- Naturalization Certificate
- Enemy Alien Registration
- AR-2
- Tax Returns
- Photos
- Correspondence written by the immigrant

- Correspondence from employers
- Financial Information
- Arrest Records
- Deportation Records
- Military Records
- Audio Recordings
- Anything!!

## Where do I find an A-number?

- The same places you find an A-number for an AR-2!
- Bottom of naturalization index card or Petition for Naturalization (after 1941/1942)
- Original alien registration receipt card
- Ancestor's other personal effects
- USCIS Index Search
- Tip: Just because an immigrant has an A-number doesn't mean they have an A-File

## Examples of A-File Contents

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

TO BE FORWARDED TO  
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

**COPIES OF THIS CARD**

No. 9767045

Petition No. **774642** **• DUPLICATE •** Alien Registration No. **13 232 075**

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Date of birth **JANUARY 25, 1934** sex **MALE**  
 complexion **MEDIUM** color of eyes **HAZEL** color of hair **BROWN** height **5 feet 7 inches**  
 weight **165 pounds** visible distinctive marks **NONE**  
 Marital status **MARRIED** Country of former nationality **MALTA**

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

1 *Korner* *Ruggi*  
 (Complete and true signature of holder)

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**  
**EASTERN DIST. OF NEW YORK** s: **DISTRICT** Court of  
**THE UNITED STATES**  
**BROOKLYN**

Held pursuant to law at **NOVEMBER 26, 1974** the Court, having found that

**ROMEO MIZZI**  
 149-83 HUXLEY STREET, ROSEDALE, NEW YORK

is desirous to reside permanently in the United States (when so required by the  
 Naturalization Laws of the United States), had in all other respects complied with  
 the applicable provisions of such naturalization laws, and was entitled to be  
 admitted to citizenship, thereupon ordered that such person be and s/he was  
 admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this **26th**  
 day of **NOVEMBER** in the year of our Lord, nineteen hundred, and  
**SEVENTY FOUR**

**LEWIS ORGEL**  
 Clerk of the **U. S. DISTRICT** Court.  
 By *Elizabeth C. Fazzio* Deputy Clerk.

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

IT IS PUNISHABLE BY U. S. LAW TO COPY,  
PRINT OR PHOTOGRAPH THIS CERTIFICATE.

Seal

Korner Ruggi

Form AIO-10-01  
 Alien Registration Receipt No. 3259353  
 Indicate if registered  
 by Consular Officer No  
 or as Alien Seaman No

Best Copy Available  
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
 APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF IDENTIFICATION  
 (Aliens of Enemy Nationalities)

I hereby apply for a Certificate of Identification and make the following statements and answers under oath or affirmation:

1. Name Antonino Lo Presti  
 (Last Name) (First Name) (Middle Name) (Last Name)

2. Registered Name Antonino Lopresti  
 (Last Name) (First Name) (Middle Name) (Last Name)

3. (a) Present residence 229 East 122 St  
New York NY 100  
 (City) (State) (Zip Code)

(b) I receive my mail at Same  
 (City) (State) (Zip Code)

(c) All other residences since January 1, 1941:  
Same

4. Employment since January 1, 1941:  
 Name of Firm Retired Address  Approximate Dates  Employed as

5. (a) Date of birth Jan 26 1865 (b) Citizen or subject of Italy  
 (Month) (Day) (Year) (Country)

6. Relatives (see Instructions) living in the United States:

Name	Relationship	Address
Maria Rosa Lo Presti	Wife	429 E 122 St NYC
Samuel de Presti	Son	429 E 122 St NYC
Rosalia Maria	Daughter	429 E 122 St NYC
Isabella Maria	Daughter	429 E 122 St NYC
Anthony de Presti	Son	429 E 122 St NYC
Joseph de Presti	Son	429 E 122 St NYC
Benjamin de Presti	Son	429 E 122 St NYC
Benjamin de Presti	Daughter	429 E 122 St NYC

7. Do you have any children serving in the armed forces of the United States? No If yes, give names and branches of service

8. (a) Relatives (see Instructions) living outside the United States:  
 (b) Relatives (see Instructions) serving in armed forces of a foreign country:  
 Name None Relationship

