

WHAT IF YOUR ANCESTOR LIED?

MAY / JUNE 2004, VOL. 22 / NO. 3

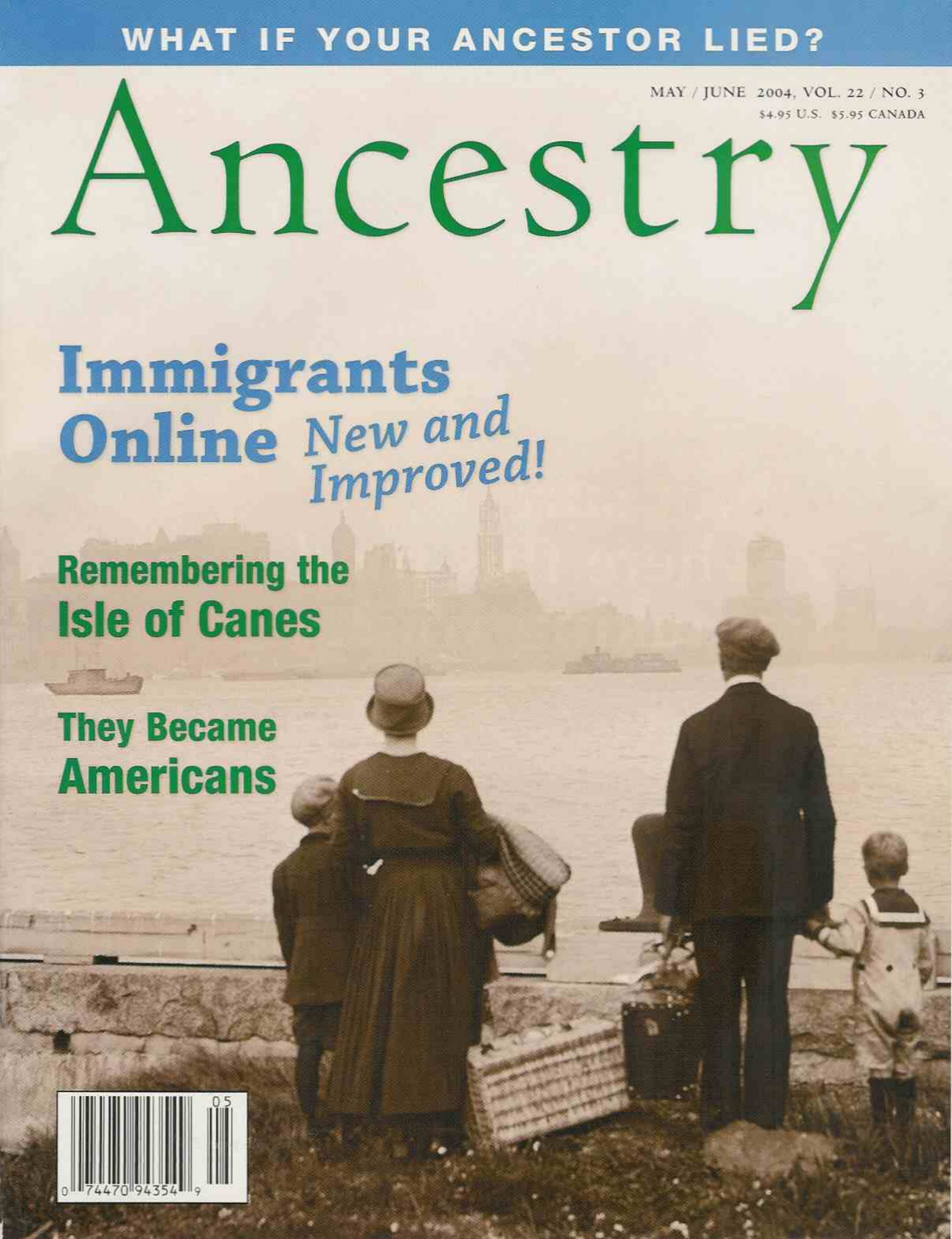
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Ancestry

