

CHALLENGES OF ESCAPE, 1938–1941

Steps to Immigrate to the United States

UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM

WILLIAM LEVINE FAMILY INSTITUTE
FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Steps to Immigrate to the United States

In the late 1930s, hundreds of thousands of European Jews applied to immigrate to the United States.

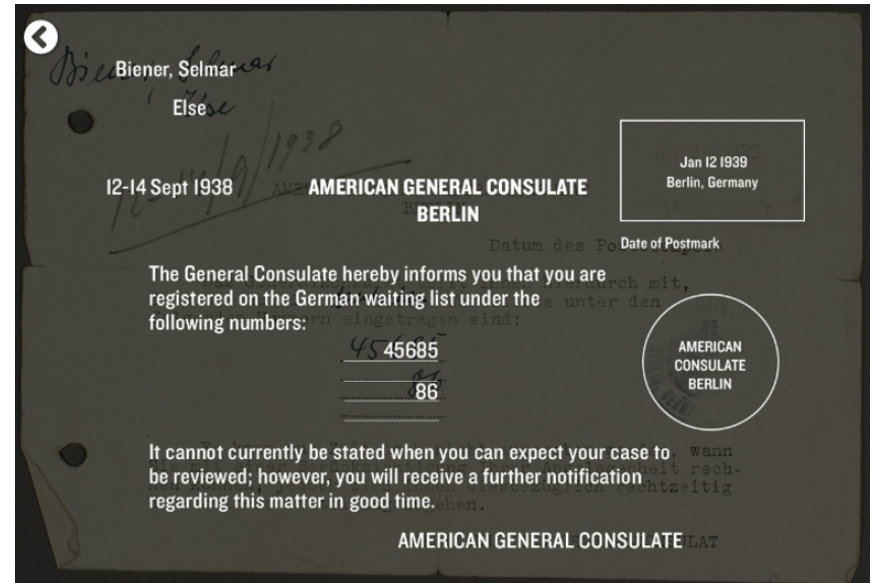
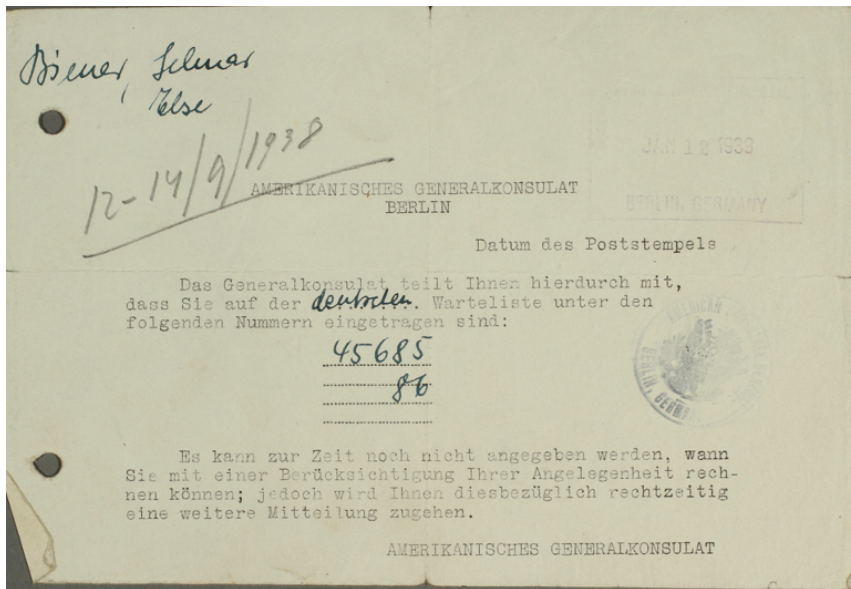
Unlike today, there were no special provisions for people fleeing persecution (“refugees”). European Jews had to follow the difficult United States immigration process, which required a lot of time and paperwork.



