

A data base for undergraduates on a micro

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A Data Base for Undergraduates on a Micro

For the past three terms we have been working on a study of immigrants in Winnebago County (Wisconsin) for the period 1906 to 1916. Our study began with a 1982 University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Faculty Development Grant to create an experimental history course in which students could learn to use computers for quantitative history. The course has been offered for two terms and the students have discovered that the records are voluminous and the work time-consuming, for in their research they have used immigration and naturalization records of Winnebago County, federal and state censuses, city directories, probate court records, marriage licenses, death certifications, register of deeds records, plat records and maps, applications for employment with local industries, church records, records of social groups, and iconographic records. Thus the students were able to trace the immigrants and their families from the immigration and naturalization records into the community, and in quite a number of cases up to the present day.

For this project the data was entered on the PDP 11/70 digital computer. An indexed sequential file was created. The program, written in BASIC-PLUS, prompts the user to enter data that has been previously gathered. Data is checked for character length, data type (numeric, character) and ranges (day, month, year). These checks are made for each response to a question; for example, country born? If the user answers with more than twenty characters, an appropriate error response is displayed and that question is displayed again.

The Project

Once the data has been entered for immigrants, the student may print this data, display it back to the CRT, or enter the update section of the program and change any mistakes made on individual questions. After the errors have been corrected a program is run to extract the data from the indexed file and create a new sequential file compatible with SPSS-X (a statistical software package). In addition, a couple of small programs are used to change the file format of the data. The data is then backed off to tape as a sequential file, but may be copied back to disk and converted to an indexed file for updating.

The statistical package SPSS-X is set up using FILE TYPE GROUPED in order to handle multiple and variable numbers of records per case; variable only because there are three records per child and up to fifteen children allowed. A fixed length record could have been created during the input program

if the maximum number of records would have been created and written to the file with all variables being set to missing in the superfluous records for families with less than 15 children, but this would have substantially increased the file size. Indeed, we soon discovered that the data collected per case was huge. For example, for the primary immigrant there were 19 records (of 80 bytes each) per case; for the child were 3 records per child, with the possibility of 19 children per case, leading to 57 possible records. This resulted in a range of a minimum of 19 records per case to a maximum of 76 records per case, with a maximum of 4608 bytes per case.

Inasmuch as several of our students wanted to work on this project during the summer months when the University's computers (PDP 11/70's and VAX 11/780's) are down at various times for maintenance and software installations in preparation for the fall semester, we decided to shift segments of the project to microcomputers. Thus students could obtain reports on the immigrant's age at the time of embarkation and reports on the immigrant's age at the time of petition. These reports show frequencies and percents of every age; and a frequency histogram was created as well showing the mode, mean, median, minimum and maximum. In addition, students could obtain reports on the immigrant's occupation at the time of petition. Thus they could list alphabetically all immigrants, all occupations with their frequencies and percents. They could also obtain complete lists of each immigrant, case number and occupation.

Since the data file is large and contains data not needed for this project, a utility program was written to extract only those fields necessary. As indicated previously, the program written in BASIC PLUS on a PDP 11 reads the first record of the sequential data file and uses the case ID as the key field, the number of children as a secondary field, as that will tell students how many records there are for this case. The data needed is then written to a new sequential data file that is compatible with SPSS-X on the IBM XT. The extracted data is then downloaded to the XT. This was done using an IBM XT with a modem, a phone line to connect with the PDP 11 and a communications package called PCTALK which will transfer the data from the PDP-11 disk to the XT's floppy or hard disk. The data file needs to be on the XT's hard disk prior to running the SPSS-X program. Once this is done, SPSS-X, which is on a floppy disk, is initiated, putting the students into interactive mode with SPSS-X. This gives the students entering commands to analyze age and occupation the benefit of receiving immediately syntax error checks for each command entered. This was not possible on the PDP 11/70 or VAX 11/780. Jobs on the VAX had to be run in batch (not interactive).

I will discuss the 550 immigrant records that the students downloaded

this summer by looking at the results under the following rubrics: Arrival, Petition for Citizenship, Age, Physical Appearance, Occupation, Residency, Marital Status, Family Size, Time Lapse between Petition and Citizenship, Certification, and Rejections.

