

Document Background The document used in this lesson is found in the General Reference Collection, Folder #501, Box 392379, Record Group 9270.1. Although undated, the document probably circulated during the early 1920s.

Background

Information

General Historic Overview

People in the thirteen former colonies knew from experience that limiting certain privileges only to citizens, and then limiting naturalization only to a few immigrants, prevented the growth and development of these colonies in the New World. On July 4, 1776, Declaration of Independence, one of the charges leveled at King George III was that he obstructed immigration to and naturalization of foreigners in the new colonies. Specifically, the Declaration charged that:

..."HE has endeavored to prevent the
Population of these States; for that
Purpose obstructing the Laws for
Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to
pass others to encourage their Migrations
hither, and raising the Conditions of new
Appropriations of Lands."ⁱ

Setting procedures for “membership” in any society other than one’s own falls to the receiving citizens and, ultimately, to their governments to establish and regulate an orderly process of belonging and distributing rights to new residents. While the early history of the United States is filled with immigration history and stories, the recognition

of the importance of adaptable rules regarding immigrants was noted in the United States Constitution: Article I, Sec. 8 identifies one of the powers of Congress in their role to protect the general welfare of the country is “To establish a uniform rule of naturalization....”ⁱⁱ The American colonies and then the early United States welcomed immigrants because they were needed to help settle and work the land and share their talents during the growth period of the country into a strong nation. An act passed in 1790 spelled out the initial attitudes of the legislators towards the naturalization process. In that legislation, the lawmakers spelled out that immigrants eligible for naturalization had to

1. Be a free white person [eliminated indentured servants, any people of color, slaves, and women since they were considered dependents],
2. Have resided within the boundaries of the United States for two years,
3. Have resided in one state for one year or more,
4. File an application for citizenship with “any common law court of record,”
5. Be a person of good character, and
6. Take an oath affirming loyalty to the Constitution.

People who filed petitions for naturalization and who took the oath were immediately granted rights of citizenship, as were their children.ⁱⁱⁱ

Subsequent legislation changed the procedures but still required applicants fulfill certain requirements before citizenship was conferred. Some of the early changes included increasing the residency requirement, requiring applicants to sign an oath of renunciation to the governments of their native lands, and requiring witnesses who would affirm the veracity of the applicant’s oath of allegiance. During this time, however, immigrants “self-assimilated” into their new communities. There were no “rites of passage” or public ceremonies associated with the transition from immigrant, or alien, to citizen. Immigrants during the earliest years of the country were usually from northern and

western Europe, with the exception of those Africans who were transported here against their will.

Legislation in this country pertaining to citizenship is unusually responsive to world events and national history. For instance, the position of women in immigration law initially was dependent on the status of men. Legislation enacted in 1922 finally separated the citizenship of women from their husbands. Earlier, women could be naturalized if their spouses were citizens, either by birth or naturalized (1855). Later, women *lost* their citizenship if they married men from other countries; in other words, citizenship followed the man. Likewise specific groups have been excluded, included or granted special status depending upon world situations. Africans were excluded by race and status until 1870 whereupon the law extended citizenship potential to persons of African nativity or descent. As a response to the influx of Asians into the western United States during the gold rush era and construction of the transcontinental railroad, 1882 immigration legislation excluded immigrants from China from applying for citizenship. Challenges in the courts forced the classification of eligible aliens to be defined narrowly: white people of European descent. All peoples of Asian origin were excluded.^{iv} Exclusionary practices have a history unto themselves in the immigration laws of this country. During any period of hostilities in which the United States has been involved, people from enemy nations are excluded; after the war, they are sometimes welcomed as displaced persons due to the economic or social disruptions in their homelands.

Since 1790 Congress has defined and redefined the legal aspects and ramifications of “becoming an American.” Certain procedures must be followed in order for applicants to receive the full benefits of citizenship in this country. By the late nineteenth century, the immigrants’ countries of origin shifted from the traditional northern and western European ones to countries from southern and eastern Europe. As this occurred,

Progressive era activists began to call for procedures that would work in concert with the legislative process to mainstream “aliens” into everyday life. Social advocates such as Jane Addams founded institutions like settlement houses where immigrants from other countries learned traditionally accepted behaviors of United States residents.

