

# **CHALLENGES OF ESCAPE, 1938–1941**

## **Steps to Immigrate to the United States**

# Steps to Immigrate to the United States

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

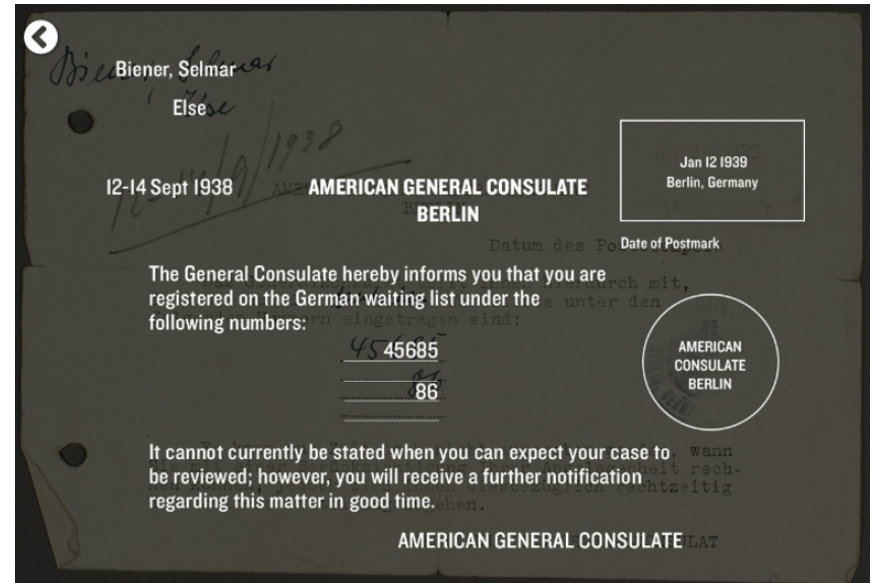
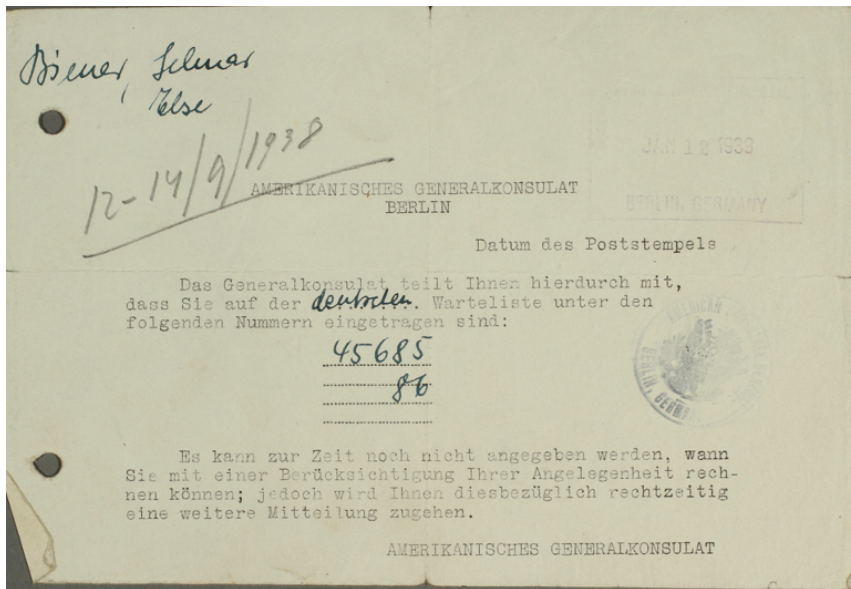
Unlike today, there were no special provisions for people fleeing persecution (“refugees”). European Jews had to follow the difficult United States immigration process, which required a lot of time and paperwork.



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  
**Hebrew** ; and resides at **deceased**  
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** ; that I am (able) to speak **German & Engl.** ; (able) to read  
**German & Engl.** ; and (able) to write the **German & Engl.** languages; that the names and addresses of my parents are as follows:  
Mother, **Hermine Schiller Ollendorff** ; address, **deceased**  
**Ollendorff** ; address, **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 Jannert**  
**N.Y.** ; that I last left the United States at the port  
of **N.Y.** ; that my final destination beyond such port is **New York N.Y.** ; and  
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) **" "**  
whose address is **84-15 Cuthbert Street, New Gardens, Queens L. I. New York.**  
(Street, 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 ordered deported 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. 26.