**Immigrants
Online** *New and
Improved!*

**Remembering the
Isle of Canes**

**They Became
Americans**





Features



16 Forgotten People of America

Decades of historical and genealogical research spanning three centuries, six countries, and hundreds of families reveals the epic story of the Creole inhabitants of the fabled "Isle of Canes" in Louisiana.

by Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, FASG

24 Speeding up Your Search for Immigrants

Recent online offerings at Ancestry.com, the Ellis Island Foundation, and others make searching for your immigrant ancestor faster and easier.

by Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak

32 What's in Those Naturalization Records?

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service makes it possible for us to retrace our ancestors' steps toward naturalization.

by Erika Dreifus, Ed.M., M.F.A., Ph.D.

38 Early Naturalization Records

Though U.S. naturalization records before 1906 are not standardized, they still have potential to help us climb the brick walls of our research.

by Loretto Dennis Szucs, FUGA

40 Research in the Great Plains States

The midwest is more than rolling hills and cornfields with scarecrows; you'll find plenty of records on your ancestors in the six states explored here.

by Paula Stuart Warren, CGRS







Speeding Up Your Search for **Immigrants**

by **Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak**

What a difference three years makes! Until 17 April 2001, those of us researching our immigrant ancestors had to consult countless resources and—all too frequently—scroll through endless rolls of microfilm in the hope of finding our kin among millions of others. And while there's something to be said for the thrill of finally finding the name you're seeking in the fifty-seventh index you inspect or that moment when you suddenly spot your great-great-grandmother's family on a manifest, I confess that I'm not averse to resources that speed up the search.

April 2001 brought the launch of the American Family Immigration History Center's (AFIHC) online Ellis Island database (EIDB). The website seemed almost magical at the time—and still would if we weren't so quick to take things for granted!

Several months later, Steve Morse introduced his tools to help excavate hard-to-find names from the EIDB. All of this was terrific news for those of us whose families were fairly recently "off the boat," but what about those who came earlier?

Enter the Ancestry.com U.S. Immigration Collection, introduced in November 2003. This tremendous new collection brings together more than seventy immigration resources—not the least of which is the first comprehensive indexing of the previously troublesome 1851–1891 gap for New York passenger lists. And these are just the highlights.

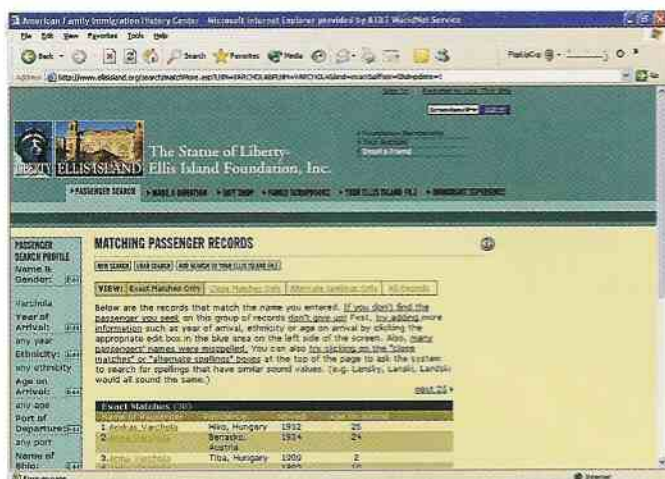
With so much tossed at us so quickly, it's sometimes difficult to absorb it all, so this might be a good time to explore each of these resources in greater depth.