APPLICANT: Antonino Lopresti  
 TYPE OR PRINT ALL INFORMATION IN BLOCK  
 LAST NAME LOPRESTI FIRST NAME ANTONINO MIDDLE NAME ALEXANDER  
 ADDRESS OF PERSON IDENTIFIED 429 E 122 St NYC  
 ADDRESS OF APPLICANT 429 E 122 St NYC  
 CITY NEW YORK STATE NY ZIP 100  
 DATE OF BIRTH 1-26-1865 SEX M RACE W RELIGION C  
 SOCIAL SECURITY NO. 091-34-5586  
 APPLICATION FOR AMERICAN Citizenship

10. Have you ever been naturalized, partly or wholly, in any country other than the United States? No  
 If yes, state whether partly or wholly, also when and where and in what country

11. Have you ever taken an oath of allegiance to any country, state or nation other than the United States? No  
 If yes, state when and where and to what country

12. Have you read or had read to you a summary of the provisions of Presidential Proclamations and Regulations concerning the conduct of aliens of enemy nationalities? No  
 Have you complied? No Have you been granted any exemption? No

13. Were you registered for Selective Service? No If yes, state where and local draft board order number

14. Name the clubs, organizations, and societies of which you have been a member or with which you have been affiliated at any time during the past 5 years:  
Society Montemonte New York

15. Additional information (see Instructions):  
none

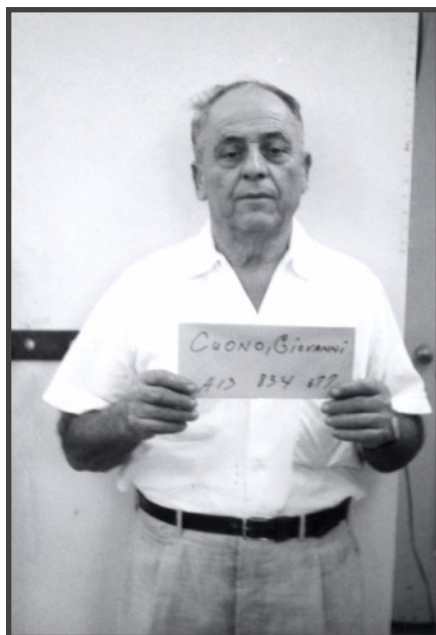
I solemnly swear (or affirm) that all the above statements and answers have been read by or to me and are true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Subscribed and sworn to (or affirmed) before me at the place and on the date here designated by the official post-office stamp at the right.

Signature of Applicant: Antonino Lopresti  
 Signature of Official: Mildred Buford

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICANT  
 (To be filled in by Identification Official)  
 Height 5 feet 3 inches. Weight 155  
 Eyes blue Hair grey Complexion dark  
 Distinctive marks none

One copy of this Application sent to Alien Registration Division.  
 Duplicate sent to Federal Bureau of Investigation office at



Best Copy Available

9. (a) Have you, since August 27, 1940, applied for or received first citizenship papers, or petitioned for naturalization in the United States? No If yes, state which, and place and date

(b) Have you ever been refused or denied naturalization? No If yes, explain fully

10. Have you ever been naturalized, partly or wholly, in any country other than the United States? No  
 If yes, state whether partly or wholly, also when and where and in what country

11. Have you ever taken an oath of allegiance to any country, state or nation other than the United States? No  
 If yes, state when and where and to what country

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DESCRIPTION OF APPLICANT  
 (To be filled in by Identification Official)  
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 Eyes blue Hair grey Complexion dark  
 Distinctive marks none

One copy of this Application sent to Alien Registration Division.  
 Duplicate sent to Federal Bureau of Investigation office at

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**  
**IMMIGRANT VISA AND ALIEN REGISTRATION**

Petition # VP3-68165  
approved on Dec. 15th -1954

PORT OF NEW YORK 3  
I certify that the immigrant named herein arrived in the United States at this port on the JAN. 26 1955 (Day, month, year) 1/2 "CRISTOFORO COLOMBO,"  
and was inspected by me and admitted (admitted) (detained for further inquiry by special inquiry officer)  
under Section 1-2 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.  
(Immigration officer)  
[Signature]  
ACTION OF SPECIAL INQUIRY OFFICER  
The immigrant named herein was (admitted) (excluded) (and no appeal taken) (and appeal taken)  
under Section \_\_\_\_\_ of the Immigration and Nationality Act.  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Special Inquiry officer)  
ACTION ON APPEAL  
Admitted \_\_\_\_\_ Excluded \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Service No. 6202  
Termin. Fo. 7  
Fee P. 20.00  
Local 12.500  
Photo of applicant must be pasted and impressed with size or the consular seal not possess the former.  
  