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  
immigrant child under 16 years of age  
who is in alien status, lawfully admitted for permanent residence, of the United States, \_\_\_\_\_ years of age, and  
resides at \_\_\_\_\_  
(City, State, street, and apartment)

That because of the relationship aforesaid I am entitled to 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 the father, mother, or husband by marriage occurring after July 4, 1921, of  
immigrant child under 16 years of age  
who is in alien status, lawfully admitted for permanent residence, of the United States, \_\_\_\_\_ years of age, and  
resides at \_\_\_\_\_  
(City, State, street, and apartment)

That I am the father, mother, or husband by marriage occurring after July 4, 1921, of  
immigrant child under 16 years of age  
who is in alien status, lawfully admitted for permanent residence, of the United States, \_\_\_\_\_ years of age, and  
resides at \_\_\_\_\_  
(City, State, street, and apartment)

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 enters the United States or is deported by immigration 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  
**1156**  
**111** 1-1043  
**Shirley Lara Klein**  
**A. John Cops, Jr.**  
**Vice-Consul** of the United States of America.

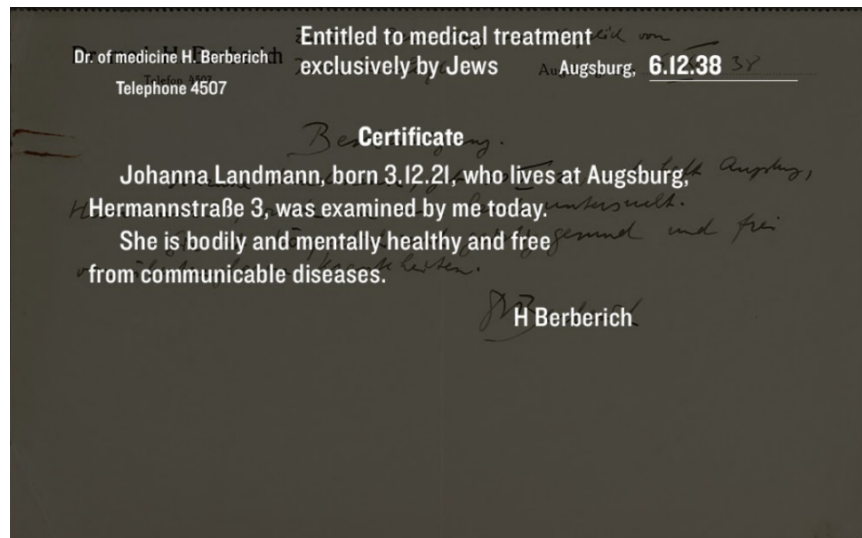
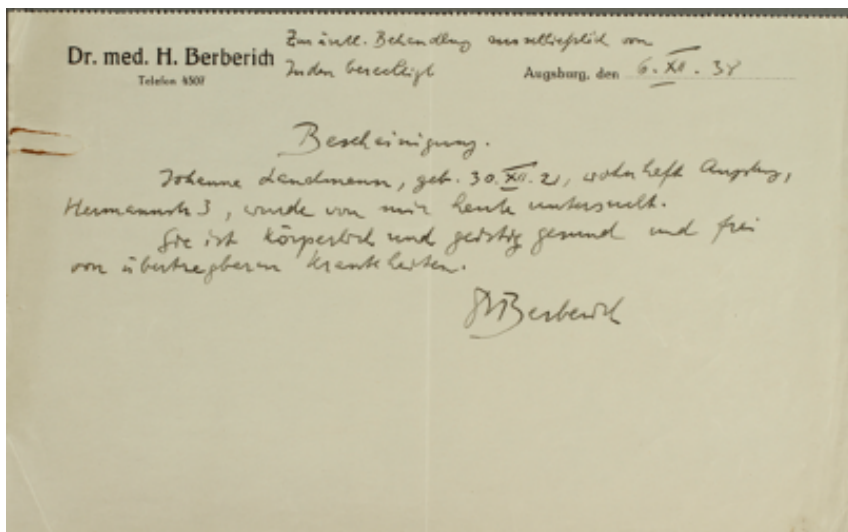
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Harold Stern

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<sup>a</sup> / 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.

