Armenian Immigration Project

Abstracts of Primary Source Material for the Study of
Armenian Immigration to North America through 1930

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Tonight we'll be discussing a project I've worked on over the last several years that I call the Armenian Immigration Project. Has anyone here searched for their family using the database search tools? [show of hands]

Project Mission

- Abstracts of Primary Source Material for the Study of Armenian Immigration to North America through 1930
  - ❑ centralized index for finding abstracts of <u>primary</u> American source records relating to Armenian immigrants
  - ❑ free searchable online database
    - Queries (lists and links to individual entries)
    - Reports (statistical summaries)
  - ❑ multiple types of primary sources (ship manifests, censuses, births, marriages, deaths, military, naturalizations, passports, and newspaper advertisements)
  - ❑ linkage of records (with photos and other images)

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First of all, what is this project all about? It focuses on Armenian immigration to North America (USA and Canada) in the period prior to 1930. That includes early immigration starting in the middle 1800s, those arriving in the years leading up to 1915 and the genocide, and the refugees arriving in the decade after the end of World War 1. My intent is to provide a centralized index for finding abstracts of primary source records relating to Armenian immigrants. The key feature is a free, searchable online database, incorporating nine different types of sources, linking records together, even including old photos of the immigrants themselves.

First, we'll cover the project mission and overview. (There are two duplicate sessions on today's agenda.) Then, we will discuss American primary sources – what that term means, which ones are included, and the value of each. The third session will show the online database and search tools. We'll do a live demo, demonstrating how you can use it to find out more about your Armenian relatives who came to America in those early years.

Unique challenges of Armenian genealogical research

- Primary records from Ottoman, Russian, and Persian empires lost or inaccessible
- Older generations no longer living; difficulty talking about the past, or too young to remember
- Fragmentary nature of records
- Scarcity of Armenians in diaspora who can read Armenian (or Ottoman Turkish)
- Many records in USA/Canada are now online, but:
  - variability of spellings of personal and place names
  - no comprehensive indexing of Armenians (like PRDH - Programme de recherche en démographie historique)

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Why is this project needed? Researchers of Armenian genealogy face many unique challenges not often encountered by genealogists with western European roots whose ancestors have been in America for several hundred years. Few records from the old country are available and accessible, the survivors are no longer with us, and little work has been done to aggregate records relating to Armenian immigration.

Genesis of the Armenian Immigration Project web site

- Dikran Arslanian (Mark's paternal grandfather)
    - born ca. 1883 in Sergevil, Keghi, Erzurum, Turkey
    - emigrated to USA in 1906; settled in Pacific NW, then Fresno, California; married a French-Canadian woman (7 children), died in 1965 (never met him)
- Mark's correspondence with his father's cousins (genocide survivors) in 1970's; research in primary source records in USA (census, ship manifests, etc.)
- Torn Between Two Lands: Armenians in America, 1890 to World War I, by Robert Mirak (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983)

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I have one Armenian grandparent – my paternal grandfather Dikran Arslanian, who was from the eastern Ottoman province (or *vilayet*) of Erzurum. He came through Ellis Island (New York) in 1906, and settled in the Pacific northwest, marrying a French-Canadian woman. They had seven children and moved to Fresno, California in the early 1930's. I never met my grandfather, nor did I live near my Armenian relatives. Much of what I learned about my Armenian family came through correspondence in the 1970s with older cousins of my father, two of whom were survivors of the death marches. I was inspired by a fascinating book written by Robert Mirak in 1983, dealing in-depth with Armenian immigration to America.

. . .

- Keghi Immigrants web site (2001)
  - ❑ list of 2,690 ship manifest entries for immigrants from kaza of Keghi (in the eastern Turkish vilayet of Erzurum)
- Armenian DNA Project (2005)
  - ❑ started at FamilyTreeDNA with focus on Keghi (y-DNA)
  - ❑ expanded to all Armenians – now about 3,450 members (y-DNA, mtDNA, autosomal DNA) – Peter Hrechdakian (2009)
- Armenian Immigration Project (2011)
  - ❑ expanded focus of Keghi Immigrants web site to all Armenian immigrants to North America through 1930
  - ❑ expanded to other types of primary sources and added online database search with linkage of source types

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About 17 years ago, images of ship manifests for Ellis Island in New York were made available online. I started abstracting ship manifests for Armenian immigrants from my family's part of Armenia in Erzurum. Back then, the project consisted of output from large Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. In 2005, I ordered a y-DNA test from Family Tree DNA to start the Armenian DNA Project, focusing on immigrants from Keghi in Erzurum. In 2009, Peter Hrechdakian approached me and asked if he could join me and expand the scope to include all Armenians. Peter, along with Hovann Simonian, did a wonderful job of expanding the DNA project to about 2,500 members and collaborating with other DNA research projects and historical ventures.

The success of that project encouraged me to expand my research of Armenian immigration, as well. I started abstracting ship manifests for all Armenian immigrants, and began incorporating other types of primary sources. Early in 2015, I figured out how to put the information online in a searchable database format, with easy-to-use queries and reporting tools.

Questions Answered with American Sources

- How did my relatives come to America – date, ports, ship, who traveled with, leaving, & joining?
- What town/village did they come from?
- Where did they live in America – addresses, occupation(s), who lived with them?
- Who did they marry, who were their children, when/where/how did they die?
- Who were their relatives and friends?
- What did they look like?
- Did they serve in the military?
- Did they travel back & forth several times?

So, what types of things can we learn about our family in these American sources? The answer is: a lot. Here are some examples. The main challenge is finding the records and organizing and presenting the information in a way that is useful.

