

Publication Number: M-1514

Publication Title: Indexes of Vessels Arriving at Brownsville, Texas, 1935-1955; Houston, Texas, 1948-1954; and at Port Arthur and Beaumont, Texas, and Lake Charles, Louisiana, 1908-1954

Date Published: 1999

INDEXES OF VESSELS ARRIVING AT BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS, 1935B1955; HOUSTON, TEXAS, 1948B1954; AND AT PORT ARTHUR AND BEAUMONT, TEXAS, AND LAKE CHARLES, LOUISIANA, 1908B1954

### Introduction

On the single roll of this microfilm publication, M1514, are reproduced three indexes to vessels arriving at Brownsville, Texas, 1935B1955; Houston, Texas, 1948B1954; and at Beaumont and Port Arthur, Texas, and Lake Charles, Louisiana, 1908B1954. These records are part of the Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group (RG) 85.

### Background

Early records relating to immigration originated in regional customhouses. The U.S. Customs Service conducted its business by designating collection districts. Each district had a headquarters port with a customhouse and a collector of customs, the chief officer of the district. An act of March 2, 1819 (3 Stat. 489), required the captain or master of a vessel arriving at a port in the United States or any of its territories from a foreign country to submit a list of passengers to the collector of customs. The act also required that the collector submit a quarterly report or abstract, consisting of copies of these passenger lists, to the Secretary of State, who was required to submit such information at each session of Congress. After 1874, collectors forwarded only statistical reports to the Treasury Department. The lists themselves were retained by the collector of customs. Customs records were maintained primarily for statistical purposes.

On August 3, 1882, Congress passed the first Federal law regulating immigration (22 Stat. 214B215); the Secretary of the Treasury had general supervision over it between 1882 and 1891. The Office of Superintendent of Immigration in the Department of the Treasury was established under an act of March 3, 1891 (26 Stat. 1085), and was later designated a bureau in 1895 with responsibility for administering the alien contract-labor laws. In 1900 administration of the Chinese-exclusion laws was added. Initially the Bureau retained the same administrative structure of ports of entry that the Customs Service had used. By the turn of the century it began to designate its own immigration districts, the numbers and boundaries of which changed over the years. In 1903 the Bureau became part of the Department of Commerce and Labor; its name was changed to the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization when functions relating to naturalization were added in 1906. In 1933 the functions were transferred to the Department of Labor and became the responsibility of the newly formed Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Under President Roosevelt's Reorganization Plan V of 1940, the INS was moved to the Department of Justice.

### Records Description

These records consist of indexes to over 4,800 vessels arriving at Brownsville, TX, 1935B1955; over

20,000 vessels arriving at Houston, TX, 1948B1954; and over 5,700 vessels arriving at Beaumont and Port Arthur, TX, and Lake Charles, LA, 1908B1954. Since these are indexes to arrival by *vessels*, names of captains, masters, passengers, or crew members are not included.

#### Index to Vessels Arriving at Brownsville, Texas, 1935B1955

The index cards are arranged chronologically by date of vessel arrival. Index cards for 1935BAugust 15, 1944, include the following information: name of ship, country of registry, and a two-part number such as "43/25" in which "43" means "1943" and "25" *usually*<sup>1</sup> means the 25th vessel to arrive at Brownsville during that year. Index cards for August 16, 1944BDecember 1955 include the following information: name of ship, country of registry, the two-part number described above, and the date of arrival. One card is used to record *each* of a vessel's arrivals.

#### Index to Vessels Arriving at Houston, Texas, July 1948BNovember 1954.

The index cards are arranged roughly alphabetically by the first two or three letters of the full name of the vessel. For example, *Abram S. Hewitt* is filed under "Ab" not "He." Each index card lists multiple arrivals by the same and/or different ships, and includes the following information: name of ship; country of registry; date of arrival; and a number such as 50130/233, in which "50" refers to the U.S. Government fiscal year, "130" is part of all of the numbers, and "/233" may mean the vessel was the 233d to arrive at the port during that year.<sup>2</sup>

#### Indexes to Vessels Arriving at Beaumont and Port Arthur, Texas, and Lake Charles, Louisiana, 1908B1954

The index cards are arranged alphabetically by the full name of the vessel. For example, the *A.B. Barteaux* is indexed under *A.B. Barteaux* not under *Barteaux*. The index cards include the following information: name of ship; country of registry; date of arrival; a two-part number such as 43/15, in which "15" means "1915" and "43" *may* mean the vessel was the 43d to arrive at the port during that year; and a notation such as "crew list," which is often abbreviated as "C.L."

The index is divided into two subseries: (1) Vessels arriving May 1, 1908BJune 30, 1932, and (2) Vessels arriving July 1, 1932BNovember 30, 1954. Neither subseries indicates at *which* of the three ports a particular vessel arrived. In each subseries, one card is used to record *multiple* arrivals by the same vessel.

---

<sup>1</sup> A few of the earliest-arriving vessels share the same number, for unknown reasons.

<sup>2</sup> Some vessels, however, have a "0" number.

## CONTENTS

<u>Roll</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	Index to Vessels Arriving at Brownsville, Texas, 1935B1955
	Index to Vessels Arriving at Houston, Texas, July 1948BNovember 1954
	AaBZy
	Index to Vessels Arriving at Beaumont and Port Arthur, Texas, and Lake Charles,

Louisiana

May 1, 1908BJune 30, 1932

*A.B. Barteaux B Zvir*

July 1, 1932BNovember 30, 1954

*A.S. Hansen B Zorroza*