STATISTICS  
U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

**COPIA DEL FOGLIO MATRICOLARE**

di SARNELLI Carmine di Antonio  
e di Martignetti Maria, di religione Cattolica nato  
il 30 gennaio 1922 a Fratoia Serra provincia di Avellino  
iscritto nel comune di Fratoia Serra provincia di Avellino

Contrassegni personali, cognizioni speciali, matrimoni e vedovanze

Statura m. 1, 57. Torace m. 0, 83. Qualità fisica in genere	Colore <u>ROSSO</u> Bocca <u>GIUSTA</u> Dentatura <u>BONA</u> Segni particolari	Professione o mestiere <u>Maieutismo</u> Grado d'istruzione e titolo di studio <u>52 elementare</u>
Capelli <u>cast.</u> forata <u>liscia</u>	Altezza dell'avanzamento mulo asperso	Cognizioni altre professionali
Viso <u>LINEARE</u> - Tuo Kg. <u>GROSSO</u>	Altezza dell'avanzamento mulo asperso	
Mento <u>tondo</u>	Altezza dell'avanzamento mulo asperso	
Occhi <u>cast.</u>	Altezza dell'avanzamento mulo asperso	
Sopraciglia <u>alta</u>	Altezza dell'avanzamento mulo asperso	
Prote <u>alta</u>	Altezza dell'avanzamento mulo asperso	

Ampliato da \_\_\_\_\_ e \_\_\_\_\_ (2) con autorizzazione del  
Comandante \_\_\_\_\_  
Ritorno vedova di \_\_\_\_\_

ARRUOLAMENTO, SERVIZI, PROMOZIONI ED ALTRE VARIAZIONI MATRICOLARI	DATA
SOLDATO di leva cl.1922, Distretto Militare di Avellino e lasciato in congedo illimitato provvisorio	3 febr. 41
CHIAMATO alle armi e giunto	1 febr. 42
TALE nel 7° Rgt. Artigl. di S. Ippolito	2 febr. 42
TALE predestinato per il 7° Rgt. Artigl. di S. Ippolito	2 febr. 42
TALE imbarcato a Civitavecchia	2 maggio 42
SBARCATO a Cagliari	3 maggio 42

(1) Corpo e Ministero. — (2) Per coloro che contrassero matrimonio prima di giungere alle armi cancellare la parola che seguono e sostituire: prima di giungere alle armi.

