Alternative Sources: The *Other* Passenger Lists

John M. Hoenig describes the lesser-known sources of travel information

RECENTLY, THE AMOUNT of computerized information about passenger travel on ships and airplanes has exploded. It's absolutely fabulous and has already resulted in many people making major advances in their research. Here, we summarize the availability of records. Let's hope the trend of expanding databases continues and this article becomes out of date soon!

Passenger Manifests
Consider the Ellis Island passenger records of people arriving in New York over the period 1892 to 1924. When the Ellis Island Foundation, *http://www.ellisisland.org*, put their database online, they were inundated with 35,000 hits per second. Tremendous interest in genealogy was generated. Soon after that, Steve Morse developed a far superior search engine for the database. His latest version, the gold form (available at *http://www. stevemorse.org*) now allows you to search by name of the hometown. If you haven't tried this, you may be missing some great information. I found my grandfather's first-cousin, Eva Peller, listed as Chawe Beller when I searched for people from Jablonow. But, even with great search engines, you'll find some relatives are elusive. Thus, I was excited to learn that Ancestry.com has created its own index to the Ellis Island records as well as pre-Ellis Island records. And, not too long ago, the Battery Conservancy placed online passenger manifests for people arriving in New York between

1820 and 1912. This can be searched from Steve Morse's site or via *http://www.archives.gov/ northeast/nyc/finding-aids/passenger -lists.html*. We now have four

Passenger manifest for the arrival of Ella Peller in 1948. The card provided her maiden name, the surname of her first husband and many other details.

indexes for some years and thus four chances of finding a relative's arrival. What's the fourth index? Don't forget there is also the National Archives and Records Administration index on microfilm, which can be examined at your local Family History Center.

My grandfather got remarried in Italy in 1948 to a widow named Ella. I never knew much about Ella because he died a few years after remarrying and we lost contact with her. I found Ella's naturalization papers and it told me the airplane flight on which she arrived in America after the wedding. At the National Archives, I looked for the passenger manifest

but all I found was a summary telling how many Americans and how many foreigners were onboard in first class and in coach. But, Ancestry.com had an image of a card Ella filled out that was highly informative. It gave her maiden name, city of birth, a personal description, the name of her daughter (who had her previous husband's surname) and other details.

Ancestry recently created indexes, and digitized images, of passenger manifests for arrivals in Baltimore, Boston, Galveston, Philadelphia, San Francisco and dozens of lesser-used ports. Depending on the port, the records can go back as far as 1800 and be as recent as 1957. Included in Ancestry's database are border crossings from Canada and from Mexico into the US.

One potential relative of mine, named Moses Peller, was mentioned on two passenger manifests as the destination of Pellers who arrived in New York in 1904 and 1906. I couldn't find Moses in the 1905 census of New York State and city directories nor could I find his arrival in any of the major ports. By chance, I found his grave and thus was also able to find his death certificate from 1908. Finally, when Ancestry.com made the Canadian border crossings available, I found he had arrived in Canada in 1900 and continued on to New York. It's now clear there aren't many records for Moses because he wasn't in the US for long before he died.

Emigration Records and Ticket Sales Registers

The ports of Bremen, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Antwerp and Liverpool were major departure points for people emigrating from northern and eastern Europe. Bremen kept lists of departing passengers but eventually destroyed almost all the records. Hamburg, on the other hand, kept its records of departing passengers. Previously, one had to search the indexes on microfilm and then look at another film to view the passenger list. Now, Ancestry.com has an index to, and images of, the records for the years 1850 to 1934.