Ellis Island Database

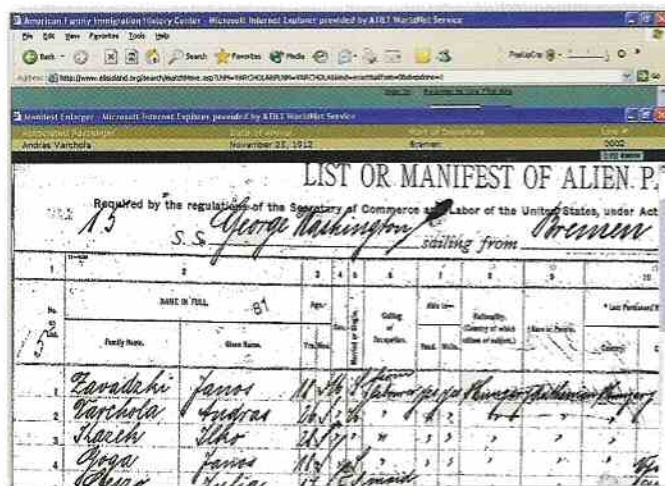
www.ellisland.org

If you're an avid genealogist, you might be one of those who set your alarm clock for 3:00 A.M. to try to get into the Ellis Island site when it first launched. While it initially floundered under traffic loads that no one could have predicted, the AFIHC quickly rectified the situation and millions of us have been happily finding ancestors since.

What's so amazing about the EIDB? It's a transcription of more than 22 million passenger arrivals that took place in New York from 1892 to 1924—records of great interest to the more than 100 million Americans who have at least one Ellis Island immigrant in their family tree. A remarkable all-volunteer effort (conducted under the auspices of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints),



The Matching Passenger Records page of the Ellis Island database presents possible candidates for Andy Warhol's father.

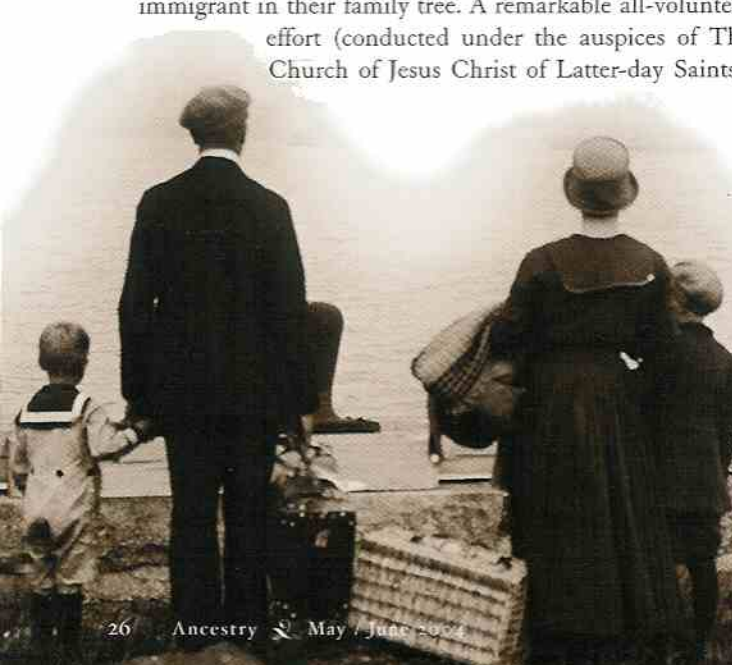


From the digitized manifest image, it's easy to see that Andras Varchola was traveling with someone named Janos Zavadzki.

this site makes it possible to immediately view a digitized image of relevant manifests. It also includes the first indexing of the 1892–1897 period and is much quicker and more convenient to search than microfilm available at certain repositories. Best of all, it's free to search and view. (Copies of manifests can either be ordered through the site or made from microfilm once source details have been uncovered through the EIDB.)

Andy Warhol's Father

To illustrate how it works, let's consider the case of Andy Warhol's father. Andy was born to immigrant parents from Mikova (then in Austria-Hungary, now Slovakia). With a Warhol branch in my own family, I know that Warhol is often an Americanized version of Varchola, so I begin by entering "Varchola" on the basic search page.



Doing so takes me to a list of thirty matching passenger records. Since results are presented alphabetically according to first name, the first entry that appears is for an Andras Varchola, age twenty-six, who arrived in 1912 from Hiko, Hungary. This seems promising since Andy was named after his father. "Hiko" is a little confusing, but elaborate capital letters at the beginning of words are often confused and some town names are abbreviated in the EIDB, so I proceed.

