

# **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.

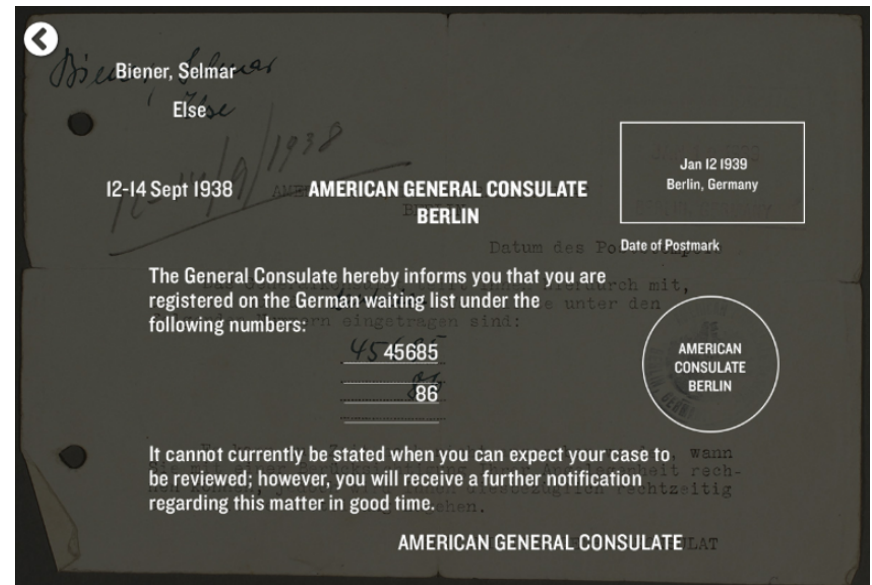
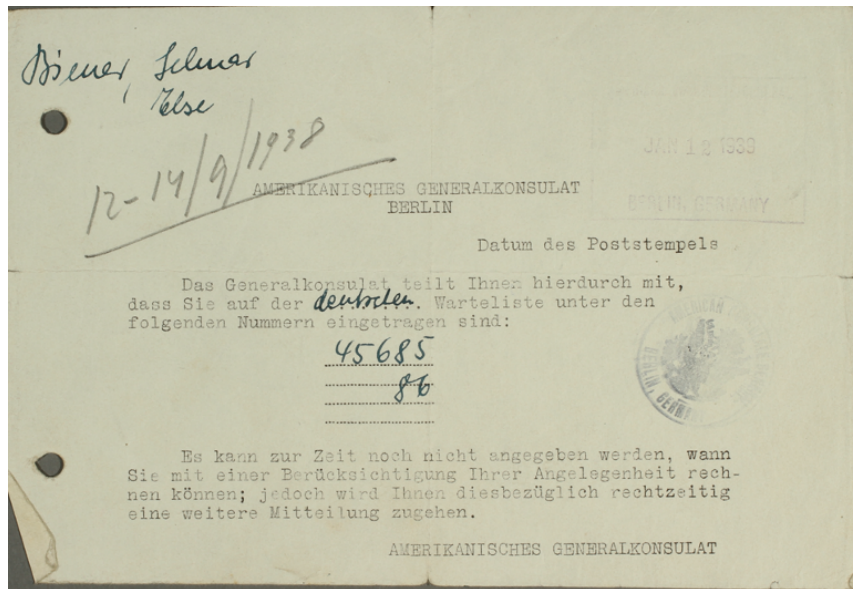
Unlike today, there were no special provisions for people fleeing persecution (“refugees”). European Jews had to follow the difficult United States immigration process, which required a lot of time and paperwork.



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  
(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 dead at Federborn, 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 the names and addresses of my parents are as follows:  
Mother, Hermine Schiller Ollendorff (date of marriage or death) deceased  
Father, Josef 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 Filmerdorff Jannert

That my port of embarkation is undecided (that I shall 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 have a ticket through to such destination; that my passage was paid for by nephew, Ernest Cassel

whose address is New Gardens, New York. (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 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) procuresses; (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 Asiatic barred zone; (29) filipinos; or (30) aliens 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 apartment)

That because of the relationship aforesaid I am entitled to or do not 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 enters clandestinely or in violation of immigration laws, or who claims entry to the United States by a fraudulent claim or misrepresentation, or with 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 Ill  
A. John Cops, Jr.,  
Vice-Consul of the United States of America.