How many of you belong to the Armenian Genealogy group on Facebook, created by Tracy Rivest Keeney? [show of hands] I strongly encourage you to join this group (over 11,000 members now from around the world). Many of them are key contributors of content to my database. Others (such as George Aghjayan) are actively uncovering and abstracting records from the Middle East, including records from the Ottoman era in Turkey. Many subject matter experts in history, linguistics, genetics, genealogy, and other fields are represented.
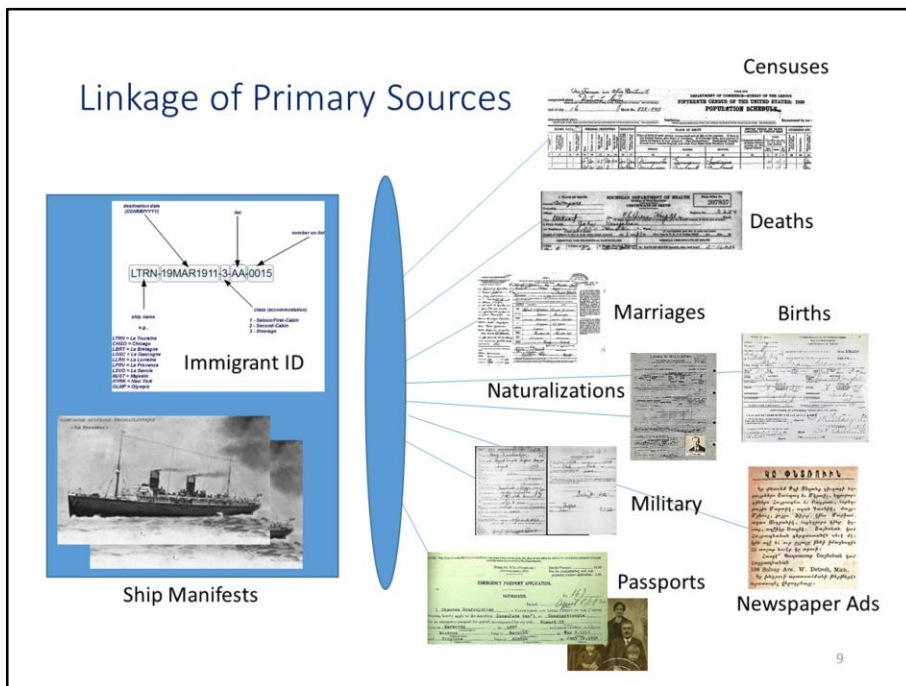
This project and its database incorporate primary sources from records in the USA and Canada. Primary sources are original records, most of which are now available online. We are creating abstracts of the information in these records along with clear citations of the primary sources, so that you can locate and examine the original images (which is strongly encouraged). The information is put into an online database that is freely accessible through a web browser over the Internet using clear, simple search tools.

By linking these records together, we get a much more complete picture of the individual immigrants. We also learn about connections to other family members and friends from the Old Country. **That is the theme and mission of this project.** In the database I've created, I link records together with a field called the Immigrant ID. This is a unique pointer to each individual ship manifest entry. Many immigrants, particularly the men, went back and forth across the ocean multiple times; each entry generated a new Immigrant ID. With the help of several of you in this room, we have abstracted over 66,000 ship manifest entries. (In all, we have abstracted over 140,000 records.) Again, the focus is on those Armenians whose family came to the USA or Canada prior to 1930. Over 95% of these were from Ottoman Turkey. Significant waves of immigration of Armenians from the Republic of Armenia and the Middle East diaspora occurred after 1930, but are not yet included in the database.

Holistic View
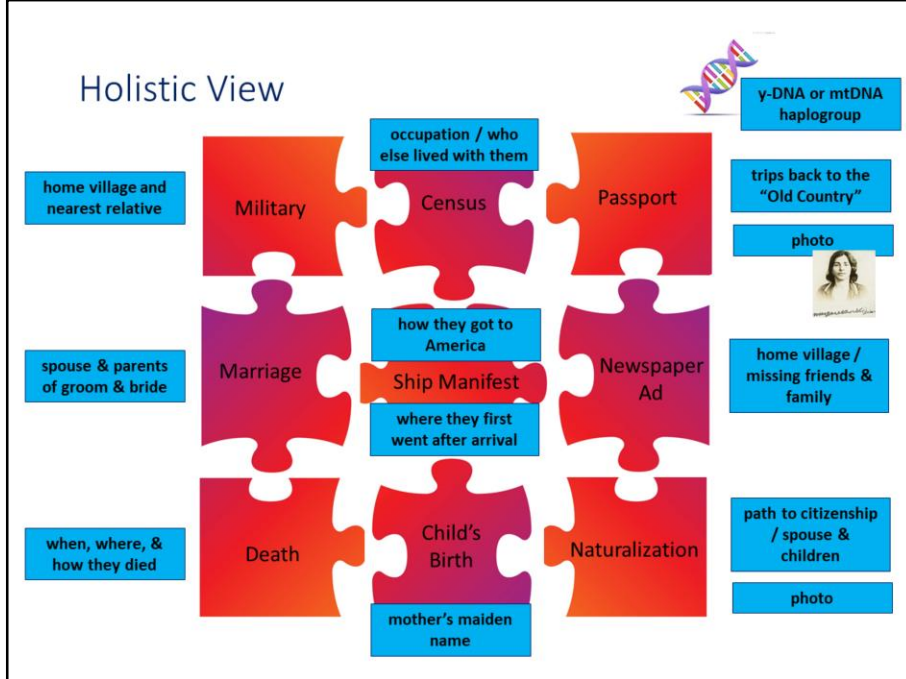
I like to use the analogy of a jigsaw puzzle for this project. It is like a jigsaw puzzle in multiple dimensions with millions of pieces. First, we have to locate the pieces, abstract information from them, and start to put them together. Right now, we've found over 140,000 pieces. As we find more pieces and start to put them together, a more complex picture starts to emerge. Each source has its own unique value. For example, I might find 10 records for a person, only one of which actually gives their village of birth, or maybe their mother's maiden name.

