



[USCIS Begins Transfer of Historical A-Files to National Archives](#)

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A signing ceremony was held on June 3, 2009, to formally announce the schedule that will initiate the permanent retention and transfer of alien registration files (“A-files”) from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to the National Archives and Records Administration.

An A-file documents the complete history of every interaction between the United States government and an individual alien. These comprehensive files may contain a wealth of information for genealogists and historians, from photographs, marriage licenses, foreign birth certificates, recordings, and interview transcripts, in addition to the more routine biographical and demographic information. A-files were previously considered to be temporary records and could have been destroyed 75 years after the date the file was retired to a Federal Records Center or date of last action. Now, however, these A-files will become a permanent record and will be transferred to the custody of the National Archives 100 years from the person’s date of birth. Newly-eligible files will also be transferred to the National Archives for processing every five years.

USCIS currently maintains approximately 53 million A-files. Of these 53 million, 21 million have been retired to a Federal Records Center. The National Archives could finish processing 135,000 files by next summer, at which time these files would become available for public access at National Archives facilities in Kansas City or San Francisco. Copies of the A-files will also be made available through the mail.

More information about the USCIS or the A-file preservation program may be found at: www.uscis.gov.