

# World War II Draft Registration Cards

John M. Hoenig describes this valuable source of information

PRIVACY CONCERNS ARE leading to increased restrictions on access to government-held information like vital records. The 1940 census of the United States won't be released to the public until 2012. Thus, we rely heavily on phone books, newspapers and cemetery records to find out whatever happened to "Uncle Harry". Fortunately, access to a major database is now much easier.

In the 1940s, the United States government held four draft registrations. The fourth one, often referred to as the "Old Man's Registration", occurred on 26-27 April 1942. Men born between 28 April 1877 and 16 February 1897 (inclusive), men aged 45 to 64, were required to register (unless they were already in the military). This included non-citizens (visitors and permanent residents alike).

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has released microfilms of these records for 15 states: Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia, as well as Puerto Rico. There are more than three million records representing about one third of the people who registered.

You can view the films at regional branches of the National Archives, and in New York City

you can view the original cards for New York and New Jersey. Ancestry.com also has just added images of the records to its online offerings.

What can you expect to find in the registration cards? The entries are:

As with any record type, there are often surprises. For example, most men listed their wife under "name and address of person who will always know your address". But both of my grandfathers, who arrived in America shortly before the draft registration, listed the

names of other relatives. One of those relatives was a significant find for me. Some men described the nature of their work when asked to give the name of their employer.

During a recent trip to New York, I viewed a box of the registration cards at the NARA facility. I noted that sometimes information was added to the cards — a change of address, an individual entering the armed services, corrections to a registration card that had been filled out by a nurse in a hospital for a patient.

The WWII draft registration cards can be a very valuable resource for tracking relatives in the mid-20th century. Some day, the earlier draft registrations will be released and that will be a fabulous source of information for genealogists. But, for now, privacy concerns prevent this.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)			
SERIAL NUMBER	1. NAME (Print)		ORDER NUMBER
U 12	MAURICE HONIG		
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)			
112 WEST 72 <sup>ND</sup> ST. NEW YORK N.Y.			
3. MAILING ADDRESS			
5 AME			
4. TELEPHONE			
EN 2-4800			
5. AGE IN YEARS			
59			
6. PLACE OF BIRTH			
ARADYAS-CYERES			
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS			
MRS. SIDNE CELIA FRIEDMAN 7441 Creston Ave Bronx			
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS			
RE VISITING ALIEN			
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE			
D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42)			
Maurice Honig			

Draft registration card for the author's paternal grandfather. Maurice had been in the country for only two years when he registered. The card provided the name and address of his sister, Celia. The author hadn't realized she had come to America. Also of note is that Maurice's signature has an accent above the O reflecting the original spelling of the name. And, he apparently started to write another name in the space for "name of person who will always know your address". Who was the mysterious Sidney?

Name  
Place of residence and mailing address  
Telephone number  
Age in years  
Place of birth (town or county and state or country)  
Date of birth  
Name and address of person who will always know your address  
Employer's name and address  
Signature  
Physical description (race, height, weight, complexion, eye color, hair color, whether bald, and other physical characteristics to aid in identification).