The Immigrant's Network
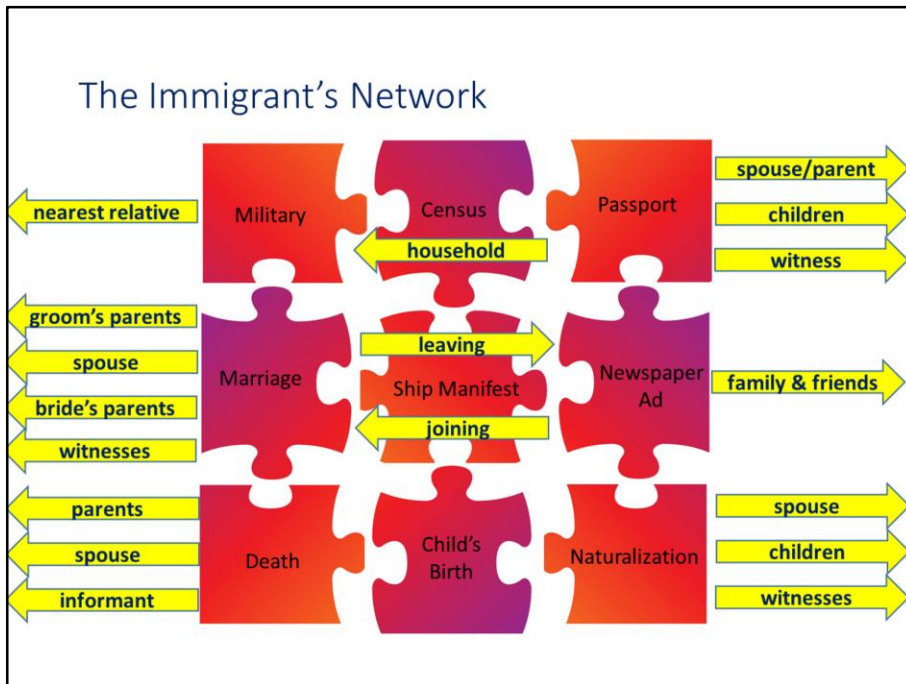
Key to getting an overall picture of an individual is learning about other family, friends, and associates to whom they are connected. For example, ship manifest entries starting in 1907 ask for the name, relationship, and address of the person the immigrant is leaving behind in the Old Country, as well as the person they are joining in America. If the immigrant then got married after arriving in America, the marriage record may give the names of the parents of both the bride and groom, including the mothers' maiden names. Missing persons ads were placed in Armenian newspapers just after the end of WW1, seeking information on the whereabouts of family and friends who may have survived the genocide.

The Immigrant's Network . . .
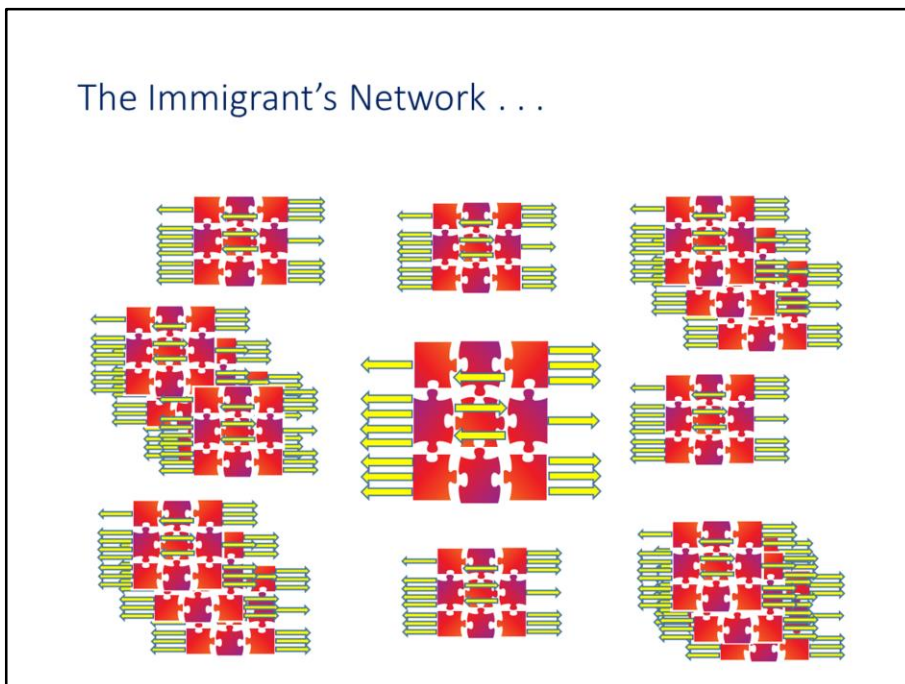
Each of these linkages has its own linkages, so you can build a very complex, expansive tree of relationships. By looking at an immigrant community like Fresno and Tulare Counties in California, you get a good sense of how interconnected all these families are, both here and in the Old Country. You may also learn about many more relatives you didn't know about before.

Power of Linking Records for an Individual

- Provides a much more complete picture of a person's history by combining information from different primary sources and timeframes
  - ❑ date & place of birth (including town/village)
  - ❑ names of parents, spouse, & close relatives & friends
  - ❑ dates & places of marriage(s) & death
  - ❑ photo(s) - helps names, dates, & places come alive
- Shows <u>interrelationships</u> of individuals (relatives, neighbors from villages/towns in "old country")
- Shows corroboration or discrepancies of information from record to record
- Find that "gem"

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Once someone immigrated to America, key events in their lives were recorded by a number of other document (primary sources). By looking at a number of different documents for an individual, we get a much more complete picture of that person, maybe even a contemporary photo or two. We also learn about their connections to others, relatives, friends and associates.

By comparing information from different sources for an individual, some information is in agreement, some is not. If we see corroboration from independent contemporary sources, we can be reasonably certain it is correct. But why do we see discrepancies, especially with dates and spelling of names?

Often, a key piece of information (that "gem") might only be found in one of a dozen records for an individual – maybe the village of birth or the mother's maiden name. Or maybe that gem can only be found in a sibling's record.

Reasons for Incorrect / Inconsistent Information in Primary Sources

- Informant didn't know
- Lack of understanding between clerk and informant due to language difference
- Error in transcribing between work document and official document (or copying of official document)
- Change of place names, borders; no clarity regarding level of place to use in the administrative hierarchy (e.g., village/town, kaza, sanjak, vilayet)
- Delay in time between event and recording of information
- Deliberate falsification (informant or clerk)

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There are many reasons why information is inconsistent, or just plain wrong. In my opinion, here are some likely explanations. Never assume that a fact is absolutely true, just because you see it written down or have heard it from a family member. Always look for corroboration from independent sources. Learn to accept that you may not ever get 100% certainty. (That's the nature of historical research, like it or not.)