Arrival

68 per cent of the 550 immigrants to Winnebago County who are the subject of this study arrived at the port of *New York* (372 people). Narrative accounts of the Ellis Island experience of these *New York* arrivals are lacking, and statistics cannot provide information about whether the bureaucratic procedures in the vast hall at that point of the debarkation made Ellis Island a purgatory, an *isle of tears*, or a *golden door* for those who eventually came to live in a small city in Wisconsin.

Baltimore was the port of arrival for the second largest number (17.5% of the total); *Philadelphia* (23 people), *Boston* (16) and *Portland* (4) were the first stops for a few others.

46 of the 550 arrived first in *Canada*, not at a United States Atlantic port, and they eventually came across the border at a *Great Lakes* port. *Detroit* was the point of entry for half of those who traveled this route, with *Buffalo*, *Chicago* and *Milwaukee* each receiving three or four. Of these immigrants from the north, one, James Harra (#388)¹, an unmarried laborer from Liverpool, England, lived in Quebec for seven years and then took the Grand Trunk Railroad to Detroit. Martin Dolven (#322), a Norwegian railroad worker, followed that same route, as did Hans Rasmussen (#329), an unmarried Danish cabinet maker. Others came by train to Detroit from Halifax, Nova Scotia. One came into Vermont from Cornwall, Canada.

From Arrival to Petition for Citizenship

The naturalization records provide no detailed information about the 550 petitioners' travels, work, residences, and other experiences between the time they first arrived in America and eventually came into Winnebago County. 107 had made the decision to declare their intention to become citizens before they arrived in Winnebago and had started the naturalization process in

¹ Examples of particular immigrants cited in the text are followed by a case number in parenthesis for reference to the manuscript Immigration and Naturalization Records in the Area Research Center of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Polk Library and to the computer analyses which identify each immigrant by the case number from the manuscripts.

another place (37 outside Wisconsin). Gustave Krause (#40), a laborer from Germany, made his declaration in Marquette, Michigan. Jacob Kratochvil (#101), an Austrian tailor, started his naturalization procedures in Cook County, Illinois and his oldest child was born in Chicago, a double indication of prior residence there.

Examination of the *birthplaces of immigrants' children born after the date of arrival in America and before the date of petition* from Wisconsin yields some information about earlier residences or travels. Michael Kren (#34), a farmer from Germany with a German wife, had one child born in Canada and one in North Dakota.

Such bits of information suggest that a few *petitioners wandered* for a while before reaching Winnebago County. *Most others*, however, reported their date of arrival at a *United States Atlantic port* as only *two or three days earlier* than their date of arrival in Wisconsin, suggesting that they had relatives, friends, contacts or other information about the state perhaps even before they left Europe, bought their train tickets at Ellis Island, and came directly west.

The Petitioners

The bulk of the data used for this computer analysis relates to the immigrants' condition and status at the time of their petitioning for citizenship in Winnebago County.

Age

Of the 542 immigrants who reported a birthdate on the naturalization forms, the *majority were in middle age* when they petitioned for citizenship. 166 were in *their 40s*, 150 in *their 30s*. The *mode* in this analysis was age 33. The *mean and media* were age 45. Thus for the *typical* petitioner, about *fourteen years elapsed between the embarkation for America at age 19 and the petition for citizenship at age 33*. At the extremes, the *oldest petitioner* was 79, the youngest 23. Ivan Jenkyns (#250), an unmarried retired farmer, had left his native England at age 19, farmed in Wisconsin for most of his life, and received his certificate of citizenship when he was nearly 80 years old. Ernst Wuthrich (#497), an unmarried farmer from Switzerland, migrated when he was 8 years old and became a *citizen at age 23*.

Physical Appearance

Some of the official naturalization forms included information about the physical appearance of applicants, and a few generalizations can be made from analyzing that data. The men were slight; most were well under six feet tall and weighed about 135 pounds. More interesting was the common recurrence of a missing index finger. Such a mutilation might have happened in sawmills or in other work-related accidents, or it might have been self-inflicted – a draft evasion technique that was not unknown in nineteenth century European countries with compulsory military service.

Occupation

At the national level, the major labor issue of the new immigration after 1880 was the preponderance of unskilled workers who flooded the labor market, lowered wages or stabilized them at low levels, deterred unionization, and built much of America's transportation and industrial system. *That pattern seems to have prevailed in Winnebago County.* "Laborer" was the most frequent answer to the question in the naturalization papers about the petitioners' occupations. 233, or nearly 37% of the 550 petitioners defined their work that way.

