

CHALLENGES OF ESCAPE, 1938–1941

Steps to Immigrate to the United States

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

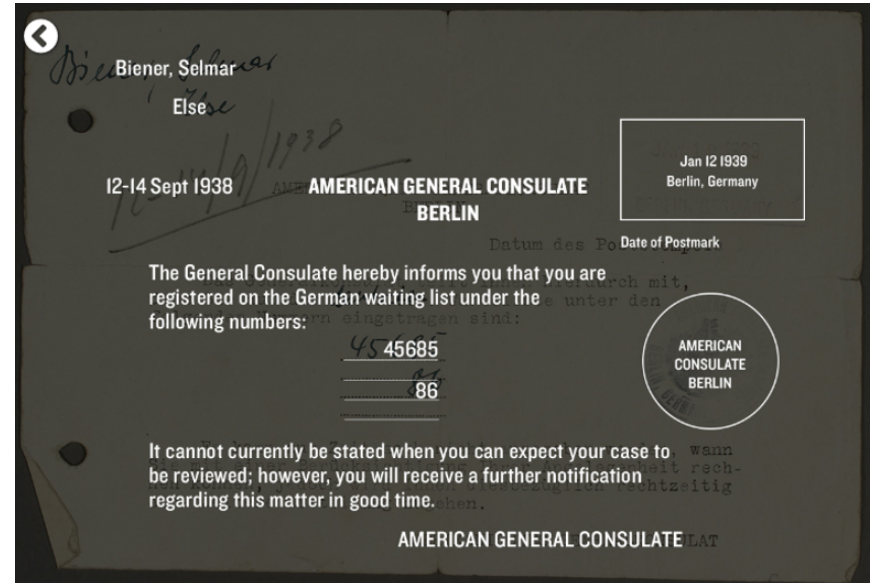
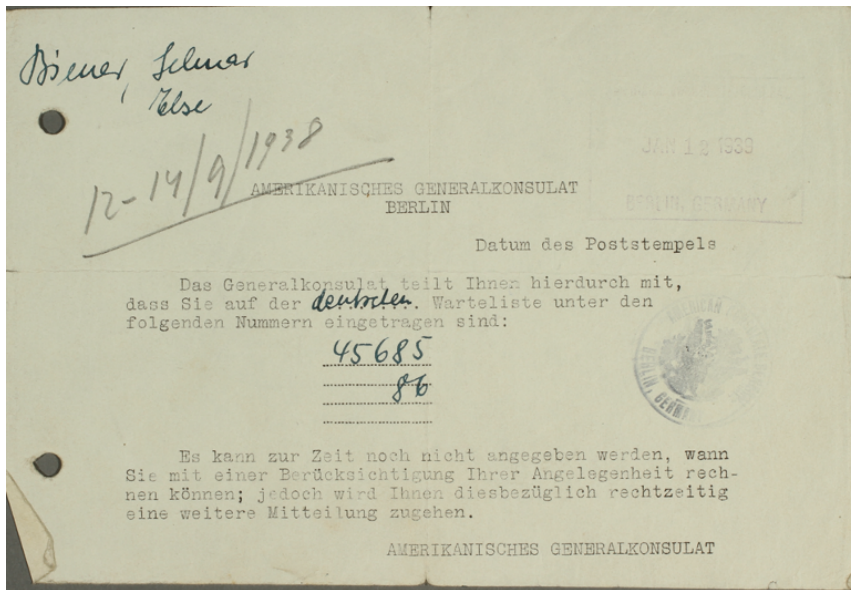
Unlike today, there were no special provisions for people fleeing persecution (“refugees”). European Jews had to follow the difficult United States immigration process, which required a lot of time and paperwork.