Birth dates are one of those problem areas in Armenian genealogy. When comparing different early primary source records for an individual, you will rarely see consistency in the birth date. Did these immigrants really know their exact birth dates? To answer this, I looked at the 7,500+ records in the Military database, and created a histogram showing the distribution of birth days across the month. If truly random, you would expect to see a fairly consistent distribution of birth days between 1 and 28, with less between 29 and 31. What I found instead was a huge spike at day 15, with lesser spikes at 1, 5, 10, 20, and 25. These men, or the clerks recording the information, were clearly rounding the days to the 15th, the 1st, or a multiple of 5. If someone only knew they were born sometime in the month of March, that got rounded to 15 March. (Maybe that is an artifact of an instruction given to the draft registrars in their training.)

Where Did They Go?

Joining Country	Joining State/Province	Joining Town	Total	% of Total
USA	NY	New York	13,935	21.3%
USA	RI	Providence	4,680	7.1%
USA	MA	Boston	4,033	6.2%
USA	MA	Worcester	2,749	4.2%
USA	MI	Detroit	2,273	3.5%
USA	PA	Philadelphia	2,053	3.1%
USA	CA	Fresno	1,856	2.8%
USA	IL	Chicago	1,550	2.4%
USA	MA	Lawrence	1,521	2.3%
USA	MA	Watertown	1,265	1.9%
USA	WI	Racine	1,055	1.6%
USA	NY	Troy	1,026	1.6%
USA	NJ	W. Hoboken	947	1.4%

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The ship manifests indicated the address where the immigrant was destined. (They may have moved on from there after some time and settled elsewhere.)

New York City was the most common destination, followed by Providence, Rhode Island and then Boston, Massachusetts. Fresno appears in the top ten destinations, but 2/3 of the settlers of Fresno spent some time first in places like New York and Massachusetts before arriving in Fresno.

Comparing data from different sources can answer questions about demographic trends

What route did Armenian immigrants take to get to Fresno County?

Original Dest.	#	%
NY	230	32.4%
CA	227	32.0%
MA	133	18.7%
RI	31	4.4%
NJ	23	3.2%
PA	20	2.8%
IL	9	1.3%
CT	8	1.1%
QC	8	1.1%
ON	5	0.7%
MI	4	0.6%
TX	4	0.6%
NH	4	0.6%
OH	1	0.1%
WI	1	0.1%
IN	1	0.1%
MO	1	0.1%
Total	710	100.0%

Original Destination (based on 1920 Census)