Jewish refugees wait outside the United States consulate in Marseilles, France, 1941.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Eric Saul

Step 1: Apply for the Waiting List



In the 1920s, Congress passed racist laws that set a yearly limit on the people born in each country who could immigrate to the United States. These laws prioritized immigration from countries with large, white Protestant populations.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Diana Barzilay and Evelyn Hill

Step 2: Collect Documents

While on the waiting list, potential immigrants collected many documents that they would need to show American officials.



Sample immigration documents from the *Americans and the Holocaust* exhibition. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum*

Step 2: Collect Documents

Example A: Visa Application

This document provided American officials with basic information about the applicant—name, birthdate, parents' names, and address.

It helped American officials learn about the potential immigrant's identity and background.

Form No. 104
AMERICAN CONSULATE SERVICE
(Revised July 1932)

American Consulate. No. 3796
AT STUTTGART, GERMANY.

APPLICATION FOR IMMIGRATION VISA (QUOTA)

I, the undersigned APPLICANT FOR AN IMMIGRATION VISA, being duly sworn, state that my full and true name is **Roberta Alice Ollendorff Stern**; that I am **46** years of age, of the **female** sex and **Hebrew** race; that I was born on the **10th** day of **November** 1891 at **Frankfurt M. Germany**; that for 5 years immediately preceding this application I have resided at the following places, during the periods stated, to wit:
Frankfurt M. Germany
Koernerstrasse 5.

That I am (married), and the name of my (husband) is **Ludwig Stern**, who was born at **Paderborn, Germany**; and resides at **deceased**

That the names, dates of birth, and places of residence of my minor children are:
Helmut Stern August 31, 1921 **London, England.**

That my calling or occupation is **housewife**; that my height is **5** feet and **1** inches; my complexion **fair**; color of hair, **brown**; color of eyes, **grey**; and that I bear the following marks of identification: **none**

German, and (able to write the **German** language; that I am (able to speak **German & Engl.**) to read **English** language; that the names and addresses of my parents are as follows:
Mother, **Hermine Schiller Ollendorff**, deceased
Father, **Josef Ollendorff**, deceased

That neither of my parents is living, and that the name of my nearest relative in the country from which I come is **Robert Ollendorff**, whose relationship is **brother** and whose address is **Berlin Wilmerdorf Jenastrasse 10**

That my port of embarkation is **undecided** that I intend to enter the United States at the port of **N.Y.**; that my final destination beyond such port is **New York N.Y.**

That I do have a ticket through to such destination; that my passage was paid for by **nephew, Ernest Cassel**

whose address is **New Gardens, New York**; that I intend to join (relative) **Ernest**

whose address is **84-15 Cuthbert Street, New Gardens, Queens L. I. New York.**
(City, state, street, and number)

That my purpose in going to the United States is **to reside**, and I intend to remain **permanently** of the issue; that my (father) (has) **NOT** been in an institution or hospital for the care and treatment of the insane; that I have **NOT** been refused an immigration or passport visa at any American consulate.

That, except as hereafter noted, I am not a member of any one of the following classes of individuals excluded from admission to the United States under the immigration laws: (1) idiots; (2) imbeciles; (3) feeble-minded; (4) epileptics; (5) insane persons; (6) persons having had previous attacks of insanity; (7) persons with constitutional psychopathic inferiority; (8) persons with chronic alcoholism; (9) paupers; (10) professional beggars; (11) vagrants; (12) persons afflicted with tuberculosis; (13) persons afflicted with a loathsome or dangerous contagious disease; (14) criminals; (15) polygamists; (16) anarchists; (17) persons who believe in or promote the overthrow by force or violence of the Government of the United States; (18) persons inadmissible under the provisions of section 3 of the act of February 4, 1917; (19) persons inadmissible under the provisions of the act entitled "An Act to Exclude and Exclude from the United States those who are Members of the Anarchistic and Similar Classes", approved October 16, 1918, as amended by the act approved June 4, 1920; (20) prostitutes; (21) procurers; (22) contract laborers; (23) persons likely to become public charges; (24) persons previously deported or refused admission and permitted to leave the United States voluntarily in lieu of deportation; (25) persons previously excluded from admission to the United States at a port of entry; (26) persons whose passage paid by another; (27) unaccompanied children; (28) natives of India barred sons; (29) filipinos; or (30) since ineligible to citizenship.