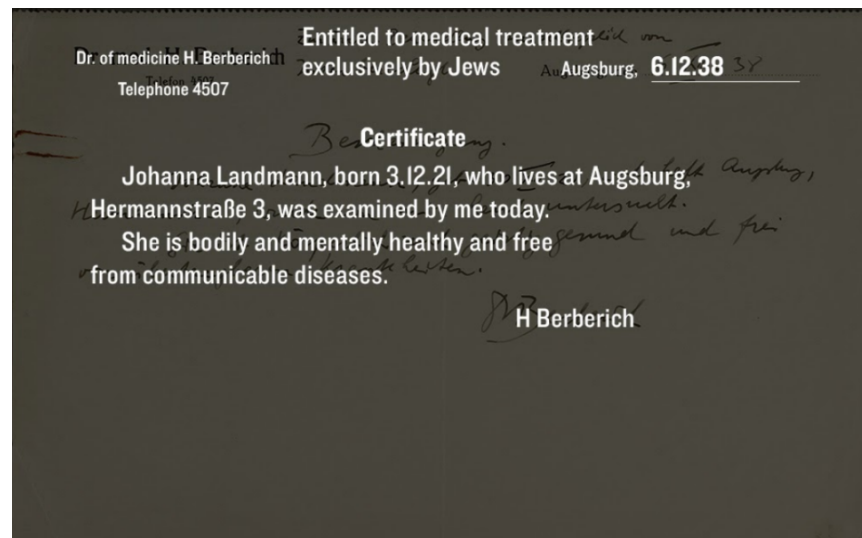
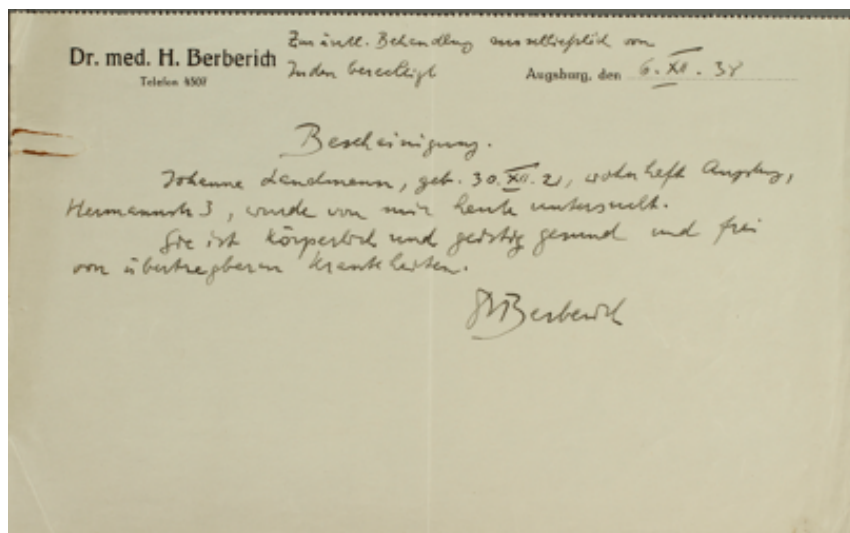
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Harold Stern

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 — he — in der Zeit  
vom 9. Oktober 1905 bis jetzt  
hier polizeilich gemeldet gewesen und daß über ihn — he — 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:  15 September 1938

On behalf of: [Signature]