Legend: NY ▪ CA ▪ MA ▪ RI ▪ NJ ▪ PA ▪ IL ▪ CT ▪ QC
ON ▪ MI ▪ TX ▪ NH ▪ OH ▪ WI ▪ IN ▪ MO

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select joiningstateprovince, count(*) as total from main where immigrantid in (select
ImmigrantID from censuses where censusyr = "1920" and StateProvince = "CA"
and county = "Fresno" and ImmigrantID <> "" and ImmigrantID not like "%,%")
group by JoiningStateProvince order by total desc
```

Having this amount of information in a database allows us to do investigations into many different types of questions about these immigrants. In this case, we were able to determine that most of the Fresno Armenians spent time in New York or Massachusetts before arriving in Fresno County.

Agenda

- Basics
  - ❑ Welcome, project mission and overview
- Primary Sources
  - ❑ ship manifests, censuses, births, marriages, deaths, military, naturalizations, passports, and newspaper advertisements
- Live Demo
  - ❑ Online database reports & queries

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In this session, we will discuss American primary sources – what that term means, which ones are included, and the value of each.

Types of Primary Sources

Definition: an official document created near the time of the event for governmental, religious, or commercial purposes (from original images only)

- **Ship Manifests**
- Censuses
- Military
- Births
- Marriages
- Deaths

- Naturalizations
- Passports
- Newspapers Ads

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You keep hearing me refer to primary sources. What are they? I define a primary source as an original record (often handwritten) that was created near the time of some event. I work exclusively from images of original sources, mostly online now. In theory, all Armenian immigrants to North America from the middle 1800s onward should appear on one or more ship manifests (or a border crossing document). Ship manifests are lists of passengers on the steamships bringing people to USA and Canadian seaports (like Ellis Island in New York, as well as a number of others – Halifax, Quebec, Montreal, Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, etc.). Once an Armenian has arrived here, they and their families will also appear in a number of other types of records.

Ship Manifests

- Purpose – record each entry into the country (USA or Canada), later referenced for naturalization, etc.
- Created by – steamship company (e.g., French Fabre Lines) (using form designed by incoming country's immigration service)
- Value
    - origin port & date; destination port & date
    - place of birth and last permanent residence
    - who joining (with destination address)
    - who leaving in country of origin (1907 and later)
    - should exist (theoretically) for every immigrant (at least once)

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Here is a quick review of the different primary sources in the project. I'm not going to go into detail on each one, but will highlight why each is important.

The core source is the ship manifest, since every immigrant (in theory) should be represented on one or more ship manifests. I use these to link all of the other records together (for an individual). They contain a lot of useful information (especially 1907 and later) linking the Old Country to America.

"The immigration official at Ellis Island changed my ancestor's name" – MYTH

- Immigration forms designed by incoming government (e.g., USA), filled out by steamship company in country of origin <u>before</u> departure; clerk used information provided by travel agents upon advance ticket purchase

A common myth is that "The immigration official at Ellis Island changed my ancestor's name". The Ellis Island officials had nothing to do with the creation of the ship manifest. That was done, in accordance with US immigration law, by clerks of the shipping companies at the port of departure (usually in Europe and the Middle East), often using information sent to them by travel agents selling the tickets. There are many reasons why names were misspelled or changed on the ship manifests, but these occurred well before they ever got to Ellis Island. The only changes I've seen on ship manifests (written over the original names) are spellings that more closely resemble standard transliterations of Armenian names to a Latin alphabet (where they were badly mangled in the first place). Most name changes occurred after the immigrant got to America, usually by their choice.

Ship Manifest (Class of Service)

- Three classes: Saloon/1st-Cabin, 2nd Cabin, & Steerage
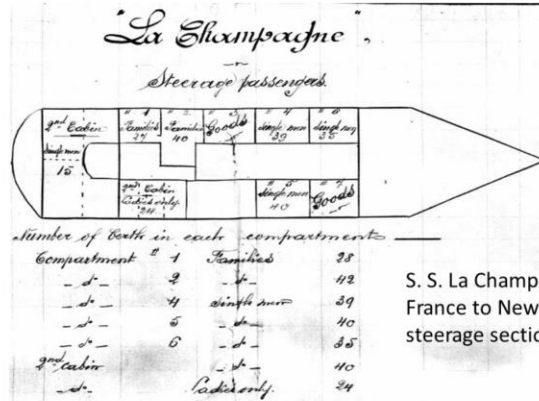
S. S. La Champagne (sailing from Le Havre, France to New York, NY, USA) with layout of steerage section from 1896

On ship manifests, you'll see the term Class of Service. Passengers traveled in one of three classes: First-Cabin, Second-Cabin, or Steerage (the lowest class). Around 92% of Armenians traveled in Steerage. This diagram from one steamship, the La Champagne, shows the layout of the steerage section, where men, women, and families were segregated in their own compartments.

Censuses

- Purpose – every 10 years, enumerate every resident living in the country to provide data for public policy decisions
- Created by – local census enumerator for each enumeration district
- Value
  - **family groupings (or groupings of men in boardinghouses) and relationships (extended families)**
  - marital status, year of immigration, naturalization status
  - occupation, residence address
  - caution: reliability of information depends upon informant's knowledge of resident

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Censuses in USA and Canada occurred every 10 years. I like censuses because they often show the structure of family groups, or (in the case of boardinghouses) men from the same village living together. Keep in mind that quality of the information provided depends on the knowledge of the informant. Be particularly wary of information for large groups of men in boardinghouses.

Military

- Purpose – register men of "fighting age" for possible draft conscription (USA – WW1 & WW2); attestation papers for men joining the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) (Canada – WW1)
- Created by – local draft/conscription officials
- Value
  - ❏ **village or town of birth (often)**
  - ❏ birth date (many are just estimates!)
  - ❏ naturalization status
  - ❏ occupation (employer), residence address
  - ❏ nearest relative and dependents (for WW1, these may be living in the "old country")

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World War 1 and 2 military draft registrations are a great source of the name of the village/town of birth. Some of them also mention the "nearest relative". WW1 draft registrations (in the USA) are for men born between 1872 and 1900. WW2 (old men's) draft registrations are for men born between 1877 and 1897. Another WW2 draft registration was recently made available for younger men, those born between 1897 and 1928.

Births

- Purpose – record birth of a child
- Created by – church or local government official
- Value
  - ❑ **names of parents of child (including mother's maiden name)**
  - ❑ place of birth of each parent
  - ❑ father's occupation
  - ❑ parents' address

The most important feature of birth certificates or registers is that they often give the names of the parents of the bride and groom, in many cases the maiden surnames of the mothers.

Marriages

- Purpose – record marriage of bride and groom
- Created by – church or local government official
- Value
  - ❑ **names of parents of bride and groom**
  - ❑ prior number of marriages
  - ❑ names of witnesses
  - ❑ occupation

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The most important feature of marriages is that they often give the names of the parents of the bride and groom, in many cases the maiden surnames of the mothers.

Deaths

- Purpose – record death (with cause of death to provide data for public policy decisions)
