

# Obtaining Internee Documents

To obtain government files about an internee you must file **Freedom of Information** requests with several federal agencies. The most important are:

1. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI): **FBI files** detail the accusations against internees and show how the FBI and other agencies used informants' reports to build a case. You must provide the subject's full name, date and place of birth, and a "proof of death." The latter can be copies of newspaper obituaries or death certificates; something that proves the subject is deceased. If not deceased, you must provide the Bureau with a signed, notarized ORIGINAL permission from the subject.

WARNING: When I wrote these instructions in late 1998, FBI requests took a minimum of six years to fill. Now, I'm afraid, 9/11 has further delayed - if not eliminated - responses.

2. National Archives (NARA): National Archives II, 8601 Adelphi Rd., College Park, MD, 20740-6001 (866-272-6272) is the source of three important files relating to German internees:

- The subject's Army internment camp file (**Record Group 389**).
- The Justice Department's [Name Index](#) (**Record Group 60**).
- The Immigration & Naturalization Service internment camp file (**Record Group 85**).

If you know your internee spent time in an army camp (Fort Such-and-Such, Camp Forrest, etc.), begin by requesting the **Army camp file** (RG 389).

Accompanying the Name Index you should find a file number (beginning with the numerical series 146-13-2-00-00) that will allow you to request the **INS internment camp file** from the Immigration & Service, which is perhaps the most important of all, because you'll get it more quickly than the FBI file, and it often suggests what evidence the FBI had, if any. The INS file may be in the National Archives. Be sure to ask them (Textual Archive - Civil Records Reference Staff) before making your FOI request of the INS.

**Internment camp files** are detailed records pertaining to every aspect of the internee's life in custody. Write to the National Archives, providing the same information you give to the FBI. (NARA does not require the original signed notarization.)

The Name Index may contain a different or additional file number, perhaps one that begins 146-7-00. This means it is a Department of Justice *Criminal Division* file. Once you have the INS and other Justice Department file numbers from the Name Index (above), send an FOI request to the appropriate agency.

**WARNING:** All Justice Department agencies, including the FBI, will tell you that they fill requests on a "date received" basis. Beware. Some requests are given higher priority than others; federal prisoners, for example. (Just because a news agency can get Frank Sinatra's file only weeks after his death does not mean you will be treated likewise.) Also, if the FBI or INS assigns your request to a busy clerk, and some are busier than others, your request may be returned to you later than one filed after yours. In these agencies, "date received" and "assigned

Next, the [Name Index](#) (RG 60) will give you the necessary information to make additional FOI requests from the Justice Department (see below), including the INS internment camp file (RG 85).

processing" are not the same, and they use the latter in determining priority. Officials claim that they follow "sound administrative practice" in filling requests.

Recently, the Justice Department has admitted that it uses a "multi-track" system to prioritize requests. This means that the department responds more slowly to solicitations it deems "complex," although it does not say how many individual requests it takes to qualify as "complex."

Records in NARA's custody related to World War II enemy alien control programs are located in several different record groups, including:

- [Special War Problems Division records and Central Decimal File records](#) in the General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59.
- [Alien Enemy Control Unit records](#) and case files in the Records of the Department of Justice, Record Group 60.
- [Alien Enemy Internment Camps records](#) and case files in the Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85.
- [Records of the War Relocation Authority](#), Record Group 210.
- [Records of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians](#) in the Records of Temporary Committees, Commissions, and Boards, Record Group 220.
- [Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations](#) (World War II and Thereafter), Record Group 338.
- [Alien Enemy Information Bureau records](#) in the Records of the Office of the Provost Marshall General, Record Group 389.

In addition, the FBI makes some records related World War II alien enemy custodial detention available through their [electronic reading room](#).