Clicking on the name will bring me to a sign-in page—a step that's only necessary during the first search in any session. After logging in, I come to a Passenger Record page where additional details are provided. These include the exact date of arrival (25 November 1912), the name of the ship (*George Washington*), the port of departure (Bremen), and ethnicity (Hungary, Ruthemian [sic]). All the data still sounds plausible, so I continue by using the View Original Ship Manifest option.

This brings me to a miniaturized version of the manifest image. While I could choose View Text Version Manifest, I decide instead to go straight to an enlarged version of the image by clicking on the icon of the small magnifying glass to the right. The details at the top of the window that opens tell me that the individual I'm looking for is on the second line, but I notice that I've been taken into the second page of the entry (a common occurrence for two-page manifests since some of the microfilms were scanned in backwards). I close out the window and use the Previous/Next buttons to get to the first half of the document. In this case, clicking Next takes me to the previous page I seek (the occasional reverse scanning can cause this step to be counterintuitive, so it's helpful to get in the habit of trying both Previous and Next).

Now I can examine the original manifest image for additional details. I see that the name of the closest relative Andras left behind is his wife Julia, and that he is going to Pittsburgh. He is apparently traveling with two others from "Miko" (as I read it) and one of them is named Zavadzki. Since Andy's mother's maiden name was Julia Zavacky and the family settled in Pittsburgh, I am convinced I've found his father. To avoid having to repeat the search in the future, I take advantage of the Add to Your Ellis Island File option to save the search for future visits to the site. In just a few short minutes, I've located and "saved" Andy Warhol's father. Mission accomplished!

Steve Morse's Search Tools

www.stevemorse.org

This was a fairly straightforward search, but what about those of us who have multi-syllabic names that are prone to

Associated Passenger	Date of Arrival	Port of Departure
Leslie Hope	March 30, 1908	Southampton

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Remarks
4	Samuel	28	M	...	...
5	John	25	M	...	...
6	William	22	M	...	...
7	Thomas	18	M	...	...
8	John	15	M	...	...
9	John	12	M	...	...
10	John	10	M	...	...
11	John	8	M	...	...
12	John	6	M	...	...
13	John	4	M	...	...
14	John	2	M	...	...
15	John	1	M	...	...
16	John	1	M	...	...
17	John	1	M	...	...
18	John	1	M	...	...

Little Leslie "Hope" is listed here with his mother and five siblings.

Searching the Ellis Island Database in One Step

We acknowledge the work of Dr. Stephen Morse in creating this search tool, with major contributions from Dr. Yves Goshoff.

Overview | Jewish Pass | Short Form (print) | Missing Headers | Frequently Asked Questions

Morse's Other Websites

Minimum required information is the first letter of the last name

starts with
 is exactly
 sounds like
 (show all)

First Name or Initial: [] Last Name: []
 Gender: []
 Year of arrival is between: [] and []
 Age at arrival is between: [] and []
 Ship Name: [] See [ship notices](#). See [ship notices](#).
 Town Name: [] See [question 201](#) onfaq page for limitations on town name.
 Start search at: [] Enter number, or leave blank to start search at beginning.
 hits/page: [] (for new display format only)

Steve Morse's white form is particularly helpful for those situations where some of the immigration details are known.

misspelling and who hail from villages with unpronounceable names? Since the majority of Ellis Island immigrants were from Southern and Eastern Europe, that describes a significant portion of the entries. Even simple names could potentially be distorted due to spelling errors, hard-to-decipher script, and assorted transcription hiccups.

Steve Morse discovered this when he couldn't find his wife's grandparents in the EIDB. Being the sort of person who does things because he can (he developed the 8086 chip for Intel and is one of the reasons we have PCs today), Steve tinkered around a bit and created a one-step search form that allowed the user to enter several criteria (e.g., name, date of arrival, year of arrival, gender, etc.) at once. It also provided greater flexibility (e.g., starts with or is, sounds like or contains options for first, last, and town names) to accommodate complex names, unexpected spellings, and other quirks. Within minutes, he located his wife's family.