- Created by – undertaker and physician (in county of death)
- Value
  - ❑ **names of parents**
  - ❑ date and place of birth (rarely includes village or town)
  - ❑ date, place, and cause of death
  - ❑ years in locality, state/province, country (sometimes)
  - ❑ names of spouse and informant
  - ❑ caution: reliability of information depends upon informant's knowledge of decedent (long ago)

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Death records may give the names of the parents, including the mother's maiden name. Keep in mind that the information given about birth date and place and parents' names are often incorrect, only as good as the informant's knowledge.

Naturalizations

- Purpose – apply for citizenship (USA)
- Created by – clerk at local courthouse
- Value
  - ❑ **details about immigration (helps locate ship manifest)**
  - ❑ village or town of birth (often) and birth date
  - ❑ **photo! (starting in early 1930s)**
  - ❑ name of spouse with marriage date and place
  - ❑ **names of children with dates and places of birth**
  - ❑ caution: immigration details (date and name of ship) are often incorrect; should be used for guidance to narrow down search for ship manifest

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Naturalization records are very important. They often give the village/town of birth and can help you find the ship manifest. Starting in the early 1930s, the Declaration of Intention document provided a photo of the applicant.

Passports

- Purpose – for USA citizens, to prove citizenship for travel abroad
- Created by – clerk at local courthouse or USA consulate overseas
- Value
  - **details about immigration (helps locate ship manifest)**
  - village or town of birth (often) and birth date
  - **photo! (starting around 1915)**
  - name of spouse with marriage date and place
  - names of children with dates and places of birth
  - caution: immigration details (date and name of ship) are often incorrect; should be used for guidance to narrow down search for ship manifest

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Passports were issued to USA citizens going overseas (or to their wives and children being repatriated after the end of WW1). Like naturalization records, they often give the village/town of birth and can help you find the ship manifest. The best thing they provide are photos starting in 1915!

Newspaper Ads (Missing Persons / Am Searching)

- Purpose – find missing friends and relatives after the end of WW1
- Created by – person placing ad with newspaper
- Value
  - **best source of name of origin village or town**
  - **mentions family members found in no other records (many never heard from again)**
  - tells where the missing persons were last known to have been (Der Zor, Bulgaria, Caucasus, etc.)
  - easy to connect record to WW1 draft registration and 1920 census (since date of most ads are 1919-1920)

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Passports were issued to USA citizens going overseas (or to their wives and children being repatriated after the end of WW1). Like naturalization records, they often give the village/town of birth and can help you find the ship manifest. The best thing they provide are photos starting in 1915!

Steps to Abstract Primary Records

- Select town/city of interest
- Select source type
- Receive spreadsheet (prepared by Mark)
- Access online records (<u>actual images</u>)
- Search through records systematically, enter data into spreadsheet
  - ❑ Read & follow instructions carefully
  - ❑ Send for review
  - ❑ Submit batches for processing
- Process data & publish abstracted records (Mark)

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When someone volunteers to contribute content to the project, I try to assign them an area of special interest to them. This might be the community in which their own family settled. Or it might be the city where the volunteer currently lives. To start out with, I assign a record type that is fairly easy to abstract, like military draft registrations or marriages.

I send the volunteer an Excel spreadsheet and instructions on how to access the record images, usually on FamilySearch.org (or on Ancestry.com, if they have a subscription). The abstracts are always done off the actual images. I'm not interested in abstracting off an indexed list that someone else created. On the spreadsheet, I have a page of detailed instructions to ensure consistency in how the original records are abstracted. As a rule, I want the data abstracted verbatim, showing misspellings and other inconsistencies in all their glory. The volunteer then submits their abstracts to me in batches (maybe a range of years or by letters of the alphabet) for review. I will give them some guidance and then accept the abstracts for processing.

I will standardize the last names, while preserving the original spellings. I will also standardize the spelling and format of street names and other place names. Then, I will import the data into my database and publish it online (usually 1 or 2 times per month).

Each type of source, like a death certificate, comes in many different formats, varying by timeframe and jurisdiction. I have created spreadsheets for entering key information from each record type. A number of volunteers have each "adopted" the responsibility for abstracting records for their particular timeframe and geography of interest.

It is very important to follow the instructions carefully. This helps to minimize my processing time and allows me to get the content online sooner. You will undoubtedly run into special situations. When that happens, just ask me how to handle it.

I love to attach photos to the abstracts to help them come alive. Photos prior to 1950 are preferred. They can come from naturalization applications after 1930, passports after 1915, or just a family photo that you can send to me. The higher the image resolution, the better. I will crop them into "head shots".

Focus Items

- Continue abstracting records from primary sources
  - ❏ expand coverage for other geographies
  - ❏ deepen coverage (censuses, passports, naturalizations)
  - ❏ link records together
  - ❏ gather more personal photos to add to records
- Add more primary source types (birth, alien registrations, etc.)
- **Recruit others to "adopt" geographies and expand workforce to accelerate the pace of abstracting**
- Scan images from Armenian churches and newspapers in America (<u>high resolution</u>)

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So where do we go from here? I've been working on this for about 17 years, not counting my own family genealogy (which I started about 47 years ago). We are just scratching the surface, only about halfway through abstracting ship manifests prior to 1930. Many of the other primary sources like censuses, military draft registrations, deaths, and marriages have been abstracted for only a few geographies (areas of my own personal interest). I will continue to drive content into these databases, but significant progress requires that this be team effort. Some individuals in this room have already graciously contributed their time to abstracting records for this project. I would like to see people with the time, inclination, research experience, and basic computer skills adopt a geography or community and primary source and periodically send their abstracts to me for inclusion into the database. For example, someone could take Troy, New York and "own" the abstraction of draft registrations for WW1 and WW2; or do marriages in Philadelphia through 1930. I've already built standardized Excel spreadsheets for capturing abstracts from each primary source.

Photos really make the names, dates, and place come alive. These were real people. I'd like to attach many more photos to these records (pre-1950 "head shots").

Finally, the structure allows for this to be expanded beyond 1930 and to other countries where we can get access to primary source records (the images) online.