That I claim to be exempt from exclusion on account of the class or classes noted above, for the reasons following, to wit:
Not otherwise inadmissible.

That I am the father, mother, or husband by marriage occurring after July 4, 1921, of _____, of _____ years of age, and who is in alien status, lawfully admitted for permanent residence, of the United States, and resides at _____ (City, State, street, and number)

That because of the relationship aforesaid I am entitled to or claim the preference provided for in paragraph (2) of Subdivision (a) of Section 6 of the Immigration Act of 1924, as amended.

That I am an alien who is a skilled agriculturalist and entitled to and claim preference provided for in paragraph (1) of Subdivision (a) of Section 6 of the Immigration Act of 1924, as amended.

That I am aware that the Deportation Act of March 4, 1909, provides in part that an alien who enters the United States in an illegal manner, or who obtains citizenship or is received by immigration to the United States by a willfully false or misleading representation or willful concealment of a material fact shall be punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both; and that the Immigration Act of 1924 provides in part that a person who knowingly makes under oath any false statement in any application, affidavit, or other document required by the immigration laws or regulations issued hereunder shall be punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both.

Available documents required by the Immigration Act of 1924, as amended, are filed herewith and made part hereof, as follows:
Certificate of birth and police records.

WHEREFORE, I apply for an Immigration Visa as a quota immigrant, pursuant to the provisions of the Immigration Act of 1924, as amended.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this **5th** day of **February** 1940
in **1156**
A. John Cops, Jr.,
Vice-Consul of the United States of America.

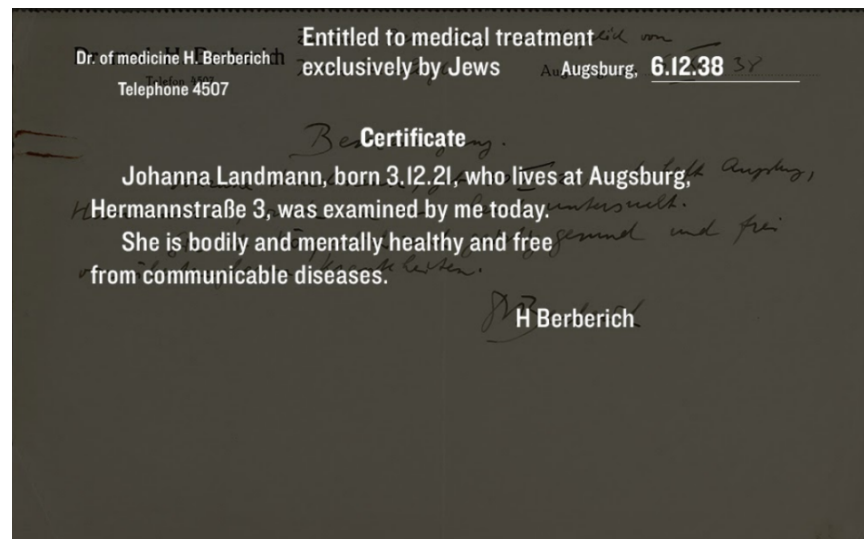
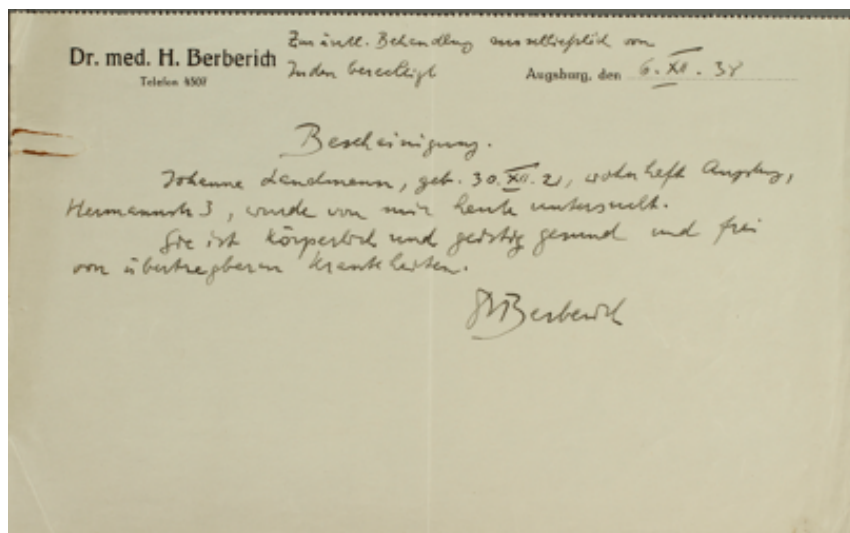
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Harold Stern