At the end of the nineteenth century, philanthropists, social workers, and industrial leaders believed that “the great danger in the immigrant situation … lay not in the fact that these people could not become assimilated to American ideals and to the American

way of life, but in the fact that very little effort was being made to help the process of assimilation by bettering relations between the newcomers and their American neighbors...”^v While Progressive era idealists worked to restructure society, the onset of world tensions brought about rhetoric that moved the country closer to isolationism and away from the inclusive dreams of the Progressives. Congress took steps to limit immigration by passing the Comprehensive Immigration of 1917 over the veto of President Wilson; however many still advocated for positive immigrant treatment.

Advocates formed the National Americanization Committee with the slogan “America First,” and by 1915 Americanization Days became social occasions in many towns. The goals of the Americanization movement were to educate immigrants in suitable American behavior, in the English language, in knowledge and respect for the American government and its laws, and to instill a strong sense of patriotism. This movement sought to alleviate the harsh conditions of immigrant life in the big cities and to improve the economic efficiency of the newcomers for employers by reducing labor unrest and minimizing language barriers. Americanization committees also strove to eliminate the loyalty questions regarding immigrants by fostering public awareness on their plight and on their potential. Polarity over immigration centered on the perception that “those people” caused economic hardship to native citizens and imminent danger to the country

as a whole; Progressives and other immigrant sympathizers, on the other hand, believed that fair and compassionate treatment of the newcomers would increase the strength of the country while minimizing unrest and economic strife.

Delaware Specific Information Delaware, like the rest of the United States, found itself in the unenviable position of needing labor during World War I. According to US Census data, Delaware's population in 1910 was 202,322, of which 34,986 people, or 17%, were either immigrants or born of immigrant parents.^{vi} Over 32,000 resided in New Castle County, the county most dependent on labor for its economic well-being. By 1920, the population of the state had increased to 223,003 and the number of immigrants "natives of foreign-born parents" had grown to 43,098. By this time, there were 668 "manufacturing establishments" in the state and over 50% of those were in New Castle County.^{vii} The state, like most of the country found itself in the position of depending on immigrants to work in the factories in the state. The earlier push to severely restrict immigration abated during this time and World War I reduced immigration substantially. During the war years, the Americanization effort throughout the United States was increasingly important to both employers and to labor unions.^{viii} Immigrant men were needed in the factories but they had to be co-opted into mainstream America as patriotic participants, eliminating any potential "threat" to the safety of the country and workplace. The people who often assisted in the acculturating process were fellow laborers, often doing so, ironically, to protect the best positions in the workplace for themselves.^{ix} "The integration of the newcomers into the labor movement called not only for new forms of organization, new organizing strategies, and new strike tactics, but also for a new means of socializing and acculturating the new people, a 'remaking' of the working class between the turn of the century and the Great Depression."^x Across the country, in factories like the Ford plant, immigrant workers "graduated" in elaborate flag-waving ceremonies from "schools"

which taught them the fundamentals of English and, even more importantly, of the way the American system worked.

In Delaware, on April 8, 1918, the General Assembly passed a measure that established the State Council of Defense. Its clearly defined mission was “to provide [an] effective means of defense and preserving order within the state, and to insure the maximum output of agricultural and industrial products....”^{xii} The charge underscored the awareness on the part of the legislature about the grave labor problems and the potential labor shortages in the state. Its specific tasks were:

- Enroll any male not actively involved with the military to help keep agricultural and industrial production up to pre-war standards.
- Maintain sufficient levels of production to adequately support the war effort.
- Cooperate with other local or national defense councils.
- Inventory resources, manpower and materials that were readily available for military use.
- Determine areas of potential shortage due to the war and take steps to avoid such shortages.

The group mandated that all males not in military service and between the ages of 18 and 55 were “required to be gainfully employed, or risk charges.”^{xiii} The Council, like those in other states, was legislated out of existence six months after the Armistice was signed in November 1918. Again, Delaware mirrored conditions in the nation. Many believed that steps still were necessary to “transform” the immigrant into a productive worker, content to remain in the state as a useful, *peaceful* worker since during the war years immigrants workers, and labor unions in general, had grown increasingly restive,

demanding a fair American wage. Americanization was seen as a means to ameliorate that situation.