If you've already found the passenger manifest, should you look for the Hamburg record? Absolutely. You'll get a spelling of the name, age, marital status, nationality and profession. Since records are often filled with errors, it's always worthwhile to get confirmation from a second source. You'll also get the name of the hometown, which is tremendously important as it is the key to looking for records in the old country. Early passenger manifests for people coming to America do not provide the hometown. Consider the passenger manifest for the arrival of Moses Peller and Alter Peller in New York in 1896. (Note: This is a different Moses Peller than the one referred to earlier.) Alter Peller was my grandfather's first-cousin. But who was the Moses Peller listed on the line above? One would think they were relatives since they were listed together. But Alter was listed as coming from Austria, while Moses was listed as coming from Hungary. Were there Peller relatives in Hungary? This could be an important clue. The Hamburg emigration record resolves the mystery: Moses was from Tekucza, Austria and Alter was from Jablonow, Austria. Tekucza was walking distance from Jablonow. Although there were several Moses Pellers, as far as I know there was only one from Tekucza and his year of birth matches fairly closely what's listed in the passenger manifest. Therefore, the Hamburg emigration list

Immigration records		
Alaska alien arrivals	1906-1949	Ancestry.com: Eagle, Hyder, Ketchikan, Nome, Skagway
Atlantic ports*	1820-1957	Ancestry.com (see Table 2)
Baltimore	1820-1948	Ancestry.com
Boston	1820-1943	Ancestry.com
California	1893-1957	includes Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Pedro and Ventura, boats and some planes
Canadian border**	1895-1956	Ancestry.com
Detroit	1905-1957	Ancestry.com
Florida ports	1898-1951	Ancestry.com (does not include Miami but such lists exist at the National Archives)
Galveston	1844-1954	Texas Seaport Museum (http://tsm.pearland.com/)
Galveston	1893-1948	Ancestry.com
Hawaii	1942-1948	Ancestry.com
Mexican border***	1903-1957	Ancestry.com
New York	1820-1913	The Battery Conservancy (www.castlegarden.org)
New York	1892-1924	Ellis Island Foundation (www.ellisisland.org)
New York	1820-1957	Ancestry.com, boats and some planes
Oregon	1888-1957	Ancestry.com
Philadelphia	1800-1945	Ancestry.com
San Francisco	1893-1957	Ancestry.com
Seattle	1882-1957	Ancestry.com

Emigration records		
Hamburg	1850-1934	Ancestry.com
British ports	1890-1939****	FindMyPast (www.findmypast.com)
Sweden	1783-1951	Ancestry.com

*) Includes 19th and 20th century records for 68 ports in 17 states from Maine to Florida. Also included for some reason are records from Sandusky, Ohio.

**) Records are available from roughly 1895 to 1956, with gaps in years depending on the specific crossing, for 10 border crossings in Maine, 8 in Minnesota, 11 in New York, 1 in Vermont, 1 in Montana, and for the St. Albans *District*. Records from the St. Albans District include a wide range of entry points across the northern border of the US and include passenger manifests for ships arriving in Canadian ports with passengers whose declared destination was the United States. This includes Halifax, St. John, and Montreal.

***) Records are available from roughly 1903 to the 1950s (with gaps depending on the crossing point) for 15 crossings in Texas, 10 in Arizona, 1 in New Mexico and 2 in California.

****) eventually, the database will be extended to 1960; includes Irish ports up to 1921.

Summary of Internet databases. Many can be searched from Steve Morse's website, *www.stevemorse.org*. A subscription is necessary for access to the Ancestry databases, but most public libraries have subscriptions. Searching FindMyPast.com is free, but there is a fee for obtaining transcripts or images.

enables me to identify this passenger.

The British government kept records of passengers departing from British ports. FindMyPast.com has posted indexes for all ports in England, Scotland and Wales (including Southampton, Liverpool, London, Glasgow, Dartmouth, Plymouth and Dover) for the years 1890 to 1939. They also posted departures from Irish ports up to the 1921 partition.

More than 15 million records are covered. The coverage will be brought forward in the near future to 1960 and eventually contain 30 million records. Searching the site is free, but there is a fee for transcripts and images of the actual records. The free index identifies the name, age, sex, year and port of departure, and destination port and country for each person. What's very interesting about the emigration records is that they

identify the destination. Thus, if you are researching an uncommon surname you may discover that potential relatives went to South Africa, Australia or Canada, to name just a few possible destinations. If you purchase a transcript of the record, you get additional information on ship name, exact date of departure, marital status and occupation of the traveler, and the names of other persons traveling with the passenger. The actual page from the manifest yields no additional information, but certainly is of value to provide details for all persons on the page and it may also reveal errors in the transcription.