Challenges of Escape, 1938–1941

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Step 2: Collect Documents

Example B: Medical Clearance



Potential immigrants had to be examined by a US government-approved doctor. Officials feared that people with certain diseases or disabilities would spread disease or not be able to support themselves in the United States.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Henry Landman

Step 2: Collect Documents

Example C: Police Certificate

Der Polizeipräsident
II 20^a / 38.

Berlin, am 15. September 1938.

Führungszeugnis

Dem Herrn Ernst Bernhardt
am 5. September 1884 zu Kohlberg, Kreis
geboren, wird amtlich bescheinigt, daß er — sie — in der Zeit
vom 9. Oktober 1905 bis jetzt
hier polizeilich gemeldet gewesen und daß über ihn — sie — in den polizeilichen Listen eine
Strafe nicht verzeichnet ist.

Gebührt
15. Sep. 1938

Zm Auftrage:
Rache

The Chief of Police
II 20/38

Berlin, on 15 September 1938

Certificate of Good Conduct

Mr. Ernst Bernhardt
born on September 5th 1884 in Kohlberg, Kreis
is officially certified to have registered here with the police
from October 5th, 1905 until now
and that there is no punishment recorded about him in the police lists.

Fee
Chief of Police
in Berlin
Detachment II (M)
2 Reichsmark
stamp

Chief of Police
in Berlin
Detachment II (M)

On behalf of:
[Signature]

15 September 1938

United States immigration officials required a certificate from the German police stating that the potential immigrant was not a criminal.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Annelise Hoffman