In July 1918, a meeting of the most influential citizens in the state was held in Wilmington for the sole purpose of establishing a group that would facilitate their ability to be deeply involved in the betterment of the state after World War I. This group, the Service Citizens of Delaware, conducted surveys of every aspect of life in Delaware, researched potential solutions to identified problems, and worked through the legislature to modernize state services. One of the subsets of that group was the Americanization Bureau, established to, hopefully, counteract and minimize potential labor problems in Delaware. It became the vehicle for conscious incorporation of the immigrant into American life. Its stated purpose was: “to give the foreign-born residents of Delaware a real understanding of the America which the native-born residents know and love”^{xiii} and “to give advice and assistance to the foreign born residents of Delaware for the purpose of aiding them in adjusting themselves to life in the United States.”^{xiv} Among the services this group provided to new residents were assistance in the forms of legal aid, obtaining travel papers, employment, domestic and social problems, completing and filing income and property tax forms, and financial advice. These services were provided in addition to classes teaching English and civics.

Initially the group attempted to work through the factories, teaching English to workers and attempting to instill in them a love for their new homeland. Two of the key players in the movement in Delaware, Helen Hart and Marguerite H. Burnett believed that “the real process of Americanization is a spiritual process. It must go on in the hearts and lives of the people of America.”^{xv} In order to inform immigrants of services and classes, the group mounted an intensive publicity campaign, hanging posters printed in English, Italian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Yiddish in the foreign residential areas of

Wilmington. Letters, from “Uncle Sam” were sent home with workers and with children from school. Americanization classes were held and 738 immigrants actually attended some or all of the classes. On June 13, 1919, Wilmington’s first graduation ceremony, like those in many cities across the country, was a pageant filled with symbolism. Graduates paraded in, carrying the flags of their homelands, each group separated from the next by an American carrying a United States flag. Each group then sang their national anthem. As that concluded, the flags of the nations disappeared, and the National Anthem of the United States was sung, and flags of the United States were waved by the graduates. On that date, the state of Delaware officially assumed the educational responsibilities of the Americanization Bureau. This transition of power marked the beginning of the first official Bureau of Immigrant Education in the state.^{xvi}

The initial thrust of Americanization in Delaware had focused on educating the immigrant worker. Soon, however, the movement recognized that by focusing on the worker, the women and children were left out of the process. During the years between 1919 and 1927, the Americanization Bureau of the Service Citizens Bureau worked in the city of Wilmington to provide supplemental programs to the state’s Bureau of Immigrant Education. Neighborhood community centers were established and open for both day and night activities; a Trouble Bureau was opened in 1919 to assist immigrants with naturalization procedures, income tax returns, passports, etc. For immigrant women, home classes held in the neighborhood centers, became arenas of social contact with native-born women. American customs, acceptable hygiene standards, and patriotism were at the heart of these groups. ^{xvii} While many of the people involved as teachers had the well being of the immigrant in mind, the immigrants often saw the efforts as attempts to force them to relinquish their cultural heritage. Conflict also erupted between citizens who believed immigrants would and should self-assimilate into society and those who

believed that assistance was essential in “shaping” immigrants into patriotic citizens who would be successful and productive workers and residents of Delaware.

The Bureau of Americanization program continued in Delaware until 1927. Immigrants continued to come to Delaware during the years immediately following the restrictive immigration act of 1924. This was in sharp contrast to the declining immigrating populations in nearby states. A constant influx of new workers was essential for the well being of the state; the state and privatized immigrant programs kept the needs of the immigrant in the forefront, making the state a desirable environment in which to settle during these years.

1924 marked a watershed year in immigration history. It was the first time that legislation was enacted that not only restricted, through a quota system, the numbers of immigrants from various countries but also identified how those eligible to immigrate would be identified. This act mandated that visitors/immigrants have a current visa; additionally the legislation began the process of fining transportation companies who illegally transported illegal aliens into the country. The legislation, with periodic modifications, was in effect until 1952.

The 1952 legislation “brought into one comprehensive statute the multiple laws which, before its enactment, governed immigration and naturalization in the United States. In general, the law perpetuated the immigration policies from earlier statutes” with certain significant changes: ^{xviii}

1. Made all races eligible for naturalization, thus eliminating race as a bar to immigration.
2. Eliminated discrimination between sexes with respect to immigration.
3. Revised the national origins quota system of the Immigration Act of 1924

by changing the national origins quota formula: set the annual quota for an area at one-sixth of one percent of the number of inhabitants in the continental United States in 1920 whose ancestry or national origin was attributable to that area. All countries were allowed a minimum quota of 100, with a ceiling of 2,000 on most natives of countries in the Asia- Pacific triangle, which broadly encompassed the Asian countries.