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

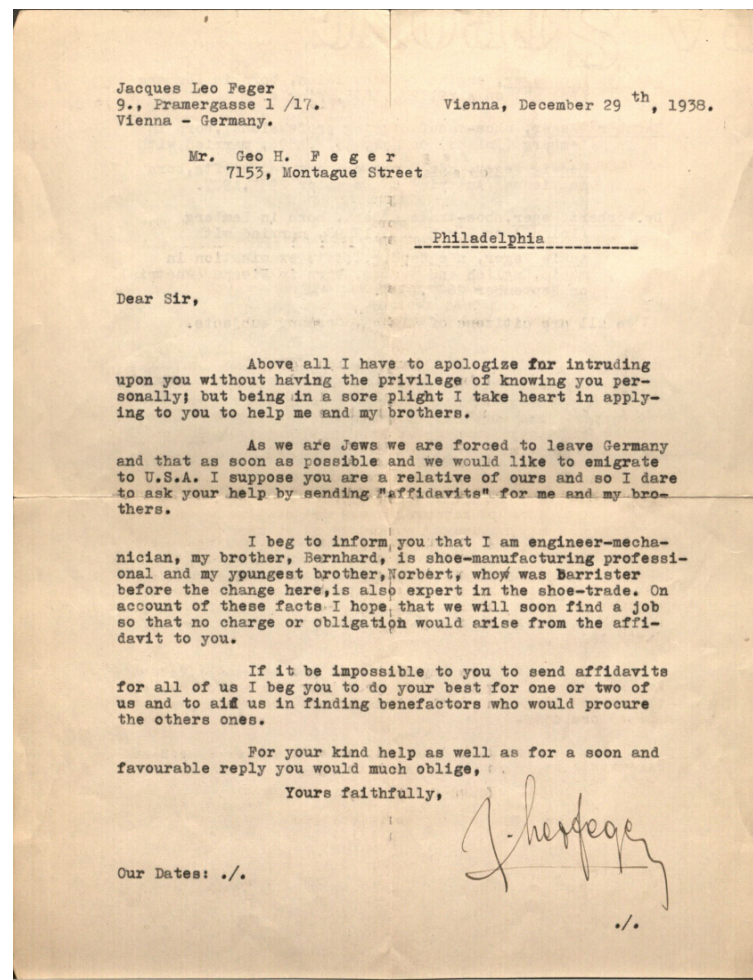
US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Annelise Hoffman



## 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 taxpayer is both husband and wife, file 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)	(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
<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)		2,518 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)		\$ 1564 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 con Vessel  
**ANDATA** *frees* **CONTE DI SAVOIA**  
**OUTWARD** in partenza il **26/I/1939** alle ore **LI AM** imbarca alle ore **9 AM** cabina **85 BAGNO**  
*sailing* *at* *on embarkation at* *cabin* *bath* **79 SENZA BAGNO**

**RITORNO** *co* **HOMERARD** *do* **BAGNO**  
Valido fino al *in partenza il* *alle ore* *imbarca alle ore* *cabina* *letto*  
*valid until* *sailing* *at* *on embarkation at* *cabin* *bath*

NOMI DEI PASSEGGERI PASSENGERS NAMES		Eta Age	Valuta Tariffa Currency	ANDATA OUTWARD		RITORNO HOMERARD	
				Pasti Fares	Nolo Amount	Pasti Fares	Nolo Amount
SIG. Max WINTER	AD	8	I	174.=			
SIG.RA Anne WINTER	"	"	I	174.=			
FIGLIA Marianne WINTER	"	"	I	174.=			
FIGLIO Stephan WINTER	"	"	I	174.=			
Supplemento cabina				40.=			
" bagno				20.=			
Incasato collected (include all charges) (ticket charges)				Importo totale passeggeri Total amount	756.=	1890.=	
Tassa Europee imbarco European Taxes, Embarkation				8		20.=	
Tassa Europee sbarco European Taxes, Landing							
Tasse America imbarco American Taxes, Embarkation							
Tasse America sbarco American Taxes, Landing				24		60.=	
Proseguimento ferroviario Railway tickets							
TOTALE TOTAL					RM. 1970.=		
Accanto come da Bilancio Dipartimento di Fisco Vienna				21463 Vienna	1976,26		
A favore dei passeggeri per BALANCE					6,28		

**VIENNA**

Intermediario  
Agent

**RILASCIATO IN CONNESSIONE COL BIGLIETTO**  
*Issued in connection with ticket*

Soc.  
Comp.

il  
per Nova  
per via

da  
da via

Emesso in sostituzione del 1.10.1938 (Art. 80, § 2)  
Issued in exchange for Previous Return Ticket

Valido  
Amount

Rilasciato a  
Issued at

**GENOVA** il **26/I/1939 XVII**

**ITALIA A -**  
Società Anonima di Navigazione  
Cap. Sociale L. 500.000.000 Interamente Versati  
UFFICIO PASSEGGERI CLASSE TURISTICA

Ufficio  
Secretaria  
Assistente  
Office

*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)  
[Signature]  
American/Consul at G. F. Reinhardt  
Vice VIENNA, GERMANY  
IMMIGRANT IDENTIFICATION  
CARD NO. 1068526 ISSUED

*US Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Robert Treuer*