By contrast, 136 people or 25% listed a skilled craft as their means of livelihood. Within that artisan group, woodworkers outnumbered all others. Oshkosh, the urban center of Winnebago County, was known in the early twentieth century as "Sawdust City" because of the number of its lumber and woodworking establishments. Perhaps that reputation attracted workers in wood or, more likely, job opportunities and apprenticeships for newly arrived Europeans were most abundant in wood businesses. 21 petitioners listed themselves as *carpenters*, the largest category of skilled workers in the study group. Cabinet maker, contractor, architect-builder, wood turner, timber estimator, lumber inspector were given as the occupations of 23 others.

Besides wood products, *paper*, *cheese*, and *beer* were also produced in Winnebago County and environs; and sixteen papermakers, six cheesemakers, and two brewers were counted among the petitioners. There were also 11 blacksmiths, 7 machinists, 6 painters, 9 tailors, 7 shoemakers, 6 butchers, and one or two representatives of other crafts and trades among them: plumber, mason, bricklayer, iron moulder, cooper, glassblower, engineer, tinsmith, electrician, printer, upholsterer, baker.

Farmers made up a little over 15% of the petitioners (83 people). Another 10% were in jobs associated with business, sales, or trade. The *tavern* business was the most popular enterprise for immigrants in Oshkosh; among

the petitioners were 13 saloonkeepers, bartenders, and bar clerks. There were also 11 *merchants*, 9 *peddlers*, and 4 *traveling salesmen*. There were 5 grocers and a sprinkling in other assorted sales jobs: *junk dealer*, real estate, fish dealer, wholesale school supplies, shoe sales, hardware. There were two manufacturers and one superintendent of a paper company.

A few petitioners had *service jobs*: 6 firemen, 2 policemen, a parole agent and the register of deeds represented government services. Two barbers, a bootblack, a gardener, an undertaker, and two janitors were in the records. A drayman, a chauffeur, a boatman, a bicycle repairman, three coachmen, and a railroad flagman and section foreman gave some representation to transportation services.

Only 6 of the group were in *professions*: 2 physicians, 2 male nurses, a chiropractor, and a pastor. Nine had white collar jobs: 8 clerks and a bookkeeper. Completing the list, there were 9 retired persons, 2 students, and an artist.

Residence

A study of residence patterns among the petitioners yielded some data suggesting that Winnebago County petitioners tended to follow the national pattern of ethnic groups settling together in neighborhoods. As their occupations might suggest, most of the petitioners settled in the *city*, not on rural routes or in villages. 249 of the 550 (about 45%) lived in Oshkosh, the county seat and largest city in Winnebago County. An additional 170 lived in the two other industrialized urban centers in the county, 99 in Menasha and 71 in Neenah.

The city of Oshkosh in the nineteenth century was divided socially as well as geographically by the *Fox River*. South of the river was a region of mills and workers' quarters with lower status schools and churches than north of the river. The south side was *geographically smaller than the north*, but 100 of the 249 immigrant petitioners who lived in the city had residences there.

Only about 20 immigrants lived at the same address, most of them relatives or natives of the same village, but some were apparently boarders. *Conrad Schuhart* (#154), a laborer from Poljana, Russia with a Russian wife and five children lived at the same residence with *Johannes Dippel* (#181) a Russian laborer from the same village and a family man with a Russian wife and two children.

John Madison (#262), a Danish woodworker who was a widower without children lived at the same residence with two other immigrants, *John Johnson*

(#264). a Swedish laborer who was single, and Carl Wahlgren (#263), a Swedish laborer who had a Swedish wife and four children.

58 of the petitioners lived on rural routes scattered throughout the sixteen townships of the county, and the remainder lived in the small villages of those townships—communities such as Omro, Winneconne, Eureka, Rush Lake, Allenville, and Larsen.

Marital Status

The great majority of immigrants seeking citizenship were married, 468 of the study group, or nearly 86%. 3 were divorced, 13 were widowers, and 62 were unmarried.

Four of the wives of the married group were listed as living in Europe rather than at their husbands' residences in Winnebago County. Reinhold Jungbauer (#255), a laborer married to a woman, born as he was in Obermoldau, Austria Hungary, listed her residence as unknown; his wife had perhaps not migrated or had returned to Europe, or possibly she had separated from her husband and lived elsewhere in the United States. Such a separation occurred in the marriage of Rudolph Kopiski (#390), a German carpenter, whose Wisconsin-born wife lived in Chicago.