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 1933

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, date 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 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 Jenagat

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.; and that I do not 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 undecided

whose address is 84-18 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 issue; that I have never been in prison or almshouse; that I have never been in an institution or hospital for the care and treatment of the issue; 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) idiot; (2) imbecile; (3) feeble-minded; (4) epileptic; (5) insane person; (6) persons having had previous attacks of insanity; (7) persons with constitutional psychopathic inferiority; (8) persons with chronic alcoholism; (9) leprosy; (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 advocate 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 Aliens who are Members of the Starvation and Starvation Classes" approved October 16, 1918, as amended by the act approved June 8, 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 Alaska barred sons; (29) illiterates; or (30) aliens 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 of a minor, or of a child under 18 years of age, or of a child under 18 years of age, or of a child under 18 years of age, who is 21 years resident, lawfully admitted for permanent residence, of the United States, and resides at _____ years of age, and _____ (City, State, street, and number)

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

That I am the spouse and sole issue or a child of an 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, 1929, provides in part that an alien who enters the United States in an illegal manner, or who claims exemption or exemption by Immigration officials, or who obtains entry 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 (except 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

[Signature] Alice Sara Stern
Applicant

[Signature] A. John Cope, Jr.
Vice-Consul of the United States of America.

FEB 11 1940
1156
n11 1-104

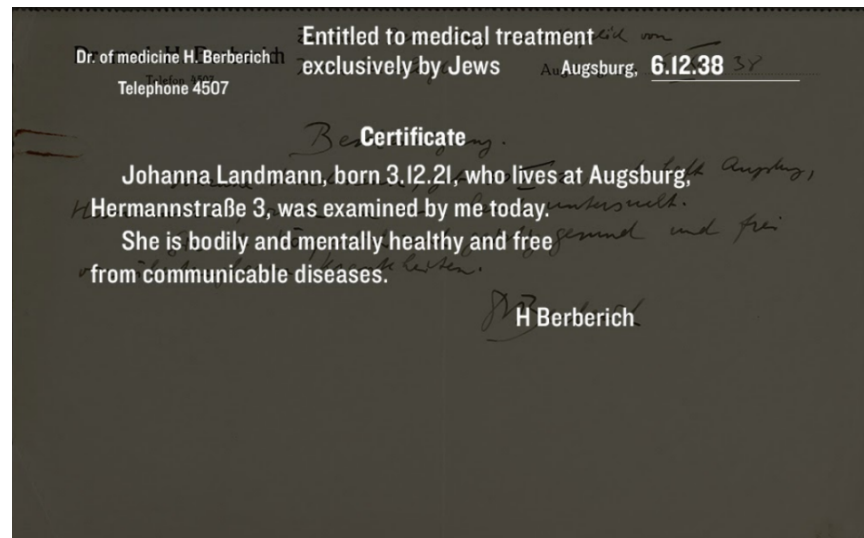
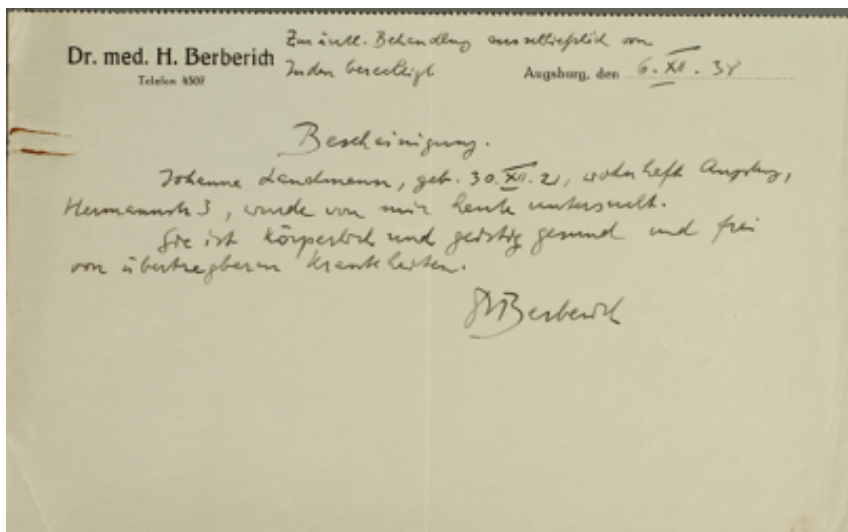
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Harold Stern