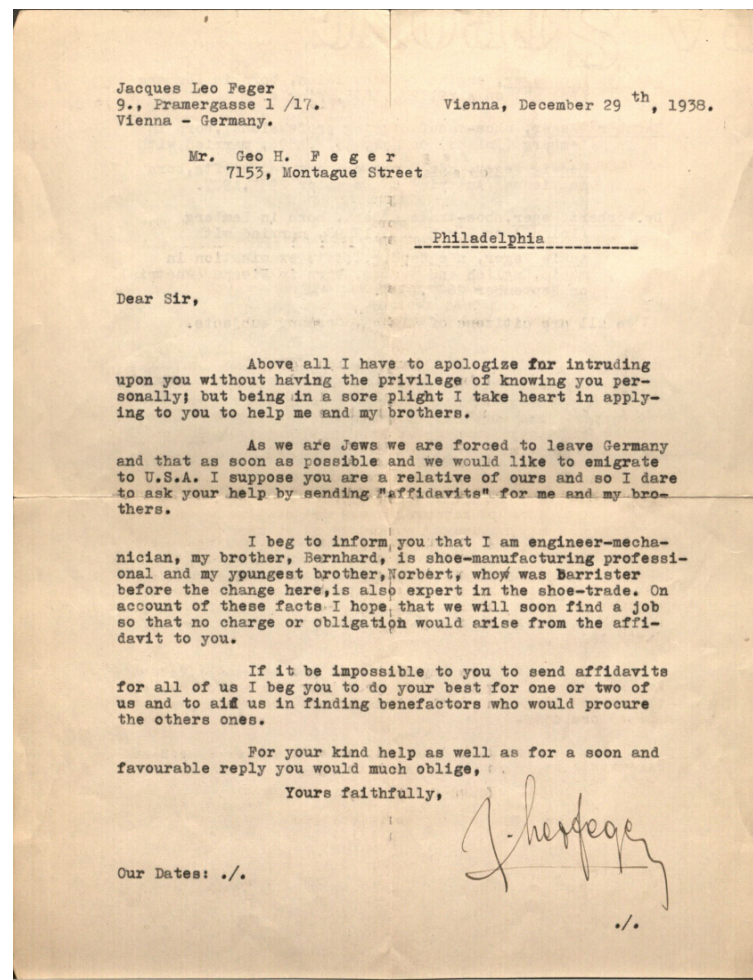
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Annelise Hoffman



## 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*

# 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 other names of high husband and wife, if a 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 F)		
(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)		
12. Total income in items 1 to 11. (Enter assessable income in Schedule I)		\$ 16,451 80
<b>DEDUCTIONS</b>		
13. Contributions paid. (Explain in Schedule H)		\$ 1,050 00
14. Interest. (Explain in Schedule H)		781 98
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
<b>COMPUTATION OF TAX</b>		
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 1116)		
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.

Al Per il Passeggero

**ITALIA** N° 99125

SOCIETÀ ANONIMA DI NAVIGAZIONE - SEDE IN GENOVA  
CAPITALE SOCIALE L. 200.000.000 INTERAMENTE VERSATO 65/68

**Contratto per Biglietto di Classe TURISTICA**

RIASCIATO ALLE CONDIZIONI INDICATE A TERZO  
Issued on the conditions printed on the reverse side

PRAGA (GENOVA) a NEWYORK colla Nave CONTE DI SAVOIA  
da GENOVA a NEWYORK colla Nave CONTE DI SAVOIA  
in partenza il 26/1/1939 alle ore 11 AM imbarco alle ore 9 AM cabina 85 BAGNO 79 SENZA BAGNO

RITORNO  
Valido fino al  
in partenza il  
colla Nave  
con  
cabina  
bagno

NOMI DEI PASSEGGERI PASSENGERS NAMES	Sex Sesso	Age Età	Valuta Tariffa Currency	ANDATA OUTWARD		RITORNO HOMEWARD	
				Posti Places	Nolo Amount	Posti Places	Nolo Amount
SIG. Max WINTER	AD	5	I	174.=			
SIG. RA Anne WINTER	"	"	I	174.=			
FIGLIA Marianne WINTER	"	"	I	174.=			
FIGLIO Stephan WINTER	"	"	I	174.=			
Supplemento cabina	"	"	"	40.=			
" bagno	"	"	"	20.=			
Incaricato collected (collected) (collected) (collected)				Importo totale passaggio Total amount 2.50 RM.		1890.=	
Tassa Europea imbarco European Taxes, Embarkation				8		20.=	
Tassa Europea sbarco European Taxes, Landing							
Tassa Americano imbarco American Taxes, Embarkation				24		60.=	
Tassa Americano sbarco American Taxes, Landing							
Prepagamento ferroviario Railway tickets							
TOTALE TOTAL				RM. 1970.=		1976,28	
Accetto come da Bordo I favore dei passeggeri Vienna				21463 Vienna		6,28	
BALANCE							
Rilasciato a GENOVA il 26/1/1939 XVII							

Stampa: ITALIA A. S. - SOCIETÀ ANONIMA DI NAVIGAZIONE  
Genova, Sede L. 200.000.000  
UFFICIO PASSEGGERI CLASSE TURISTICA

Director  
Direttore

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.

Non-Quota } Immigration Visa  
Quota } No. 19702  
dated NOV 7 1938  
Issued to Fritz Treuer  
(name)  
American/Consul at G. F. Reinhardt  
Vice VIENNA, GERMANY  
IMMIGRANT IDENTIFICATION  
CARD NO. 1068526 ISSUED

*US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Robert Treuer*