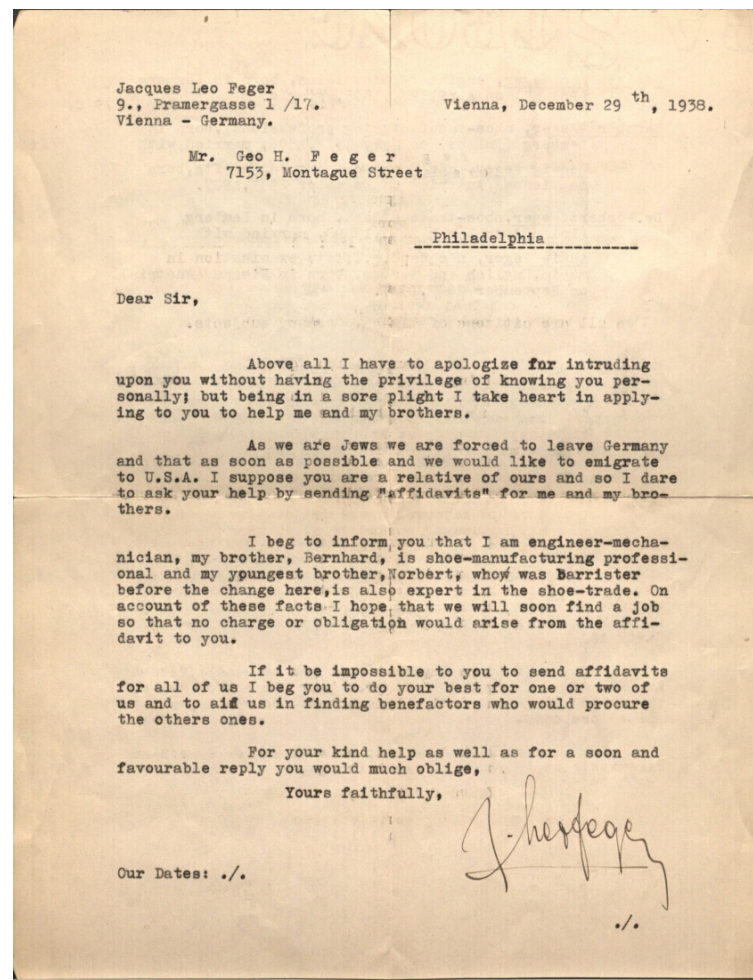
Step 3: Find an American Sponsor

During the Great Depression, the United States required proof that a potential immigrant would not become “a public charge” (that he or she would not need financial support after arriving in the United States).

Most Jews did not have enough money to prove they would not become a “public charge” and needed to find an American relative, friend, or stranger to sponsor them.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Thomas Pedrick

Challenges of Escape, 1938–1941



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Step 3: Find an American Sponsor Tax Returns

Each American sponsor had to submit an application, tax returns, and recommendation letters.

American officials demanded proof that the sponsor was willing and financially able to care for the immigrant if necessary.

Treasury Department
1938 **INDIVIDUAL INCOME TAX RETURN** **1938** Internal Revenue Service Page 1

FORM 1040
UNITED STATES

FOR NET INCOMES OF MORE THAN \$5,000 FROM SALARIES, WAGES, DIVIDENDS, INTEREST, ANNUITIES, AND FOR INCOMES FROM OTHER SOURCES REGARDLESS OF AMOUNTS
For Calendar Year 1938
or fiscal year beginning _____, 1938, and ended _____, 1939
(Before Preparing This Return, Read the Instructions Carefully)
To be filed with the Collector of Internal Revenue for your district not later than the 15th day of the third month following the close of year taxable year

PRINT NAME AND ADDRESS PLAINLY (See Instructions K)
Joseph A. Schwelb
(Name) (If joint return of both husband and wife, give joint return)
290 Washington St.,
(Street and number, or rural route)
New York New York New York
(Post office) (County) (State)

DUPLICATE COPY
IMPORTANT
↓
One duplicate copy must be filed with original return.
(\$5 will be assessed if duplicate is not filed.)

Item and Instruction No.	INCOME	
1. Salaries and other compensation for personal services. (From Schedule A)		\$ 16,877 50
2. Dividends		300 00
3. Interest on bank deposits, notes, mortgages, etc.		
4. Interest on corporation bonds		
5. Taxable interest on Government obligations, etc. (From Schedule B)		
6. Income (or loss) from partnerships, syndicates, pools, etc. (other than capital gains or losses). (Furnish names and addresses)		
7. Income from fiduciaries. (Furnish names and addresses)		
8. Rents and royalties. (From Schedule C)	(Loss)	(525 70)
9. Income (or loss) from business or profession. (From Schedule D)		
10. (a) Net short-term gain from sale or exchange of capital assets. (From Schedule E)		
(b) Net long-term gain (or loss) from sale or exchange of capital assets. (From Schedule F)		
(c) Net gain (or loss) from sale or exchange of property other than capital assets. (From Schedule G)		
11. Other income (including income from annuities). (State nature; use separate schedule if necessary)		\$ 16,451 80
12. Total income in items 1 to 11. (Enter assessable income in Schedule I)		
DEDUCTIONS		
13. Contributions paid. (Explain in Schedule H)		\$ 1,050 00
14. Interest. (Explain in Schedule H)		781 96
15. Taxes. (Explain in Schedule H)		939 68
16. Losses from fire, storm, shipwreck, or other casualty, or theft. (Explain in Schedule H)		6,700 00
17. Bad debts. (Explain in Schedule H)		
18. Other deductions authorized by law. (Explain in Schedule H)		2,516 00
19. Total deductions in items 13 to 18		11,987 64
20. Net income (item 12 minus item 19)		\$ 4,464 16
COMPUTATION OF TAX		
21. Net income (item 20 above)	\$ 4,464 16	
22. Less: Personal exemption. (From Schedule J-1)	\$ 2500 00	
23. Credit for dependents. (From Schedule J-2)	400 00	3000 00
24. Balance (surplus net income)		\$ 1,564 16
25. Less: Income on Government obligations, etc. (See Instruction 25)		
26. Earned income credit. (From Schedule K-1 or K-2)	464 42	464 42
27. Balance subject to normal tax	\$ 1,099 74	
28. Normal tax (4% of item 27)		\$ 43 99
29. Surtax on item 24. (See Instruction 29)		
30. Total (item 28 plus item 29)		\$ 43 99
31. Total tax (item 30, or if you had a net long-term capital gain or loss, enter line 16, Schedule F)		
32. Less: Income tax paid at SOURCE		
33. Income tax paid to a foreign country or U.S. possession. (Attach Form 1118)		
34. Balance of tax (item 31 minus items 32 and 33)		\$ 43 99

