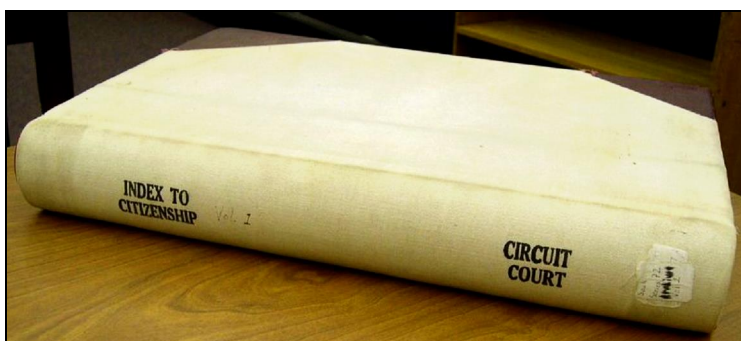


## Naturalization In Our Ancestor's Time

by Debbie Blau

People who moved from other countries to settle into the United States were known as emigrants. If they wanted to become citizens, they had to apply at a courthouse in America. The papers they filled out were part of the naturalization process. The first naturalization act was in 1790 and said that anyone who lived in the US for two years was eligible for citizenship. In 1795, the residency requirement was changed to five years. Anyone born into nobility had to renounce their status. Applicants for citizenship had to publicly declare their intention to become citizens and renounce allegiance to their former country.

By 1802, the naturalization act was a three-part process: 1) Declaration of Intention to Become a Citizen; 2) Petition for Naturalization; 3) Certificate of Naturalization and Citizenship



*Index to Citizenship, Circuit Court, Sauk County, Wisconsin [Wisconsin Historical Society, archive]*

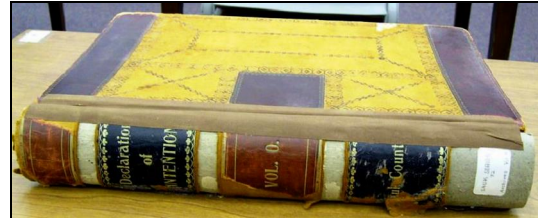
For a complete explanation of the naturalization process, see:  
[https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United\\_States\\_Naturalization\\_and\\_Citizenship](https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/United_States_Naturalization_and_Citizenship)

People moving to Franklin Township in Sauk County, Wisconsin, generally applied for citizenship in Sauk County, but may have applied in Dane County or Iowa County as well. They may have gone to the courthouse in Baraboo in Sauk County for one part of their application and into another county for another part of the application. They filed the Declaration of Intention to Become a Citizen first. It may have been years later when they filed the next part of the application. Some never did file their last papers.

<b>State of Wisconsin,</b> } ss.	
SAUK COUNTY, }	
..... <i>Joseph Blau</i> ..... personally	
appeared before the subscriber, the Clerk of the Circuit Court of said County, being a Court of Record, and made oath that	
he was born in <i>Germany</i>	on or about the year <i>Eighteen</i>
hundred and <i>sixty-one</i>	; that he emigrated to the United States, and landed at the port of
<i>New York</i>	, on or about the month of <i>April</i>
eighteen hundred and <i>sixty-two</i>	; that it is <i>bona fide</i> his intention to become a citizen
of the United States, and to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty	
whatever, and particularly <i>William Emperor of Germany</i> , whereof he is a subject.	
Subscribed and Sworn to the <i>3</i>	
day of <i>November</i> , A. D. 18 <i>84</i> , before me. } <i>Joseph Schrad</i>	
<i>W. A. Reverden</i> Clerk.	

*Joseph Blau petition signed Nov. 3, 1884. Birth year was 1862 (not 1861 as stated here). He was born in Glissenberg, the son of Michael Blau and Barbara Dobmeier.*

If your ancestor came from Germany and didn't speak English, they may have found it difficult to answer questions on the applications because the forms were written in English. How did they know they could apply for citizenship? Were they handed a naturalization brochure when they entered the country for the first time? Maybe they were already informed of this on the ship ride over the ocean, or had read about it in the newspaper. When they arrived at the courthouse, did someone translate for them? Perhaps the County Clerk could speak German and wrote their answers in English, or the applicants had learned enough English by time they applied for citizenship. The applicants had to sign their name on the forms, so that is a good place to see your ancestor's handwriting style.



*Two naturalization books for Sauk County, Wisconsin, at the Wisconsin Historical Society archive*

The Petition for Naturalization required two witnesses who swore they had personally known the petitioner, they knew how long the person had resided in the United States, and knew the moral character of that person. Oftentimes the witnesses were neighbors. Petitions in the early 1900s included more personal information such as a physical description; occupation; place of residence in their homeland and in America; a picture; birth dates and places of the petitioner, names and birth dates of spouses and children; marriage dates and places; the full date of emigration; the ship name; and dates and place of departure and arrival.

Where can you find naturalization records? The archive on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, Wisconsin, has original naturalization books and also images of naturalization records on microfilm. Most of the books have indexes. If you cannot get to Madison, you can search for naturalization records online at [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org). In their catalog, search for *Wisconsin Naturalization* to see the entire list of their collection. Iowa County records were at one time stored at UW Platteville in Grant County, but [FamilySearch.org](http://FamilySearch.org) also has Iowa County records. The Reedsburg Public Library has some naturalization records on microfilm. If you don't find records for your ancestor in one place, look in another place, since the different parts of naturalization records can be scattered in various locations. The cornerstone for the first courthouse in Sauk County (in Baraboo) was placed in 1855; by 1857 the building was finished. In 1904, a fire destroyed the courthouse which was then later rebuilt. It's not known if any of the naturalization records were destroyed in the fire.

As with any record, there can be spelling and date errors. The applicant may have not remembered the date of emigration and ship name when filling out one form, but in another form had remembered this information.