Nearly one-third of the wives of the petitioners were born in the United States (151 wives, or about 31% of the total). Inter-marriage across ethnic and national lines occurred most frequently among Canadian immigrants, 73% of whom married women born in the United States. English (67%), Swiss (67%), and Irish (64%) also tended to marry American women more frequently than women of their own nation of origin.

By contrast, 88% of the Russian immigrants married Russian women, and 83% of the Austrians married wives from their own country. 19 immigrants married wives not only from their own nation of origin but also from their own home town or village.

61 per cent of the German immigrants married German wives, 32% married women born in the United States, one married a Swiss and two married Russians. Scandinavians tended to seek out wives of northern European or American origin. Forty-four per cent of Swedish men married Swedes and the others married wives from Norway, Finland, Germany, and the United States. 52 per cent of Danes married Danes and the others married Norwegians, Swedes, Germans, and Americans. 31 per cent of the Norwegians married wives from their own country, and the others married women from Denmark, Iceland, and the United States.

Family Size

Of the 468 married petitioners, the great majority, 427, had children. The average number of children was 4. The families ranged in size from those with 1 child to one with 14. Fred Galau (#491), a farmer from Germany migrated when he was 17, married a Swiss wife, had his first child when he was 26 and his fourteenth child when he was 51, nine boys and five girls all born in Wisconsin.

Eighty-two families of the 427 households in the study group had more than 7 children: twenty families had 8 children, eighteen had 9, twelve had 10, two had 11, one had 12, and one had 14. (If these figures can be used for social analysis, 10 offspring would seem to have been the acceptable limit on family size, with a dramatic drop between the number of families with 10 and the number with 11.)

The sex division of the children conformed fairly closely to the national average, with a total of 914 female and 836 male children, 78 more female than male. In a few cases, the families produced a string of one sex, had one of the other and then stopped reproducing. John Schneider (#75), a Prussian laborer, and his wife, who was born in Saxony, had eleven girls before John, Jr., the twelfth and last child was born. All the children were Wisconsin natives.

Four families had twins. Two families adopted their children. Adam Block (#9), a Russian laborer married to a Russian wife, had one child, an adopted son named Adam Block, Jr.

Time Lapse between Petition and Citizenship

The time lapse between the date of petition for citizenship and the date of the certificate of citizenship was about 5 months for Winnebago County immigrants. Forty-seven people waited 153 days (5 months and 1 day); thirty-five waited 99 days (3 months, a week and a day). One person had a delay of only 2 weeks; one at the other extreme had a lapse of nearly 8 years. The mean for this analysis was 127.47 days or 4 months and 6 days; the median was 112 days or 3 months and 3 weeks.

Certification

Certificates of citizenship were issued on a limited number of court days during the year, and the number and date of those days varied somewhat between 1907 and 1913. In 1907, there were 6 certification dates, 8 the next year, 16 in 1909, 10 in 1910, 9 in 1911, 6 in both 1912 and 1913.

The changes in the number of certification dates do not correspond to the changing number of aliens admitted to citizenship during the years after 1907. Only 10 people became citizens in Winnebago County in 1907, and 17 in 1908. There was a sharp increase to 56 in 1909 and 67 in 1910. There was a slight drop in 1911 to 63, but the number went up to 72 in 1912 and to 155 in 1913.

The Rejected Few

The naturalization process went smoothly for the vast majority of petitioners, but a few encountered some difficulties. Four had problems proving that they had satisfied the United States residence requirements. Otto Wishnowsky (#82), an unmarried carpenter from Danzig, Germany petitioned in 1909, claiming that he had resided in Memphis, Tennessee for a while before 1907; he was unable to prove that, however, so this petition was denied. He petitioned again in 1910 and was again turned down. In the case of John Hewitt (#216), an Ontario machinist, married, with an infant child, the court clerk sent two official requests to Minnesota for an affidavit to confirm Hewitt's claim that he had resided in that state from 1908 to 1910, but neither request was answered. As a result, Hewitt's petition was denied. Edwin Huband (#243), a papermaker from London, had not lived in Wisconsin for the statutory period, so he was unsuccessful in his petition.

Problems with witnesses caused rejections for still other petitioners. On the day before New Year's Eve in 1911, six Russian Jewish immigrants, four of them peddlers, one a shoemaker, and one an oil merchant, all married with families, were rejected because a rabbi, one of the two witnesses used by all of them, was not a citizen. Three of the six - all peddlers - petitioned again with a different witness and secured certificates of citizenship.