SALTA - TOP ENROLLMENT OFFICE  
470 copie 500.000 - 10-5-55

ARRUOLAMENTO, SERVIZI, PROMOZIONI ED ALTRE VARIAZIONI MATRICOLARI

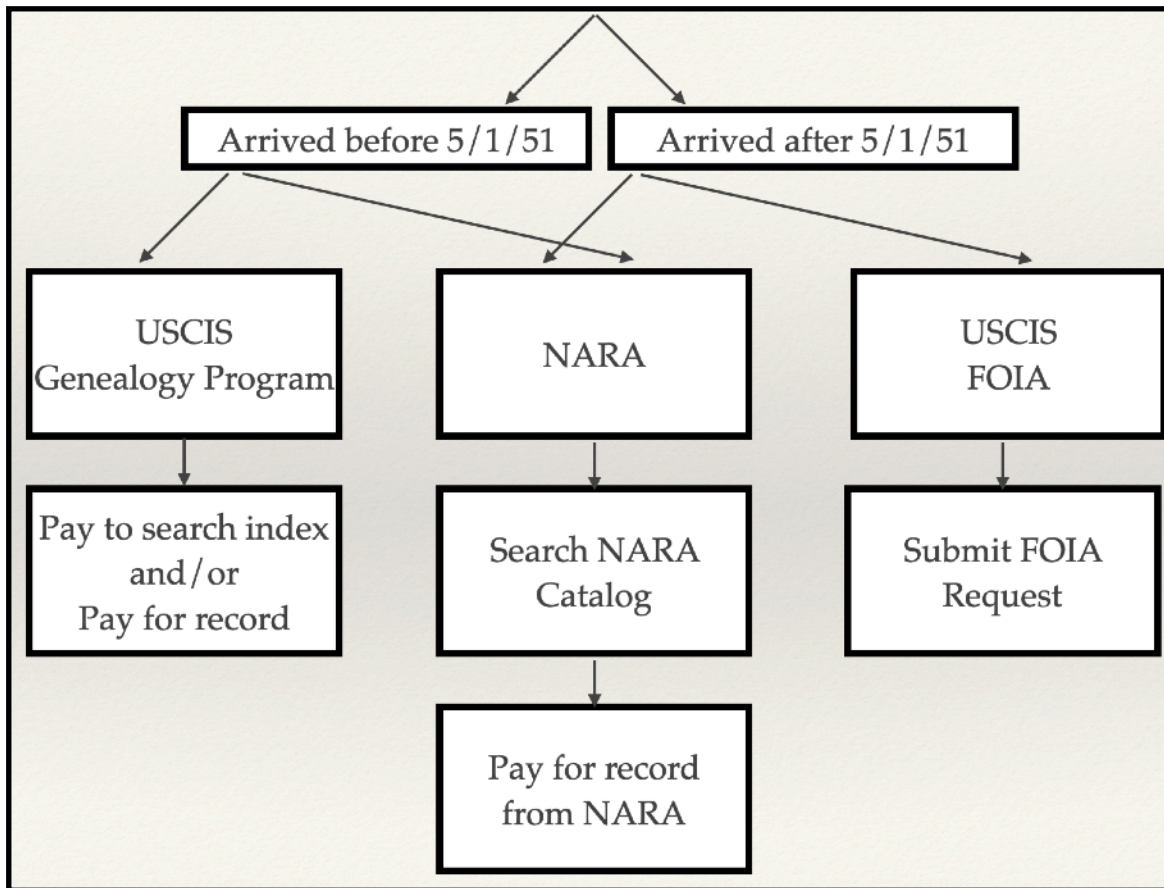
TALE nel 7° Rgt. Artiglieria  
Versazioni non accertate (circ. 40039 del 4-8-45).

TALE trasferito al 412° Rgt. Lav. Pionieri in P.M. 186  
ALLONTANATOSI arbitrariamente dal suddetto reparto  
DENUNZIATO alla Procura Militare della Campania dal  
mando 412° Rgt. Lav. Pionieri in P.M. 186 con foglio n. 2178/51  
in data 13/9/1944 per essere incorso il 16/8/1944 nei  
reati di diserzione ed alienazione di effetti militari  
COLLOCATO in congedo illimitato  
CON SENTENZA del Tribunale Militare Terr. di Napoli in  
data 2/10/1952 condannato alla pena di anni due mesi due  
e giorni e giorni venti di reclusione militare col benefici-  
cio della non menzione della condanna nel certificato del  
Casellario giudiziale dichiarando condonata della pena  
a senso dell'art. 5 D.L. 29/5/1946 n. 132.

15 luglio 46



## Where are A-Files?



### A-Files from the USCIS Genealogy Program

- Most A-Files of genealogical interest are likely still with the USCIS Genealogy Program (all files numbered below 8 million).
- An immigrant who was already in the U. S. in 1940 for whom an A-File was created *\*should\** be, and would be available via the \$65 record request (+ \$65 index search, if A-number unknown).
- However, files of immigrants with a birthdate over 100 years ago may be at NARA.
- See: <https://www.uscis.gov/records/genealogy/historical-record-series/a-files-numbered-below-8-million>.
- There are a small number of A-Files below 8 million who pertain to people born less than 100 years ago. These will not be produced unless the requester supplies proof of death.
- Proof of death can now be uploaded in the record request process, or it can be e-mailed to [Genealogy.USCIS@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:Genealogy.USCIS@uscis.dhs.gov), along with the GEN-\*\* case number.