Thinking that others might find the form useful, he put

it on the Internet without any fanfare, but it wasn't long before word spread and his website was bookmarked by hundreds of thousands of eager genealogists. Since then, Steve has created a handful of forms to use in conjunction with the EIDB to help unearth our ancestors-in-hiding. Steve's forms are useful for anyone trying to find immigrants who came through Ellis Island, but if any of the following pertain to you, you'll definitely want to launch your searches from his site:

- Your name and/or town of origin are prone to misspelling
- You want to find people from a particular village
- You know some details of the immigration
- You need to narrow the field
- You're researching Jewish ancestors
- The ship's manifest is missing or mislinked

Bob Hope's Family

By way of example, let's take a look at the situation when some of the details of the immigration are known. Many of us have a family story along the lines of "Grandma came here in 1908 at the age of sixteen." For such scenarios, I like to use Steve Morse's white form, and it was exactly what I needed to find Bob Hope's arrival.

Each year, The Statue of Liberty–Ellis Island Foundation honors a handful of immigrants (or children or grandchildren of such immigrants). Since the much-beloved Bob Hope is one of the most famous immigrants to have ever walked the halls of Ellis Island, he was an obvious choice for one of 2003's honorees.

There was just one small hitch. Bob Hope, who once famously said, "I left England at the age of four when I found out I couldn't be king," couldn't be found in the EIDB. Many of us know that his birth name was Leslie Townes Hope, but if you go to the website and enter "Leslie Hope," you will not get a single hit in the database. So where is he?



Bob Hope, ca. 1950

Since he is a national treasure to both the United States and United Kingdom, it's not terribly difficult to learn bits and pieces about his life by surfing the Internet. In fact, because England likes to lay claim to their native-born son, a little googling will quickly reveal that he departed with his family from Southampton on the *SS Philadelphia* on 21 March 1908.

Equipped with these details, I entered the name of the ship and the year of arrival on the white form. Making an educated guess that the source of the problem was the surname, I typed in "Leslie" for the first name and asked for all such candidates with last names starting with the letter H. Up popped two-year-old Leslie Hape from Bristol, England. I was expecting a four-year-old, so using the features of the Ellis Island site described earlier, I took a closer look at the digitized manifest. I saw that this Leslie was traveling with his mother Avis and siblings to join their father, "Wm. Hy. Hape" in Cleveland, Ohio. Aside from his understated age, all the data matched perfectly with well-known, biographical details of his family, so I knew I had my man—or perhaps I should say, aging toddler. And by the way, it does look like Hape on the manifest.

U.S. Immigration Collection at Ancestry.com

www.ancestry.com

I lecture frequently on the topic of the Ellis Island database, and inevitably get questions from people whose families immigrated before 1892 or through other ports. "But what do I do?" is the oft-repeated query. Until recently, answering this has been challenging because it's very much an "if this, then that" situation. Depending on the suspected timeframe of arrival,



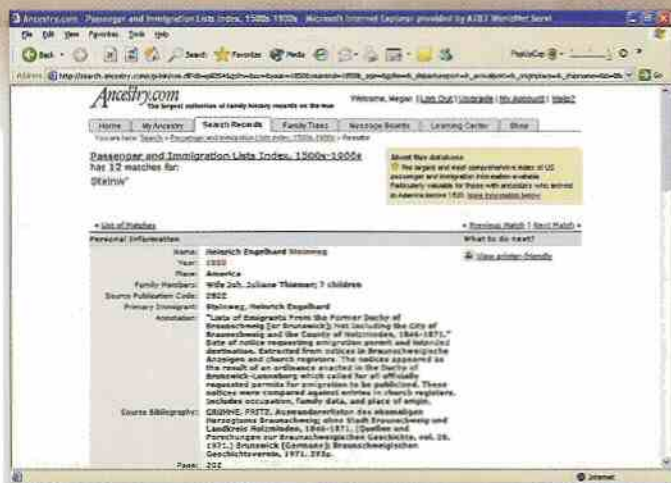
ethnicity, hypothetical ports of departure and arrival, and other factors, there are numerous resources that can be explored that might hold the answer. But there was no single best resource to refer people to as a starting point. Now there is with the U.S. Immigration Collection at Ancestry.com.