Challenges of Escape, 1938–1941

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Step 2: Collect Documents

Example B: Medical Clearance

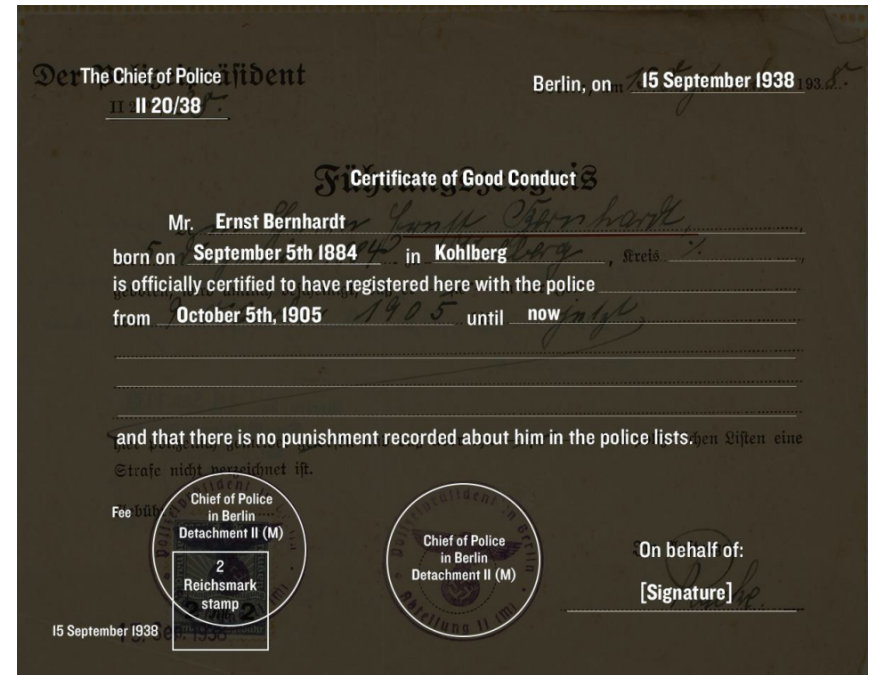


Potential immigrants had to be examined by a US government-approved doctor. Officials feared that people with certain diseases or disabilities would spread disease or not be able to support themselves in the United States.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Henry Landman