Emigration records do not exist for the port of Rotterdam per se, but the Holland American Line (HAL) kept records of ticket sales for the period 6 December 1900, through April 1940. The records include individuals who sailed from Rotterdam or boarded at Boulogne or Southampton and traveled to New York. These have not been digitized and posted on the internet. Microfiche can be requested, however, through your local Family History Center at a Mormon church. An excellent infofile can be found at *http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/hollam.txt*. You have to search through the index on microfiche to find the fiche with the actual record. The information you can find is the name of the head of the household, the number of persons traveling in the party, location where the tickets were purchased, the point of origin of service, and the final destination for which transportation was arranged. The HAL sometimes sold package deals consisting of train tickets to Rotterdam, the steamship passage and train tickets within the US. One relative told me her uncle in New York bought tickets for her mother. The HAL records indicate that, indeed, the tickets were purchased in New York and they included train passage from Vienna to Rotterdam. This puzzled me because traveling via Vienna involved a long detour. I suspected there must have been relatives in Vienna and this suppo-

sition was greatly strengthened when I discovered another member of that immediate family traveling to New York via Vienna.

Ancestry.com has put together a database they titled Swedish Emigration Records. This is actually several disparate databases including passport applications,
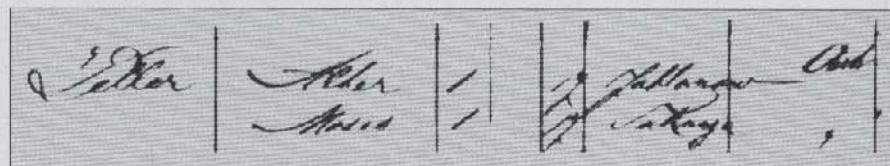
Alter and Moses Peller in the Hamburg outgoing passenger (emigration) list.

passenger manifests, lists of sailors and records of an agent who arranged passages. Of interest are the 242,000 records of passengers from the Swedish America Line from 1915 to 1950. These passenger lists provide the names of people traveling both to and from America (and also includes some ports outside the US). Many times genealogists lament the paucity of records of people leaving the US. A potential relative may be identified in an arrival record and then disappear. Could the relative have returned to the old country? The Swedish records on Ancestry.com are one way this question might be resolved.

An extremely important point to note is that ships departing Europe for America often made stops before crossing the ocean. Thus, for example, we saw that Chawe Peller sailed from Antwerp to New York; she appears as Chawe Beller on the ship's manifest. But, her ship stopped in Southampton and thus she appears in the British departure list as Chaje Peller. My advice is to check the Hamburg, Rotterdam and British lists when you have trouble locating a record of arrival in the US or Canada.

Caution to Readers
I caution readers not to rely solely on computerized records. I knew my grandparents arrived at the port of Miami in the early 1940s and was able to obtain their arrival record from the National

Archives because I found the arrival date and name of the ship in their naturalization records. I looked for the arrival record in the Ancestry database and could not find it. A careful reading of Ancestry's documentation reveals that the Miami records are not part of the record group with the Florida arrivals that Ancestry computerized. As another example, consider the Canadian border crossing records on microfilm at the National Archives. These records are poorly organized and confusing, with two separate indexes occurring for some of the crossing points for some years (see "Surprises from the St. Albans Canadian Border Crossing Records" in the May/June, 2005, issue of *Family Chronicle*). It took me two trips to the National Archives to find my other grandparents' arrival through Rousses Point, New York, but it was worth the effort because it gave me the name of a previously unknown relative in the old country. I haven't been able to locate my grandparents' record in the Ancestry.com database.

The computerized databases are not comprehensive and they have errors in them. They're a fabulous resource but, nonetheless, researchers should check as many sources as they can, including microfilm.

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John Hoenig is a professor of marine science and an avid genealogist. He is fascinated by genealogical strategy and enjoys the challenge of developing ways to track down elusive information. He also collects family photos and is fascinated by the ways they provide clues and insights into family history.