

Genealogical Guide to Monroe County, New York

Naturalization Records

Naturalization is the process by which someone from another country becomes a US citizen. Naturalization was accomplished through the County Court system until 1906 when the Federal government assumed most of the responsibility. The first part of the naturalization process was to file a "Declaration of Intent" to become a citizen with the court. The next step, which is usually a few years later, was to file a "Petition for Citizenship" and if the qualifications were met, the court would issue a "Certificate of Naturalization." Of the three documents, the Petition gives the most information of genealogical value. The quality of the records improved over time. Only a few files before 1880 list date of birth or show when a person arrived in the United States. After 1900, most records have the birth date, plus the place and date of immigration. It is possible that an individual may have filed some of the naturalization documents elsewhere, resulting in an incomplete local file.

Women did not have to be naturalized on their own until September 22, 1922. There wasn't any need. The main reason for becoming a US citizen was to be able to vote and women could not vote even if they were a citizen. Still, for some unknown reason, there are records for a few women that did make the effort to become citizens before 1922.

The naturalization record files (before 1906) in the Monroe County Clerk's office, which consist of the Declaration of Intent, Petition and the Certificate have been moved to a private storage company. In that office you can look up your ancestor's name in a series of 23 index films, which have all names listed from 1821 - 1990. You can also give a name of an ancestor to the staff in the Clerk's office and they will check for records and make copies. It may take a few days for the Clerk's staff to obtain the records from the storage company. The cost of copies is \$1 per page. The price is the same if writing to the Clerk's office (39 W. Main St., Rochester, NY).

A filming of the card index dated 1821 to 1906 was completed by LDS Family History Department (now FamilySearch) in the mid 1970s. Those records have been digitized and are available online. The card index are the first seven entries on [this web page](#). When you find a person in that index, print or write down all the information on the card. You can ignore "File 2" (or similar) as that was the old gun-metal file cases that were in the Courthouse before the records were moved off-site. The number in the upper right corner (that is underlined in red) is the file number that you will need for the next step.

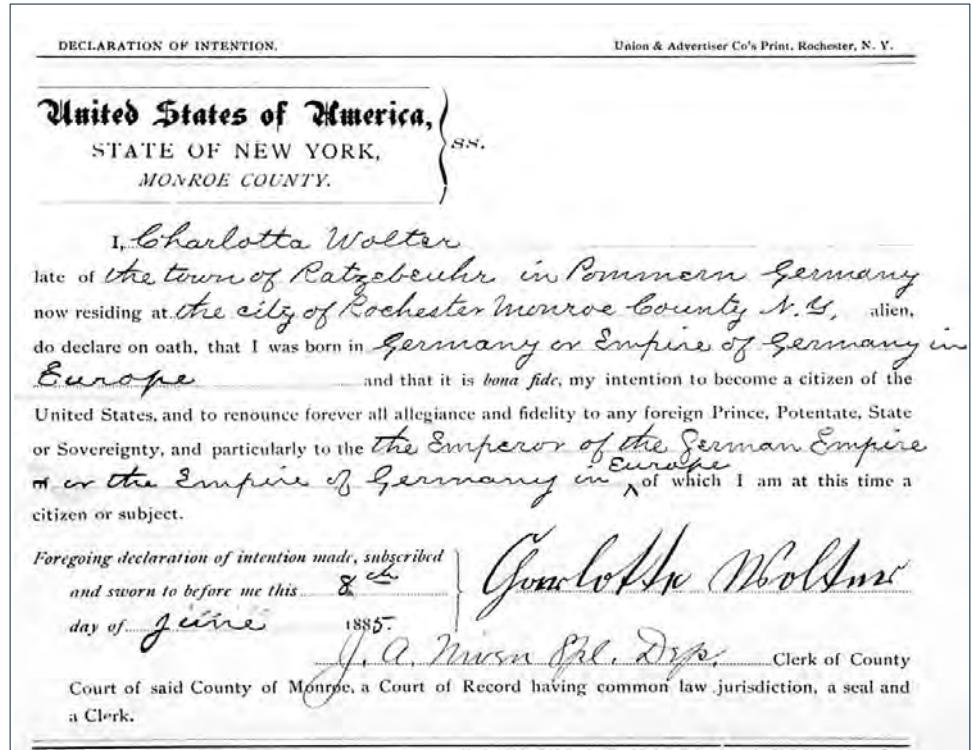
Grentzinger, George	File 2.	467
D/I	Issued	12/4/1832
Pet	Filed	11/7/1838
Admitted		11/7/1838

Index Card for George Grentzinger

From the same web page above you can find the file by using the file number. Between 1821 and 1906 there were 32,102 naturalization files created in Monroe County. Those are on 111 digitized films online on FamilySearch. The files contain the Petition and Naturalization (sometimes as one piece of paper) and often times the file contains a copy of the Declaration of Intent. Some files also contain affidavits from citizens that the person being naturalized has lived in the US sufficient time to become a citizen. Note those names as often they are family members.

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FamilySearch also has digital films of Declaration of Intents from 1821 to 1898 that could be searched (see [this web page](#)). There are times when a person may have filed a Declaration and never followed through to become a citizen (example on right). They may have been naturalized in another NY county or another state. There are two indexes at the top of that web page that can help to narrow down the date that you have to search. Those indexes are only by the first letter of a surname (ie. all "M" surnames are together). Then find the digital film for the date the Declaration was filed. You probably will not find Declaration of Intent in this time period for men under the age of 18. It appears that they did not have to file a Declaration of Intent.



FamilySearch has [this separate web page](#) for Declarations of Intent for the year 1898 to 1906. Again the index to these two volumes have indexes at the front of the volumes.

In September 1906 Federal regulations changed for the naturalization process. Local governments continued to record the Declaration of Intent, but the Petition process was accomplished by US district Courts. FamilySearch only has [two digital films of Declaration of Intents](#) that cover the period from 1906 to 1910. Those two volumes have an index at the front of the volume.

The Petition for Naturalization after 1906 for Monroe County residents was filed in the Federal Court of the New York Western District in Buffalo, NY. FamilySearch has those records online from 1906 to 1929 (see [this web page](#)). Those records have limited access. They are available for viewing only in a Family History Library or FamilySearch Affiliate Library. They also have [this web page](#) to search the NY Western District records from 1907 to 1966. Then if you want to see the index card with the file number FamilySearch sends you to Fold3. That is a fee based website but you can usually see the file number using a magnifying glass.

The Italian Genealogy Group has [this page to search](#) naturalization records from 1906 to 1966. If you only want to search the NY Western District record, you need to check the box for that district. This search will give you file numbers and dates to order the naturalization.

If you have a subscription to Ancestry.com then you can search their [naturalization database](#). That search does not allow you to search just the NY Western District. Instead it searches the whole country. That may give you more results than is practical.

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For all naturalizations after September 1906 you have to order the original document from the National Archives website. [This web page](#) has the order form. You can order paper copies, a CD or a digital copy.

In County Court, Monroe County:

At a term of the County Court held at the City of Rochester, in the County of Monroe and State of New York,
on the 29th day of September 1885

Present;

HON.

Wm. C. Werner

Judge, County Judge.

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF

Gustav Frankenstein

TO BE ADMITTED A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES.

The said applicant appearing personally in Court, producing the evidence required by the Acts of Congress, and having made such declaration and renunciation, and having taken such oaths as are by the said acts required.

It is Ordered by the said Court, that the said applicant be and he is hereby admitted to be a citizen of the United States of America.

Maurice Leyden

Clerk.

Wm. Brown
Judge of Monroe County.

Gustav Frankenstein becomes a US citizen.