- Requesters should submit proof of death of all individuals who may be mentioned in the file to lower the possibility of redactions

## A-Files at the National Archives

- A-Files of immigrants with a birthdate over 100 years ago may be with the National Archives at San Francisco [San Bruno] or Kansas City. USCIS began retiring A-Files to NARA in 2009.
- NARA San Francisco holds records for some individuals whose files had their last actions within the jurisdiction of the Reno, San Francisco, Honolulu, and Guam INS District offices. Records for immigrants whose cases were closed in the rest of the country would be at NARA Kansas City.
- The best way to definitively determine if an A-File has been retired to NARA is by searching their Catalog: <https://catalog.archives.gov>. Searching by Record Group 566 will only bring up USCIS records.
- If searching by A-number, be sure to add the prefix “A” to the number. For example, search by “A2727088” and NOT “2727088”.
- If an item of interest is found, a contact email is within the catalog entry. Request scans or physical copies of the records via that email address, providing the name, A-number, and link to the catalog entry. They will send an invoice and usually provide color reproductions within a week or two.
- Note that Ancestry and FamilySearch each have databases of A-Files at NARA but they are very out of date. They should not be used, however any entry that does appear in those databases will still be at NARA.
- Note that many tens of millions of A-Files have been created, so only a small fraction are held with the National Archives. NARA receives new accessions from USCIS annually, so check back to see if your file of interest has been transferred.
- For more info, see: <https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/aliens>.

## A-Files via Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) / Privacy Act (PA) requests to USCIS

- One can request an A-File for an individual numbered above 8 million via a FOIA request to USCIS. For a FOIA request, the individual must be deceased, and proof of death should be provided with the request. A living individual must request his or her own file via a Privacy Act request.
- A living individual can sign for the release of their records to another individual or to be sent to himself; in either case, the living individual named in the records \*must\* sign the request.

- Use FIRST, USCIS' FOIA portal. Make all requests via the "Other Requests" tab: <https://first.uscis.gov>.
- In nearly all instances, FOIA requests for A-Files are free. If a fee needs to be levied, USCIS will inform the requestor.
- See the handout that discusses FOIA for more information.

## Central Index System

- The indexing system for A-Files was initiated in 1975. From the beginning, it should have contained A-numbers above 12 million (though there are some gaps), which usually relate to individuals who arrived or whose status was adjusted after 1960. It would also include files that were opened or became active after 1975, and files that were inventoried after 2000. It is for this reason that many A-Files for immigrants born over 100 years ago are not yet with the National Archives – they were likely made inactive before 1975, and have not yet been inventoried.
- A Date of Birth in an index entry as 1/1/\*\*\*\* (or perhaps (7/4/\*\*\*\*) may be when an immigrant did not know his exact date of birth, or when only a year was provided. (This could also be when only an age was provided, and a year of birth was calculated.) The Date of Birth for the index was taken from the last sworn document in the file.
- The Port of Entry, when extant in an index entry, is usually the INS District Office location, not necessarily the actual port at which the immigrant arrived.
- The naturalization location and naturalization date (when extant) are usually the most misleading fields. The naturalization location usually relates to the location of the file, i.e., the INS District Office holding jurisdiction over the immigrant's place of naturalization. If the naturalization date was prior to 1 April 1956, it relates to the date of derivation of citizenship (i.e., date of parent's naturalization, date of woman's marriage, date of woman's husband's naturalization).

## Further Reading

Burnes, Elizabeth and Lee, Marisa Louie, "The A-Files: Finding Your Immigrant Ancestors," *Prologue* (Spring 2013): 54-61; online archives, *The National Archives* (<https://www.archives.gov/files/publications/prologue/2013/spring/a-files.pdf>)

Wormser, Paul. *Documenting Immigrants: An Examination of Immigration and Naturalization Service Case Files*. Paper for CIDS Program, 2013 (elsewhere specified as 2013). Available online at <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/immigration/case-files.pdf>.

Thank you Rich Venezia for supplying much of the information contained in this handout.