Step 2: Collect Documents

Example C: Police Certificate



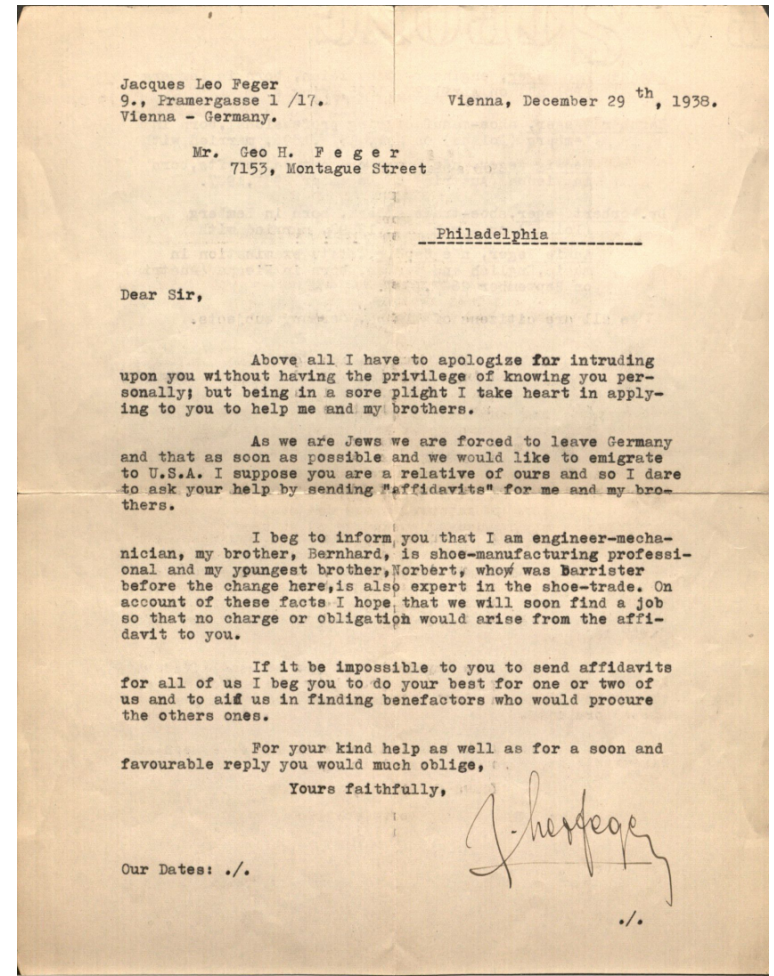
United States immigration officials required a certificate from the German police stating that the potential immigrant was not a criminal.

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 **FORM 1040** Internal Revenue Service Page 1
UNITED STATES
1938 INDIVIDUAL INCOME TAX RETURN 1938

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 Instruction E)
Joseph A. Schwelb
(Name) (Use joint names of both husband and wife if a joint return)
230 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)	(528 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
DEDUCTIONS			
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)		2,518	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
24. Balance (surtax net income)		\$ 1,564	16
25. Less: Interest on Government obligations, etc. (See Instruction 25)			
26. Earned income credit. (From Schedule K-1 or K-2)		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

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 № 99125

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

Contratto per Biglietto di Classe TURISTICA

BILANCIATO 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
OUTWARD in partenza il 26/I/1939 alle ore 11 AM imbarca alle ore 9 AM cabina 85 BAGNO
in partenza il 26/I/1939 alle ore 11 AM imbarca alle ore 9 AM cabina 79 SENZA BAGNO

RETORNO
VALIDO FINO AL
Valido fino al
in partenza il
colla Nave
with Vessel
imbarca alle ore
cabin
with Vessel
cabin

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	M	AD	8	I	174.=		
SIG.RA Anne WINTER	F	"	"	I	174.=		
FIGLIA Marianne WINTER	F	"	"	I	174.=		
FIGLIO Stephan WINTER	M	"	"	I	174.=		
Supplemento cabina					40.=		
" bagno					20.=		
Importo totale passeggeri Total amount				756		1890.=	
Tasse Europee imbarco European Taxes, Embarkation				8		20.=	
Tasse Europee sbarco European Taxes, Landing							
Tasse Americane imbarco American Taxes, Embarkation				24		60.=	
Tasse Americane sbarco American Taxes, Landing							
Proporzioni Aeroporti Waiting tickets							
TOTALE TOTAL				RM. 1970.=		RM. 1970.=	
Accetto come da Billo I favoro dei passeggeri Vienna				21463 Vienna		1976,28	
BALANCE				RM. 6,28		RM. 6,28	

Emesso in esecuzione del Lit. Chiem (Ser. 89, 9°)
Issued in execution for Prague/Return Ticket

Rilasciato a GENOVA il 26/I/1939 XVII

ITALIA A. S. - Società Anonima di Navigazione
Via S. Andrea 1, Genova - Tel. 2111
UFFICIO PASSEGGERI CLASSE TURISTICA

Stampa: DIREZIONE GENERALE

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 Vice G. F. Reinhardt
VIENNA, GERMANY
IMMIGRANT IDENTIFICATION
CARD NO. 1068526 ISSUED

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Robert Treuer