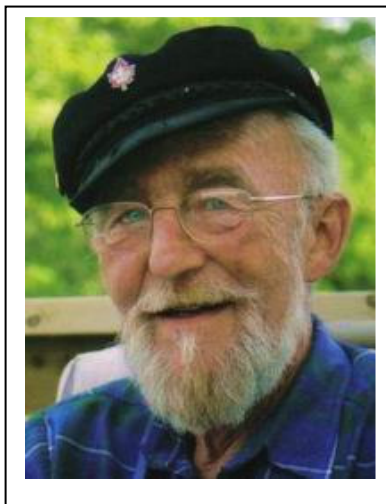


Castle Garden



Some weeks ago we took a look at the availability of records of immigrants who entered the United States through the Ellis Island Immigration Station from 1897 to 1924. Earlier records of immigrant arrivals were on unindexed microfilm and not easily available to most researchers.

On August 1, 2005, a new website was launched making those missing records available. Castle Garden was the point of entry for New York prior to Ellis Island (1855-1890) and many immigrants destined for Canada arrived there.

The new website at www.castlegarden.org provides the opportunity to search a free online database of passenger lists from as early as 1830 to 1913. There are about 10 million names in the database some 2 million more are to be added soon.

The site is not yet 100% complete and while you can certainly search for a name and even refine it by selecting a point of origin, range of arrival dates, occupation, or ship, the search will only return exact results. Other refinements like soundex, which would catch similar sounding names, are in the works.

I find it easier to provide minimum information and sort through more returns. While looking for Hans Mumm, I entered only 'Mumm'. I had no idea if he arrived as Johann, Johannes, J., Hans, or John. I found him and two other family members who arrived at different times, along with their age, trade, country of origin, date of arrival, and the ship they sailed on.

If there are several pages of results, there will be a note to that effect in the upper right of the list between '« »'. To move to the next or previous page, click on the appropriate double arrows.

There are still some small glitches in the system. The last column has the person's passenger ID number. There is no way that I can get that column to appear on my screen and I have tried two different browsers. I have seen similar complaints from a number of other researchers. These problems will, I am sure, be dealt with in the near future and we should look at the first few months as a sort of 'Beta Testing Period'.

If you are having difficulty finding your ancestor, you might want to try an alternative search engine. Stephen Morse has created a portal to the names on the Castle Garden list that is a little more flexible. Among other things it allows you to browse the names in alphabetical order, so that you can catch spelling variants and mistranscriptions. His utility is located at www.stevemorse.org. Scroll down and click on Castle Garden Passengers.

Castle Garden is known today as Castle Clinton (an earlier name) National Monument and is a major landmark in the 23 acre waterfront park at the tip of Manhattan, known as the Battery.

U.S. Land Grant Records

In another helpful American initiative, the American Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, is placing the Land Grant Records online.

While their site is not yet complete, it is certainly worth a try if you have ancestors who took up land in the U.S. They have over 2 million land titles issued between 1820 and 1908. You search by name and I had better luck just using a family name, since you may not be certain if your ancestor used his given name or a nickname or an initial.

You will be presented with a list of names and if you click on the icon to the left of the name you want you will actually see a digitised picture of the original Land Grant Certificate, specifying exact location and size of the grant. If you have trouble printing it out, they help you to convert it to a PDF file for that purpose.

If you would like to check it out, go to: www.gloreCORDS.blm.gov/patentsearch/default.asp?