4. Introduced a system of selected immigration by giving quota preference to skilled aliens whose services are urgently needed in the United States and to relatives of U.S. citizens and aliens.

5. Placed a limit on the use of the governing country's quota by natives of colonies and dependent areas.

6. Provided an "escape clause" permitting the immigration of certain former voluntary members of proscribed organizations.

7. Broadened the grounds for exclusion and deportation of aliens.

8. Provided procedures for the adjustment of status of nonimmigrant aliens to that of permanent resident aliens.

9. Modified and added significantly to the existing classes of nonimmigrant admission.

10. Afforded greater procedural safeguards to aliens subject to deportation.

11. Introduced the alien address report system whereby all aliens in the United States (including most temporary visitors) were required annually to report their current address to the INS.

12. Established a central index of all aliens in the United States for use by security and enforcement agencies.

13. Repealed the ban on contract labor (see Act of March 30, 1868) but added other qualitative exclusions.

In 1965 amendments did away with the quota system of requiring immigrants to be of certain ancestry, race, or national origin. Added to the law was a first come, first served system. Preference was afforded to “seven category preference system for relatives of U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens (for the reunification of families) and for persons with special occupational skills, abilities, or training (needed in the United States).”^{xix}

In 1990 a major overhaul of the immigration system in the United States occurred. Four key differences in this legislation continue to affect immigration in 2002. First, beginning in 1995, total immigration was to be “under an overall flexible cap of 675,000 immigrants,” that number being subdivided into family-sponsored immigrants [480,000], employment-based [140,000], and 55,000 “diversity immigrants.” Second, all grounds for exclusion and deportation were rewritten. Third, the Attorney General received the power to grant certain groups protected status due to natural disasters or armed conflict in their native countries. Finally, nonimmigrant admission categories were revised and redefined.^{xx}

In Delaware in 2002 an Immigrants Council exists. Its mission is to serve “as the voice of all immigrants in Delaware in order to ensure their access to information, resources, and services; to advocate for improvements in immigration laws; and to enrich the lives of all immigrants in our state.”^{xxi} To be eligible for naturalization, according to current legislation, a person must be 1. 18 years of age, 2. Be a lawful resident of the United States for at least five years [or three years, if married to a United States citizen] and be able to present his/her I-551, Alien Registration Receipt Card, as proof of status. 3. Resided within a state or district for at least three months 4. Be of good moral character: cannot have been convicted of murder or an aggravated

felony,

- a. Has committed and been convicted of one or more crimes involving moral turpitude
- b. Has committed and been convicted of 2 or more offenses for which the total sentence imposed was 5 years or more
- c. Has committed and been convicted of any controlled substance law, except for
 - a single offense of simple possession of 30 grams or less of marijuana
- d. Has been confined to a penal institution during the statutory period, as a result of a conviction, for an aggregate period of 180 days or more
- e. Has committed and been convicted of two or more gambling offenses
- f. Is or has earned his or her principal income from illegal gambling
- g. Is or has been involved in prostitution or commercialized vice
- h. Is or has been involved in smuggling illegal aliens into the United States
- i. Is or has been a habitual drunkard
- j. Is practicing or has practiced polygamy
- k. Has willfully failed or refused to support dependents
- l. Has given false testimony, under oath, in order to receive a benefit under the

- Immigration and Nationality Act.
- 5. Must be "attached" to the US Constitution,
- 6. With specific exceptions, be able to read, write, and speak English.
- 7. With certain specific exceptions, must demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of the history and of the principles and form of government of the United States.
- 8. Take an oath of allegiance to the United States of America.^{xxii}

Between the years 1991 and 1998, 9,726 immigrants, primarily from 31 different countries, moved into Delaware. "Immigrants from Mexico, China, India and Korea accounted for two-fifths (40.2%) of all new "green card" recipients since 1990. Mexico

alone accounted for nearly one-eighth (13.8%) of the immigration total.^{xxiii} While exact numbers from the 2000 census are not yet available for the state, national statistics point to the following: 10.3%, or 29,034,000, of the entire US population is foreign born; this is an increase of 46.9% from 1990. The estimated U.S. naturalized population is 12,249,038. The non-naturalized foreign-born population is about 18.2 million persons. 2000 census data shows 783,600 total residents in the state of Delaware. Of that number, 42,782, or 5.4%, are foreign born. 20,032 of those people, or 46.8%, are naturalized citizens. No county foreign-born statistics are available yet. However, the following data is available from the 1990 census:

County 1990* 2000* Foreign-born[1990] Percent New Castle 441,946

500,265 17,280 3.9% Kent 113,229 126,697 2,932 2.6% Sussex

110,993 156,638 2,063 1.8%

*Total

Population

Delaware continues to have a low percentage of foreign born population and of those who have immigrated to this state, the highest percentage still choose to reside in New Castle County.^{xxiv}

ⁱ This Month in Immigration History: March 1790. [Online]

<http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/history/mar1790.htm> 8 January 2002. ⁱⁱ The Constitution of the

United States. [Online] <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/const/const.html> 8 January 2002. ⁱⁱⁱ Act of March 26, 1790.

[Online] <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/history/1790Act.htm> 8 January 2002. ^{iv} Interpretation of

311.1: Interpretation of Eligibility to Naturalization. [Online] <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/lpBin/lpext.dll/inserts/slb/slb-51842/slb-52724?f=templates&fn=document-frame.htm#slb-interp311-46-1> 8 January 2002. v Hartmann, Edward

George. *The Movement of Americanize the Immigrant*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 36.

vi "1910 State Level Census Data -- Sorted by State/County Name". *U.S. Historical Census Data Browser*.

Online: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/censusbin/census/cen.pl> [January 26, 2002]. vii "1920 County

Level Census Data -- Sorted by State/County Name," *U.S. Historical Census Data Browser*. [Online]:

<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/censusbin/census/cen.pl>] January 26, 2002. viii Barrett, James R.

"Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 79, No. 3, *Discovering America: A Special Issue*. (Dec., 1992), pp. 996-1020. [Online]:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?&sici=0021-8723%28199212%2979%3A3%3C996%3AAFTBUI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S>

] 26 January 26, 2002. ix Ibid. x Ibid, p. 1003. xi Delaware General Assembly, Laws of Delaware, 96th

Session, special sess., 8 April 1918, c. 3, pp. 7-10. xii "State Council of Defense," *Delaware State Archives*.

[Online: <http://www.state.de.us/sos/dpa/collections/aghist/1673.htm>] January 26, 2002.

xiii "Directory of Social and Philanthropic Agencies of Wilmington, Delaware," *Bulletin of the Service Citizens of Delaware*, Vol. IV, No. 4 (Wilmington, n.p., 1922), p. 7. xiv "Directory of Social and Philanthropic Agencies of

Delaware," *Bulletin of the Service Citizens of Delaware*. Volume VIII, No. 3, (Wilmington, n.p., 1925), p. 9. xv Hart,

Helen and Marguerite Burnett, "Six Months of Americanization in Delaware" in *Reports of the Americanization Bureau, 1919- 1927*. Wilmington: Service Citizens of Delaware, [1919], p. 19. xvi Ibid, pp. 66-67. xvii Hart, Helen,

"Americanization in Delaware, 1919-1920" in *Reports of the Americanization Bureau, 1919-1920*. (Wilmington:

Service Citizens of Delaware [1920]), pp.55-59. xviii "76. Immigration and Nationality Act of June 27, 1952 (INA) (66

Statutes-at-Large 163)," *Immigration and Naturalization Service*. [Online]:

<http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/statistics/LegisHist/511.htm>] January 27, 2002. xix "Who Gets In: Four

Main Immigration Laws," *INS History, Genealogy, and Education: Main Immigration Laws*. [Online: <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/history/teacher/MainImm.htm>] January 27, 2002. xx *Ibid.* xxi "Mission," *Immigrants Council of Delaware*. [Online: <http://www.delawareimmigrant.com/mision.htm>] January 27, 2002. xxii "General Naturalization Requirements," *Immigration and Naturalization Service*. [Online: <http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/services/natz/general.htm>] January 27, 2002. xxiii "Delaware Immigrants by Nationality and Fiscal Year," *FAIR Delaware*. [Online: <http://www.fairus.org/html/042deins.htm>] January 27, 2002. xxiv "Summary Demographic Data," *FAIR Delaware*. [Online: <http://www.fairus.org/html/042de702.htm>] January 27, 2002.