2-17143

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of the Estate of Henry Bernhard

Step 4: Buy a Ship Ticket

In the late 1930s, most people traveled across the ocean by ship.

After World War II began in September 1939, American officials required proof that potential immigrants had already purchased a ship ticket (which could be quite expensive) and would be physically able to leave Europe.

ITALIA N° 99125
 SOCIETÀ ANONIMA DI NAVIGAZIONE - SEDE IN GENOVA
 CAPITALE SOCIALE L. 500.000.000 INTERAMENTE VERSATO 65/68
Contratto per Biglietto di Classe TURISTICA
 RILASCIATO ALLE CONDIZIONI INDICATE A TERZO
 Issued on the conditions printed on the reverse side

PRAGA (GENOVA) da **NEWYORK** alla Nave **CONTE DI SAVOIA**
 ANDATA *free* con *free* with *free*
 OUTWARD in partenza il **26/1/1939** alle ore **11 AM** imbarca alle ore **9 AM** cabina **85 BAGNO**
 in arrivo il **26/1/1939** alle ore **11 AM** sbarca alle ore **9 AM** cabina **79 SENZA BAGNO**

RITORNO *free* con *free* with *free*
 HOMEWARD Valido fino al **26/1/1939** in partenza il **26/1/1939** alle ore **11 AM** imbarca alle ore **9 AM** cabina **85 BAGNO**
 in arrivo il **26/1/1939** alle ore **11 AM** sbarca alle ore **9 AM** cabina **79 SENZA BAGNO**

NOMI DEI PASSEGGERI
 PASSENGERS NAMES

No.	Nome	Eto	Valuta	ANDATA		RITORNO	
				Tariffa	Nolo	Tariffa	Nolo
		Age	Currency	First	Second	First	Second
1	SIG. Max WINTER	AD	£	I	174.-		
2	SIG. RA Anne WINTER	"	"	I	174.-		
3	FIGLIA Marianne WINTER	"	"	I	174.-		
4	FIGLIO Stephan WINTER	"	"	I	174.-		
5	Supplemento cabina				40.-		
6	" bagno				20.-		
Incasato				Importo totale passeggeri		1890.-	
collected (include all passengers)				Total amount		1890.-	
				Tassa Europee imbarco		20.-	
				European Taxes, Embarkation		20.-	
				Tassa Europee sbarco			
				European Taxes, Landing			
				Tassa America imbarco			
				American Taxes, Embarkation			
				Tassa America sbarco		60.-	
				American Taxes, Landing		60.-	
				Proseguimento ferroviario			
				Railway tickets			
Intermediario				TOTALE		RM. 1970.-	
Agent				TOTAL		1970.-	

VIENNA
 RILASCIATO IN CONNESSIONE COL BIGLIETTO
 Issued in connection with ticket

Soc. **Genoa** **N.** **12345** **emesso a** **Genoa**
 il **26/1/1939** per **Nave** **CONTE DI SAVOIA**
 da **PRAGA** **il** **26/1/1939** **per** **PRAGA**

Emesso in conformità del D. 1100 del 10/10/38, art. 10, 1°
 Issued in accordance with D. 1100 del 10/10/38, art. 10, 1°

