

A3404

INDEX TO PASSENGER ARRIVALS IN THE
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS, ca. 1906–ca. 1947

Compiled by Claire Prechtel-Klusens

National Archives and Records Administration
Washington, DC
2005

INTRODUCTION

On the seven rolls of this microfilm publication, A3404, are reproduced over 61,000 index cards to passenger arrivals in the U.S. Virgin Islands, ca. 1917–ca. 1947. These records are part of the Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group (RG) 85.

BACKGROUND

Early records relating to immigration originated in regional customhouses. The U.S. Customs Service conducted its business by designating collection districts. Each district had a headquarters port with a customhouse and a collector of customs, the chief officer of the district. An act of March 2, 1819 (3 Stat. 489), required the captain or master of a vessel arriving at a port in the United States or any of its territories from a foreign country to submit a list of passengers to the collector of customs. The act also required that the collector submit a quarterly report or abstract, consisting of copies of these passenger lists, to the Secretary of State, who was required to submit such information at each session of Congress. After 1874, collectors forwarded only statistical reports to the Treasury Department. The lists themselves were retained by the collector of customs. Customs records were maintained primarily for statistical purposes.

On August 3, 1882, Congress passed the first Federal law regulating immigration (22 Stat. 214–215); the Secretary of the Treasury had general supervision over it between 1882 and 1891. The Office of Superintendent of Immigration in the Department of the Treasury was established under an act of March 3, 1891 (26 Stat. 1085), and was later designated a bureau in 1895 with responsibility for administering the alien contract-labor laws. In 1900 administration of the Chinese exclusion laws was added. Initially the Bureau retained the same administrative structure of ports of entry that the Customs Service had used. By the turn of the century, it began to designate its own immigration districts, the numbers and boundaries of which changed over the years. In 1903 the Bureau became part of the Department of Commerce and Labor; its name was changed to the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization when functions relating to naturalization were added in 1906. In 1933 the functions were transferred to the Department of Labor and became the responsibility of the newly formed Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Under President Roosevelt's Reorganization Plan V of 1940, the INS was moved to the Department of Justice. The INS was abolished, and its immigration and naturalization record-keeping functions were transferred to the new Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services within the new Department of Homeland Security, established January 24, 2003, by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-296, § 471, 116 Stat. 2135, 2205).

The United States purchased the U.S. Virgin Islands—St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas Islands—from Denmark in 1917. The territory was governed by the Department of the Navy from 1917 until 1931, by authority of the Act of March 3, 1917

(39 Stat. 1132), and on February 27, 1931, administration was transferred to the Department of the Interior (Executive Order 5566). The U.S. Virgin Islands is an unincorporated territory of the United States organized and governed under the provisions of the Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands (Act of July 22, 1954, Pub. L. 90-496, 68 Stat. 497, 48 U.S.C. §1541 et seq.), as amended, which superceded much of the Organic Act of the Virgin Islands of the United States (Act of June 22, 1936, 49 Stat. 1807, 48 U.S.C. §1405 et seq.), as amended.

RECORDS DESCRIPTION

The records consist of two typewritten card indexes to passenger arrivals in the U.S. Virgin Islands, ca. 1906–ca. 1947.

SERIES 1: PASSENGER ARRIVALS AT ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS, ca. 1923–ca. 1947.

This series reproduces typewritten index cards upon which some or all of the following information was recorded: surname, first name, age, gender, citizenship (“nationality”), date of arrival (often in day/month/year format), name of vessel or airplane, port of embarkation, and the “book” and “page” containing the original passenger arrival record. Although many of the cards contain all of that information, a significant portion include only the passenger’s surname and first name, age, nationality, and “book” and “page” number.

The INS target (information) sheets reproduced at the beginning of each roll do not state the inclusive dates of these records. During processing, the earliest year noted was 1923 and the latest year noted was 1947.

The alphabetical arrangement is generally good, but there are cards out of order—often significantly so. For example there is a card for *Gusta Jackson* filed in the *G. Jennings/Jannings* section on Roll 3, and there are cards for eight persons surnamed *Wells* mixed in toward the end of the “Z” surnames. Variant spellings of a surname may be filed together under the dominant spelling; for example, *Gustina Jannings* is included among the *Jennings*.

SERIES 2: PASSENGER ARRIVALS AT ALL OTHER U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS PORTS, ca. 1906–ca. 1940.

This series reproduces typewritten index cards upon which some or all of the following information was recorded: surname, first name, age, gender, citizenship (“nationality”), date and port of arrival, name of vessel or airplane, and the “book” and “page” number containing the original passenger record.

A number of the cards are for “contract laborers” for various specified estates who arrived on “name of vessel unknown” during 1906–12.

The INS target (information) sheet reproduced at the beginning of this segment does not state the inclusive dates of these records, but the earliest year noted during processing was 1906 and the latest year noted was 1940.

GENERAL REMARKS

The records were filmed by the INS in April 1957 and transferred to the National Archives on microfilm. Although some of this film may be difficult to read, it is impossible to correct the situation since the INS destroyed the original records.

Rolls 1 and 2 begin with short “retakes” sections (images refilmed to ensure legibility).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROLL	PORT	CONTENTS
1	St. Thomas	Aaron, Pardric – Davis, Hugo
2		Davis, Irene – George, Avarilda
3		George, B. – Jennings, Gestina
4		Jennings, Alvin/Alwin/Alwyn (6 cards) Jennings, Henry – Parsons, Evangeline
5		Parsons, Felice – Smith, Ezilene
6		Smith, Fan – Vanterpool, Virnah/Vernah
7		Vanterpool, W. – Zvahlen, Gabriel
	“Other Ports”	Aarons, Emilia – Zur Needlen, Martin