I was so excited to learn about this resource that I subscribed (\$19.95/month or \$79.95/year) the moment I heard about it. The most newsworthy aspect of this collection is the indexing of the 1851–1891 New York records mentioned earlier—an almost impenetrable void for many genealogists whose forebears came to this country via New York during that four-decade period. It's true there are workarounds—being fortunate enough to find exact immigration details from a naturalization record, back-dooring your way to an arrival record through departure records (e.g., Hamburg emigration), or discovering a relevant entry in finding aids, such as ethnic-specific books and CDs—but you had to know about them, obtain access to them, and sometimes learn how to use them.

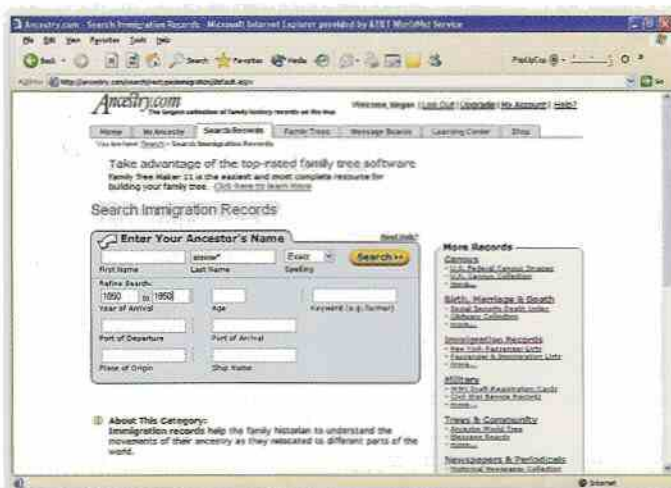
With its diverse compilation of databases and more than 10 million names culled from passenger lists and naturalization records, this new immigration collection provides the closest thing we've ever had to one-stop shopping—not just for the forty-year New York gap, but for other time frames (1500s through the 1900s) and ports as well. To give you a sense, here's a small sampling of the databases included in the collection:

- Scandinavian Immigrants in New York, 1630–1674
- New Orleans, 1820–1850 Passenger and Immigration Lists
- San Francisco Chinese Exclusion List
- Baden, Germany Emigration Index, 1866–1911
- Atlantic Ports, Gulf Coasts, and Great Lakes Passenger Lists, Rolls 1–7
- Minnesota Naturalization Records Index, 1854–1957
- Philadelphia Quaker Arrivals, 1682–1750
- Canadian Immigrant Records, Parts One and Two

Just as with the EIDB, some of these databases contain digitized images of the original documents. So if you find your relatives in New York Passenger Lists, 1851–1891, for instance, you can view and even print out a copy of the original manifest. And as with Steve Morse's one-step forms, there are multiple search fields (e.g., first and last names, year of arrival, age, ports of departure and arrival, ship name, and even keyword), that can also be searched with wildcards and Soundex, thereby increasing your chances of locating your ancestral prey.



A little-known source reveals unexpected details about Heinrich Steinweg.



The Ancestry.com Immigration Collection includes multiple search fields and incorporates wildcard and Soundex features.

Henry Steinway's Clan

If you're one of the millions who grew up taking piano lessons, the name Steinway is more than familiar to you. Steinway & Sons was founded in Manhattan in 1853 by Heinrich Steinweg, who changed his name after coming to America just a few years earlier. I was curious to see if I could find any record of his arrival. As with Bob Hope, I did some preliminary surfing to see if I could learn any additional details. In doing so, I discovered that he immigrated in 1850. (The easiest way to get a ballpark estimate of the year of immigration for your own ancestors is by consulting naturalization papers or census records after 1890.)