Chris Peterson (#148), a blacksmith from Copenhagen, Denmark, had his wife testify as a witness for him, but she was not a citizen so his petition was rejected. In three other cases, however, women served as witnesses, and the petitions were approved without question.² In all, 10 petitions were denied because a witness was not a citizen.

² Peter Oskar (#375), a cement contractor from Schleswig Holstein, married to a Danish woman, had his minister and the minister's wife testify as his witnesses. George Morasch (#549), a Russian laborer with a Russian wife and nine children, had a laborer and his wife as witnesses. John Dunne (#387), an Irish farmer married to an Oshkosh native, had as one of his witnesses Margaret Kelly, a housewife.

Raimund Hoffman (#242), a Bohemian laborer, was turned down because one of his witnesses had not known him for the full period of his Wisconsin residence. Charles Snyder (#93), a painter from Prussia and a Civil War veteran, ran into an objection that one of his witnesses had not known him for five years; that objection, however, was overruled by the court and Snyder secured his certificate of citizenship without further difficulty.

Two others, John Hintzki (#140), a bartender from Danzig, and Adolf Otto (#142), a German carpenter, used witnesses who were unable to prove their acquaintance with the petitioners.

Frank and Joseph Quella (#446, #447), brothers from Germany, one a contractor and one a laborer, used as witnesses a manufacturer and the city treasurer, one of whom, unidentified, was declared to be not qualified to testify. Soren Rasmussen (#195), A Danish cement contractor, used as his witnesses, a contractor and an insurance man and their testimony was deemed "unsatisfactory." All three of these petitioners suffered rejection because of the inadequacy of their witnesses.

Both witnesses for George Wacker (#377), a male nurse from Germany, were male nurses in Oshkosh and one of them failed to appear to testify; Wacker did not secure citizenship as a result. In other such cases of non-appearing witnesses, though, the petition was continued until a later date, or a substitute witness was used. A few petitioners came prepared with three or four witnesses rather than the two required by law.

Problems with the filing of the Declaration of Intent (filed outside the clerk's office or otherwise not properly executed) caused John Gavin (#33), an Irish timber estimator, John Jungbauer (#105), an Austrian laborer, and Frank Binder (#106), an Austrian carriage builder, to have their petitions denied.

Three petitions were dismissed because the petitioner himself did not appear. Boniface Ganther (#135), a mason from Germany, was hospitalized on the appointed day for his appearance and his case was continued. John Sande (#25), a forty-six year old Norwegian shoemaker, a widower with two children, failed to appear, with no explanation given in the records, and his petition was voided. Jens Jensen (#510), a Danish laborer married to a Danish wife, apparently changed his mind about staying in America, returned to his nation of origin, and did not appear on the day assigned to execute his papers. He was the only one of 550 petitioners who voluntarily abandoned the naturalization process and went back home.

Kazmir (Kermien) Pawlowski (#299), a German laborer married to a Wisconsin native, was denied because he was "unwilling" to learn the laws and Constitution of the United States. The suggestion that he chose not to

learn rather than that he was unable to learn because of a language problem distinguished him from 17 other petitioners who secured citizenship even though they were illiterate or semiliterate or spoke very little English.

Of the 550 people who petitioned for U.S. citizenship in Winnebago County between 1906 and 1916, a total of 36 or 6 1/2 % were denied.

Of the remaining 514 who were successful petitioners, 3 had their citizenship revoked after having secured it. Lucian Koschnik (#192), a German tailor married to a German woman was sixty-three years old when the United States entered World War I; he had his certificate of citizenship cancelled by the United States District Court of Eastern Wisconsin on 1 December 1917 with no reason given in the naturalization papers.

August Borschke (#149), a German carpenter married to an Oshkosh native and the father of five children, had his citizenship cancelled on 6 April 1930 by the United States District Court of Eastern Wisconsin.

Hans Jensen (#136), a ninety-three year old unmarried Danish farmer, lost his citizenship and that information was communicated to the Winnebago County Clerk of Court on 23 July 1957 by the Justice Department.

Conclusion

When the computer analysis of the naturalization records is completed and new students in this continuing research project have time to pursue the personal and family histories of more of the new immigrants in Winnebago County, the cultural and social role of these new citizens as community builders can be fully explored. Such a contribution to local and ethnic history, made in large part by undergraduate students, can confirm for many of us the value of active history for the enrichment of historical studies.