Thanks very much for your time today. I hope it has been a useful discussion. If you have any other questions or feedback, or would like to contribute, please look me up. My e-mail address is on the front of this presentation, in case you'd like to send me an e-mail.

Each type of source, like a death certificate, comes in many different formats, varying by timeframe and jurisdiction. I have created spreadsheets for entering key information from each record type. A number of volunteers have each "adopted" the responsibility for abstracting records for their particular timeframe and geography of interest. (We'll talk in depth about this in the last session on today's agenda.)

Agenda

- Basics
  - ❑ Welcome, project mission and overview
- Primary Sources
  - ❑ ship manifests, censuses, births, marriages, deaths, military, naturalizations, passports, and newspaper advertisements
- Live Demo
  - ❑ Online database reports & queries

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In this session, we will discuss the online database and search tools. The live demo will demonstrate how you can use it to find out more about your Armenian relatives who came to America in those early years.

There is a main web site home page that provides a detailed description of the project and its primary sources.

There is also a launch page for access to the online database. On that page are links to queries, which present lists and links to individual entries (abstracts of primary source records), as well as reports (which are statistical summaries of the information).

I brought a stack of business cards with me that have my e-mail address and a link to the Home Page. Be sure to grab one of these before you leave today.

Before doing a live demo, let's review two important concepts: standardized surnames and hierarchy of place names.

Standardized Surnames

- extreme variability in spelling of surnames in primary records
- defining a "correct" spelling is problematic, even within the same family
- Standardized Surname is simply a label given to a group of phonetically similar surnames, or converting an anglicized name back to its Armenian equivalent

Grjigian =

Gerjigian	Grdjiguian	Gurghikian
Ghirjighian	Grjikian	Gurgignian
Ghourghikian	Guerdjeguian	Gurgiguian
Girdjikian	Guerdjigian	Gurjignian
Girdyikian	Guerdjikian	Kirdyikian
Giricigian [?]	Guirdjikian	Kurdjikian
Gourghiguian	Gurdjiguian	

One of the most challenging aspects of searching for Armenians in historical records is the variability in the spelling of personal names. There are many reasons why names are spelled so many different ways (which we won't go into here). Even members of the same family spell the names differently. What I've done in this project is grouped surnames together, based on the phonetic pronunciation, a common root, or reverting an anglicized name back to its Armenian or Turkish form. Then I've given a standard label to each group of names. That's not to say that the standard label is the **only** correct spelling. For example, here are just some of the different ways we've seen of spelling Tracy's family name of Grjigian.

The Ottoman Empire, in the decades preceding WW1, was organized by vilayet, what we would call a state or province. None of the vilayets were exclusively Armenian, although higher concentrations of Armenians lived in the area of historic Armenia in the eastern vilayets, as well as in an area historically known as Cilicia on the Mediterranean Sea. There was a large concentration of Armenians living across the eastern border in what was then the Russia Empire; this is what became the Republic of Armenia in 1918. Armenians also lived in the Persian Empire (later known as Iran). In the period before 1930, over 95% of the Armenian immigrants to the USA and Canada came from the former Ottoman Empire (Turkey).

Administrative Structure of Ottoman Empire
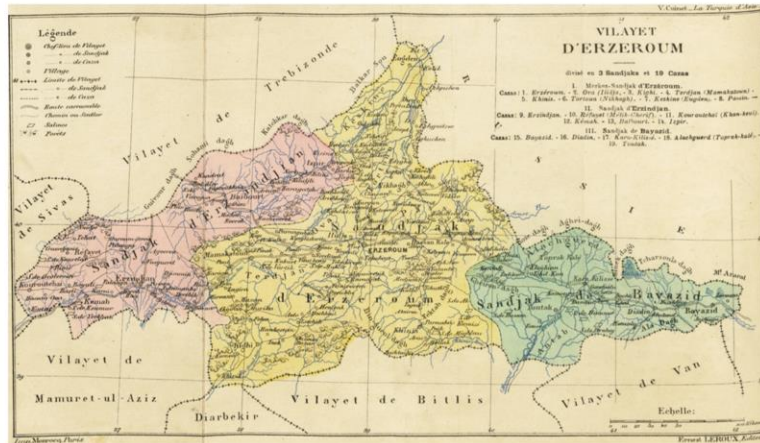
Each vilayet was further subdivided into sanjaks, and these into kazas. Here is a map of the eastern vilayet of Erzurum.

Hierarchy of Place Names

Ottoman	USA/Canada					
Vilayet	State/Province	California	Erzurum	Ankara	Sivas	Van
Sanjak		(San Joaquin Valley)	Erzurum	Kayseri	Sivas	Van
Kaza	County	Tulare	Keghi	Everek	Sivas	Van
Nahiye	Township	Orosi				
Town/Village	Town/Village	Yettem	Sergevil	Tomarza	Sivas	Van

- Changing administrative divisions and boundaries
- Used structure and boundaries as of just prior to WW1
- Ottoman Empire = "Turkey"; Russian Empire = "Russia"

Keghi (Sergevil), Erzurum, Turkey
Everek (Tomarza), Ankara, Turkey
Kars (Sarikamish), Russia
Brantford, ON, Canada
Yettem, CA, USA

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Understanding the geography and administrative structure of the Ottoman and Russian empires is important when researching Armenian genealogy. Part of the challenge is that borders and names have changed frequently, even in the past couple of hundred years. For the purpose of this project, I have standardized on the names and borders in place at the time of the start of WW1. For simplicity, I refer to the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East as Turkey, and the Russian Empire in the Caucasus as Russia. The historical boundaries of Armenia have spanned both empires, as well as the Persian Empire (now Iran).

I've organized the place names of Turkey according to the Ottoman administrative structure. Let's see how that compares to the USA and Canada. At the top of the hierarchy is the vilayet, similar to a state or province in America. Each vilayet was divided into several sanjaks. Each sanjak was further subdivided into kazas. There was even a sub-level within the kaza.

The structure of place names in this project for Turkey consists of four elements: country, vilayet, kaza, and town/village. If the town or village is of a different name than the kaza, I will put it in parentheses after the kaza name.

Note the that Ottoman names were often redundant within the hierarchy. For example, the term Sivas could refer to the town, its kaza, its sanjak, or its vilayet. The same goes for Van,

Adana, Erzurum, Bitlis, and others. How do you know which element in the hierarchy it refers to? When in doubt, I assumed the highest element. Someone born in Tomarza could give his birth place as Tomarza, Everek, Kayseri, Ankara, Turkey, or Armenia, each of which would be correct.

The launch point for accessing the database is the Queries & Reports page. Let's go there now.

Each section header (highlighted in yellow) relates to a primary source, with the number of abstracted entries shown. For example, we've abstracted over 66,000 entries from the Ship Manifests. For each primary source, there are queries and reports. A query presents a list of entries and allows you to select an entry to view the detail (with a photo included on some). A report is a statistical summary.

You'll note that five photos appear at the top of the page. Every time you refresh this page, five new photos from the repository of over 2,300 photos will be randomly selected to appear. You can click on a photo, which will take you to an entry for that person. We look at the Photo Gallery in a bit.

Let's start with the Ship Manifests by selecting the link for the query By Destination Date. [Click the link.]

All query pages will have common elements:
a description of the query and primary source and how to use it
drop-down dialog boxes to select entries

table of entries

To the left of each entry is a little magnifying glass icon. By clicking on this symbol, you will be able to view the the detailed abstract for that entry. Some entries (shown by a green magnifying glass icon) will have links to other entries for the same individuals.

Let's look at entries for the destination year (arrival date) of 1920. [Go to Destination Year drop-down box and select 1920.]

This shows all entries abstracted so far for ships arriving in America in 1920, sorted in order by destination date. At the top of the table are 20 Armenians arriving at New York (Ellis Island) on 6 January 1920 aboard the S. S. La Touraine, all traveling in Steerage.