Using this information, I went to the basic immigration search form and entered 1850 as the year of arrival. Not sure how he might have spelled his name at the time, I opted to use a wildcard and search on Steinw*. That way, I hoped to find him whether he was listed as Steinweg or Steinway.

This turned out to be a smart move. There were hits in four databases, two of which proved to be irrelevant, but in the other two—New York, 1820–1850 Passenger and Immigration Lists and Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, 1500s–1900s—he was listed as Heine Steinway and Heinrich Steinweg, respectively. (The second database actually had two additional entries for him as H. Steinweg and Heinrich Engelhard Steinweg.)

While these were not databases with digitized images, I envied his descendants when I saw how much information could be gathered from these sources. The first provided the names and ages of his wife and their seven children, the port of departure (Hamburg), exact arrival date (29 June 1850), and ship's name (*Helena Sloman*). This was handy because I could compare names and ages to later census records to confirm that I was indeed dealing with the piano-making family.

By perusing the first two of the three entries found in the other database, I obtained an abbreviated profile and source citations that would lead me to more details. The last (Lists of Emigrants From the Former Duchy of Braunschweig [or Brunswick]; Not Including the City of Braunschweig and the County of Holzminden, 1846–1871)—a source I could have remained ignorant of for years—furnished still more nuggets, such as his middle name, his wife's complete maiden name, and an unexpected but very clear indication of his place of origin in Germany. Had this been my own family, I would have been delighted!

If you're one of the many who have temporarily tabled their efforts to find immigration records after years of unrequited searching, now is definitely the time to have another go! ❧

Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak, author of Honoring Our Ancestors, In Search of Our Ancestors, and They Came to America, lectures widely and has appeared in Ancestors, They Came to America and the Today Show, among others. She can be reached at <www.honoringourancestors.com>.

The Best of the Rest

This has been a brief introduction to the most valuable online immigration resources, but there are an astonishing array of others available (Many of which are covered in *They Came to America: Finding Your Immigrant Ancestors*, available at <www.honoringourancestors.com>.) Following is a short list of a few others that are worthy of your time.

• Emigration and Immigration Links

<http://home.att.net/~wee-monster/ei.html>

Joe Beine's compilation of links, including several online primers, is a great starting point for Internet research. Clean and frequently updated, this site covers arrival, departure, and naturalization records, organized primarily by time-frames and locations.

• Immigrant Ships Transcribers Guild

www.immigrantships.net

An all-volunteer effort to upload searchable transcriptions of passenger lists to the Internet, the ISTG site includes more than 5,000 ships listed by ship's name, port of departure, port of arrival, captain's name, and surnames.

• The Olive Tree Genealogy's Search Ships Passenger Lists

www.olivetreegenealogy.com/ships/search_ships.shtml

Lorine McGinnis Schulze's search engine for passenger lists, both on and off her own site (such as ISTG above), includes unexpected sources such as New York City Alms House Admissions, which contain immigration details.

• Hamburg: Link to Your Roots State Archive Passenger Search

http://fhh1.hamburg.de/fhh/behoerden/staatsarchiv/link_to_your_roots/english/start.htm

Millions of Europeans left for the new world through Hamburg's port between the years 1850 and 1934. The Hamburg State Archive is now making its records available online, beginning with the ones from 1890 to 1905. Searches are free, but viewing additional details requires payment (\$22) that can be made online by credit card.

• National Archives of Canada Genealogy Research

www.archives.ca/02/020202_e.html

If you had family that immigrated to Canada, you'll want to check out this site, especially under the Citizenship (naturalization) records and Immigration records categories. Contents include searchable indexes of Canadian Naturalizations (1915–1932), Immigrants at Grosse-Île, (1832–1937), and Immigration Records (1925–1935).