Ritenuto a **Genoa** **il** **26/1/1939** **per** **PRAGA**

Ritenuto a **Genoa** **il** **26/1/1939** **per** **PRAGA**

Accordo con la R.A. **Genova** **il** **26/1/1939** **per** **PRAGA**
 Agreement with the R.A. **Genova** **il** **26/1/1939** **per** **PRAGA**

ITALIA
 Società Anonima di Navigazione
 Sede Sociale L. 500.000.000 INTERAMENTE VERSATO 65/68
 OFFICIO PASSEGGERI CLASSE TURISTICA

Ufficio
 Direzione
 Ufficio

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Stephen Winter

Step 5: Collect Transit Visas

Potential immigrants needed permission to enter all countries they would travel through to reach the ship they would take to the United States. Foreign officials carefully monitored anyone who would be entering their country due to national security concerns. These officials also did not want Jewish immigrants to somehow get trapped there and need financial support.



US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Robert Treuer

Step 6: Interview at a United States Consulate

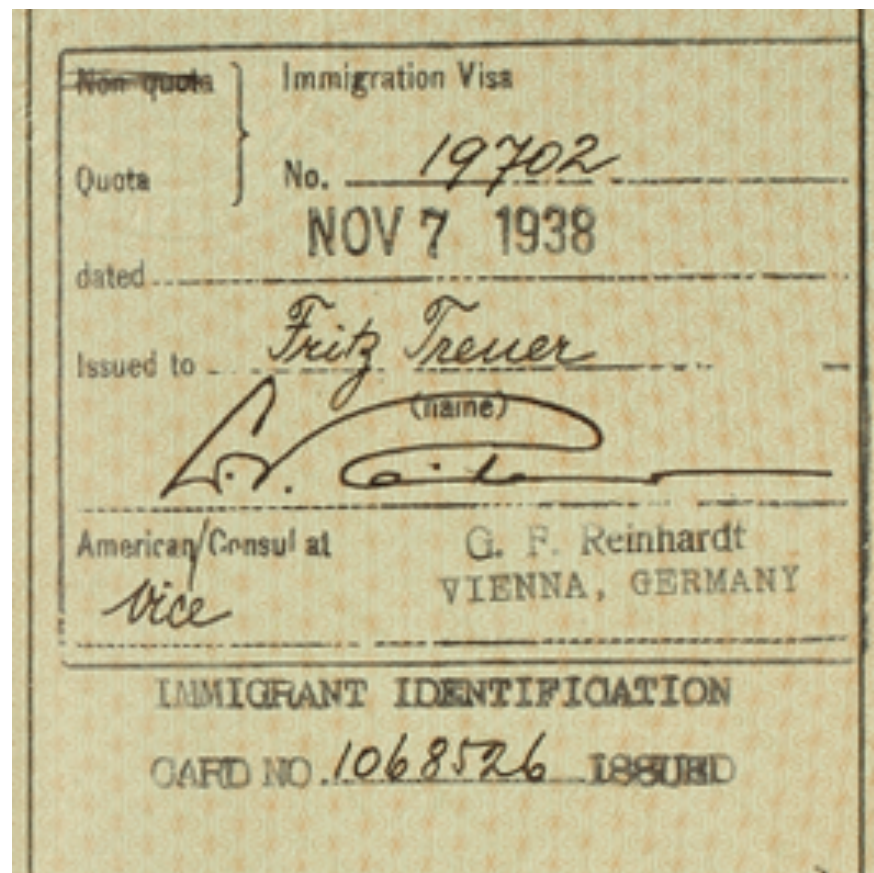
When it was their turn on the waiting list, potential immigrants received appointments at a United States consulate for an interview with a State Department official.

The American official examined all the potential immigrant's paperwork, the paperwork submitted by the American sponsor, and interviewed him or her.

Potential immigrants could be rejected for health reasons, financial reasons, or if the official thought the person might be a security threat.

Receive a United States Immigration Visa

Potential immigrants who successfully gathered all the required paperwork and passed their interview were granted United States immigration visas.



US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Robert Treuer