Within each destination year, we can also look at a particular surname. Let's look for Arslanians in 1920. [Select "Arslanian" in the drop-down box entitled Last Name (Std.)]

There are 53 entries in 1920 relating to the surname Arslanian. Note that it includes entries for passengers with other surnames. Those entries are included because an Arslanian is included in one of the three roles. Let's look at this one for Haiganouche Tetezian, who arrived on the S. S. Mauretania on 23 October 1920 with Araxi and Sahag Arslanian. [Click the magnifying glass.]

This detailed entry screen shows all of the field abstracted from that line (row) of the ship manifest. Haiganouche's photo is included, as well (from another source). We can see that she was joining H. (Harabet) Arslanian, who was her sister Araxi's new husband. (Harabet's nephew Sahag Arslanian had gone to Aleppo to bring them to America.) At the bottom of this detail page, we can see entries from other records in the database relating to Haiganouche Tetezian. She was found in the 1930 and 1940 censuses (as Haiganouche, or Helen, Mouradian). She is mentioned as the nearest relative in WW2 draft registration entries for Harabet Arslanian and Samuel Demirdjian Mouradian (her husband, from Sivas). Let's look at the Highland Park, MI marriage record for her and Samuel. [Click on magnifying glass to the left of the marriage entry, then backspace to return to the ship manifest detail record.] We can also see that Haiganouche and Samuel had an infant son who died in 1923.

Now let's see what we have on Harabet. He has two Immigrant ID links, one for an arrival in 1901 and another for a later arrival in 1909. Let's click on the 1909 arrival.

This is the abstract of fields from Harabet's 1909 ship manifest. We can see that 19 other Armenian immigrants joined him in America between 1903 and 1920, most of them from his kaza of Keghi in Erzurum. Here are his entries from the 1910 through 1940 censuses, military draft registrations for WW1 and WW2, and his marriage to Araxi Tetezian in 1920. Remember, we can click on the magnifying glass to go to any one of these entries. Let's go to his WW1 draft registration.

He listed his sister-in-law Osgouhi Maloian as his nearest relative (at the same address). His first wife Hazou Maloian was left behind in Turkey, a victim of the genocide.

Notice that we have linked from entry to entry to explore the relationships between these individuals. By clicking the "Return to Query" button, we can return to the original query. [Click it.] This takes us back to the query Search Ship Manifests - By Destination Date. Now let's look at a different query into the Ship Manifests. [At top of page, select query By Last Name (Std.), All Roles.]

This next query (By Last Name (Std.), All Roles) is a surname index to anyone found in a ship manifest, whether they were a passenger, the person left behind in the old country, or the person they were joining in America. Let's look at the surname Kakligian.

There are 165 ship manifest entries so far relating to Kakligian (obviously many different spellings). One of these is Mamigon Kakligian's 1912 entry on his way to Granite City, Illinois. Let's look. At the bottom on this ship manifest page are many other entries relating to Mamigon, including . . . the marriage of his daughter Heranoush (Helen) to Yervant (Edward) Grjigian (one of Tracy's relatives).

Okay, we will now return to the original query and return to the original launch page by clicking on the steamship photo at the top of the page.

Let's now take a quick look at a Ship Manifests report, Summary by Joining Address. [Click that link.] This report summarizes where Armenian immigrants first went when they came to America. Many of them subsequently moved elsewhere. New York and Massachusetts are at the top of the list. We can drill down further to see how this breaks out by city or town. Click on the Detail by Town? check box and then Refresh View. Notice how Providence, RI jumps up to number two. [Return to Project Reports & Queries page.]

Back to Project Reports & Queries page . . . Each of the nine primary sources have their own queries and reports links. Notice that there is a section entitled Combined. What is this?

First, we have a photo gallery of all the photos I've collected so far, mostly from naturalizations records (starting in the early 1930s) and passport applications (starting in 1915). I can also include an old photo from another source, as long as I have a ship manifest entry to attached it to. If you find your relative in the Ship Manifests database and would like their photograph attached, please send it to me in an e-mail. (I am looking for "head shots" taken before 1950. Send me what you have and I can crop it.) [Click on Photo Gallery link to show the page, then backspace to return.) Under each photo, there will be a link to the record it is attached to.

Also in the Combined section are three queries. These queries pull entries together from all of the primary sources. These are the queries I use most often in my own research. Let's briefly look at each of them.

First - the query By Last Name (Std.), All Roles. Across the nine primary sources included in this project, there are 27 roles identified. This queries allows you to search, by standardized last name, for anyone included in the project, wherever they are referenced. [Click the link.] There are, for example, 1,442 unique entries relating to Arslanian. The column entitled Database tells what primary source they came from. [Scroll down a few pages.] What if you don't see your surname in the drop-down box? That is probably because I standardized it to another name. That's why I included the Find a Std. Name function. Let's click on that.

On the Std. Name Lookup page, there is a drop-down box called "Last Name". If we click on it, you will find a complete list of every surname in the database across all primary sources, exactly as they were spelled (or misspelled) in the original document. [Click on the drop-down box.] Let's pick Gerjekian. [Then push the button below it show what standardized name(s) it is mapped to.]

This returns us to the By Last Name (Std.), All Roles query page. You can see all of the different spellings of the last name included in this grouping. I am continually refining the groupings and may even change the spelling of the standardized name (or label). I might split the grouping up or lump similar-sounding groupings together.

The second query in the Combined section is "By Origin Place". [Click the link at the top of the page.] It allows you to find anyone by their place of origin, be it birth place, last residence, etc., across all primary sources. Let's see who was from the village of Chomakhlou. [Drill down by vilayet, then kaza.] Then entries are listed by standardized last name. Or we can look at all of the villages in the kaza of Everek.

The third Combined query is called "By Street Address". You can search for a particular street address in the USA or Canada to find any reference to that address, across all primary sources. [Click the link at the top of the page.] Let's look for people living in Granite City, IL. Remember that friends and relatives coming to America from the home villages or towns in Turkey or Russia would often live in the same house or neighborhood.

This concludes today's demonstration of the project's online database application. There are many more queries and reports. Please take the time to explore on your own.

First, I want to thank all of those who have already contributed to the project. We would not have the extensive coverage we now have were it not for their significant efforts and dedication. Abstracting from the original records is not easy. It takes someone with attention to detail, the ability to follow instructions, some familiarity with Armenian personal names, and experience using spreadsheets.