# Early Ships Lists in the 1600 and 1700's

Most of us have searched the passenger records available on ancestry.com, or looked at these records at Ellis Island, Castle Garden or the National Archives websites have discovered that passenger immigration records were not kept centrally before 1820. While the majority of our immigration came after 1820, something like 500,000 people chanced the dangerous ocean voyage from Europe to eastern US ports between 1600 and 1820. While the ship owners (and the taxing authorities in the US) kept records of the cargo, ,including lists of the human cargo, many of these records either did not survive, or are moldering away in archives and local libraries waiting for discovery. However, there are records of this early period, and some of them are available online in five websites, including:

- **Pilgrim Ship Lists from 1602 to 1638**, including abstracted passenger lists for 250 ships which came to Massachusetts, New York and Virginia. This is the most comprehensive list I have seen. Some sources are mentioned, but the complier frankly says there are no original references. Never-the-less, this is still a significant attempt to collect this very early information. See the website http://www.packrat-pro.com/ships/shiplist.htm. Ships are listed by year, or alphabetically, and the ships are linked to passenger data (not searchable). The first ship in this data is the Concord, to Plymouth, MA in 1602.
- **Olive Tree Genealogy Ships Passenger Lists**. Olive Tree was one of the first places to put old passenger lists online, but it is a complex site with a lot of advertising, and it can be hard to find the critical data, which ranges from Columbus' voyage in 1492 to 1900. Following is their data arranged in 10 year periods, and "clicking" on that range will take you to the data.

### Olive Tree Ship Lists, 1400 to 1810

| | |
|---|---|
| 1400-1600 | 1730-1740 |
| 1600-1630 | 1740-1750 |
| 1630-1640 | 1750-1760 |
| 1640-1670 | 1760-1770 |
| 1670-1680 | 1770-1800 |
| 1680-1700 | 1800-1805 |
| 1700-1730 | 1805-1810 |

Ship list data is on various sites, so expect to be bounced from site to site as you search. The formats of the abstraction also vary greatly depending upon who did the work. The Olive Tree Genealogy Ships Passenger Lists are at: http://www.olivetreegenealogy.com/ships/tousa1600-1630.shtml beginning with the Sea Venture to Jamestown in 1609. A separate listing of seventy Dutch ships to "New Holland" is at http://www.olivetreegenealogy.com/nn/ships/. With Olive Tree, you do have to look carefully at the whole page to find the data, as many times it is pushed to the bottom of the page by advertising. Some source information is available for some ships.

- The third source of early ships comes from the **Immigrant Ship Transcribers Guild**, individuals who transcribe ships lists, and put them up on the website at: http://www.immigrantships.net/. Ships lists are displayed in thirteen volumes of 1000 ships/volume. So, each volume has ships from every period and there is not time order. One hundred thirty four ships from the 1600's are spread through all the volumes with the largest number in volume 9. One hundred twenty nine ships from the 1700s are in volumes 1-6, and one hundred twenty ships from the 1600s, many of them in volume 10. These transcriptions are of uniformly high quality, and capture the original writing and order of the passengers on the ship. Some Source data, but limited.

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- The fourth source is **The Ships List** found online at http://www.theshipslist.com. This site concentrates on Canadian ships and has an excellent discussion on this area. Many US ancestors came into Canada, and came across the northern border. Unfortunately, there are not many Canadian records before 1865.
- Ancestry.com also has a section on early ships **Passenger and Immigration Lists Index 1500s to 1900** available at: https://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=7486 (paid subscription). These are an index of individuals only which generally gives the port of arrival, age of the passenger, and year of arrival. While they are sourced, the source is a book reference and would have to be researched in a library. It appears some of this data comes from other genealogy sources, and might not actually be ships data.

Another very good online reference when looking for early ships is **Finding Passenger Lists Before 1820** by Joe Beine. It is available at http://www.germanroots.com/1820.html.

So, overall, much more is available than I thought. To bring 500,000 people to the US, there must have been several thousand ships involved, and this data only accounts for a fraction of that. However, your ancestor just might be among those transcribed! Happy hunting.


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