

Ask the Experts

by Randy Daitch and Eileen Polakoff

Do you have a tough, thorny research problem whose solution has eluded you? Send it to us and our panel of experts will assist you if at all possible. Our experts will not do the research for you. They will only direct you to sources of information. Answers are supplied by Randy Daitch (RD) and Eileen Polakoff (EP). Send your query to: Ask the Experts, AVOTAYNU, 794 Edgewood Ave., New Haven, CT 06515.

My grandfather, Hil Tempelhof, arrived in the United States in 1923 via Ellis Island and went to Pueblo, Colorado, to live and work while establishing citizenship to bring his wife Ida to the U.S.

My grandmother was a passenger on a ship that arrived at Ellis Island in January 1926. The story I was told is that while the ship was en route to the U.S., the immigration law was changed, and my grandfather needed “another paper” to bring her into the U.S. The ship was turned away and was sent to Mexico. Neither grandparent remembered exactly the port in Mexico where the passengers were able to disembark.

Somehow, my grandmother ended up in Juarez, Mexico, where she lived until November 15, 1928. My grandfather relocated to El Paso, Texas, in January 1926 after he learned that my grandmother had to remain in Juarez until he qualified for the final paper needed to bring her to the U.S. Apparently Juarez had a small Jewish community populated by all of the Polish passengers. My grandfather would cross the border there to visit my grandmother; my mother was born there and brought to the U.S. when she was almost two years old. My grandfather was naturalized in El Paso on October 1, 1928, and I have the petition for naturalization for my grandmother dated November 15, 1928. Eventually, she traveled by train from Juarez to Pueblo.

I have no idea how I might learn where in Mexico her ship landed or what the immigration laws were at the time that prevented her entry into the United States. I am interested in learning as much as I can about my grandparents’ journeys to the U.S.

Wendy Ruby
Denver, Colorado

According to Marian Smith, chief of the History Department at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, there may be some confusion about the date of your grandmother’s arrival in Mexico. The major change in the U.S. immigration law to which the story seems to refer actually occurred on May 26, 1924, with the enactment of the Johnson-Reed Act. The law went into action two months later, in July 1924. This law included the National Origins Act that instituted quotas on the number of immigrants who would be admitted from any given country. Its aim was to restrict entry of southern and eastern Europeans, including Jews. In other words, the immigration law did not pass when “the ship was en route to the U.S.,” unless, of course, your grandmother sailed between May and July 1924.

Even if the exact date that your grandmother arrived in

Mexico is unknown, you may still be able to discover the information you want. The chapter on “Mexico” in the *Avotaynu Guide to Jewish Genealogy* includes the following information:

“Population registries, called *Registro Nacional e Extranjeros del Archivo General de la Nacion* were created under the *Secretaria de Gobernacion* (Interior Ministry). This ministry is responsible for all foreigners who live in Mexico as permanent or nonpermanent residents or as immigrants. The registries cover the years 1888 to 1950 and include everyone—Jews and non-Jews.

“The database includes arrival dates, complete name of immigrants and of the persons giving their affidavit, port of entry and other data. This is an invaluable genealogical resource.”

The registries are held at the *Archivo General de la Nacion* (General Archives of Mexico). The Archives also makes a copy available to the *Centro de Documentacion*

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Ashkenazi, the Documentation and Research Center of the Ashkenazi community of Mexico. The chapter author, Arturo Rubinstein, advises that the *Centro* copy is more accessible. You may write to the *Centro* at CDICA@hotmail.com. Write in Spanish; a recent inquiry in English brought no response. (EP)

After more than 20 years of looking for when and by what means my paternal grandparents, George and Dora Levenstein, and my great-grandmother, Lillie Levenstein, immigrated to the United States, I have run out of ideas.

They left a trail indicating that they were born and married in or around the city of Warsaw, Poland. My grandparents were in England before coming to the United States at the end of 1899 or early 1900. My great-grandmother appears to have come to the U.S. at the same time, as did my grandfather's sister, Sophie Burkholtz.

The only reference to a ship and an arrival date (*SS Leck Ensterns*, May 17, 1900) was on my grandmother's naturalization papers, but I can find no record of the existence of a ship with that name.

Sophie's husband, Max Burkholtz, was in England also, and came to the U.S. in 1898. Except for Max, no ship or land immigration entry database that I have accessed has any indications of other members of the family's entrance into the U.S.

I have enclosed the group charts for my grandparents, great-grandparents and great-aunt. They contain the basic information I have obtained with references to the sources. Can you suggest anything else I might do?

George Lowenstein

Doylestown, Pennsylvania

The only avenue of research I was able to come up with is to try to search for your grandparents by ship and approximate time period. I could find no ship called the *SS Leck Ensterns*. However, by using links on the Stephen Morse website, I searched by "contains" the letters "enst" in the Castle Garden arrivals (before 1892) and found a ship called the *Nyenstein*. The time period is well before 1900, but still worth a try. (RD)

My maternal grandfather's American name was Simon Hyman Waldman. He immigrated to the U.S. in the late 1800s (he said 1892) from Lithuania, supposedly from Oliniki/Valkininkai. While in the U.S., he married my grandmother, Bertha Freeman (who also immigrated supposedly from the same town). This Waldman branch of my family has been extensively documented, but I have been unable to find a ship manifest or record of Simon's precise date of arrival in the U.S., nor can I find any records from Lithuania that I can be sure are his family.

The family story is that Simon's original name was Chaim or Shmuel Edelstein. His father's name was Tsvi Hirsh or Isaac. His mother's name has consistently come down as Peshe. Simon's birth date varies depending upon source. July 5, 1875, in one record; June 12, 1869, accord-

ing to his gravestone and at least a couple of his children. His naturalization record gives an arrival date of June 15, 1892, in Boston. Simon fairly consistently said he arrived in the U.S. in 1892 and the 1900 and 1910 federal censuses reflect this date.

I am stuck trying to find his ship and the manifest page as well as any record of him or his family in Lithuanian records. I've tried searches for Simon/Shmuel/Chaim and for Waldman/Valdman/Edelstein and other forms of each name. I've tried to search all of Lithuania and not limit my search to his supposed shtetl.

Barry Halpern

Denver, Colorado

Using the free version of Ancestry.com, I used a wild card search method to find the following information. I typed the name Edelstein in surname field of Ancestry's search engine, using the "exact search" option. I then scrolled down to the keyword field and typed in the first four letters plus an asterisk, OLKE* of the town name Olkenik (Olekenik), which were the Russian and Yiddish pronunciations of the modern Lithuanian town of Valkininkai. This approach yielded the following results:

Schaje Edelstein - arrival Hartlepool America USA (via Liverpool)

Chaje Edelstein - arrival Hartlepool America USA (via Liverpool)

Isaac Edelstein - arrival at Grimsby Liverpool

Harris Zwee Waldman - (father: Mowscha M. Edelstein)

Passport applications. Ancestry.com provides limited information in its free version. If you have not already done so, I suggest you subscribe to the "full feature" paid version of Ancestry to obtain the full data. (RD)

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