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Passenger Lists of Arrivals at Ellis Island

P. William Filby

Ira A. Glazier

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Passenger Lists of Arrivals at Ellis Island 1892-1954 to be Made Available

From 1892 to 1954 immigrants to America were processed at Ellis Island in New York City. During that time no fewer than sixteen million immigrants passed through the Island, the records of which are preserved in the National Archives in Washington, DC. But unless the person needing information knows the name of the ship and the date of arrival, it is almost impossible to trace the immigrant.

At the present time the buildings on Ellis Island are being refurbished and in a few months' time they will look exactly as they were during the time of arrival of the immigrants. But this is only a part of the story. Genealogists and family historians want access to the actual arrival records, and so The Ellis Island Restoration Commission has been formed to make these records available. The intention is to computerize the passenger lists so that any name will be available immediately. Information differs from list to list, but the full name, age, port of embarkation and arrival are stated, and since the family was treated together, those travelling with parents will be seen readily. Other information such as place of birth and last residence may also be stated.

The Commission under Philip Lax, President, includes P. William Filby, former Director of the Maryland Historical Society and compiler of several books on immigration, Ira A. Glazier, Director of the Temple Balch Center for Immigration Research, Richard G. Scott, President of the Utah Genealogical Society, Rabbi Malcolm Stern, President, Jewish Historical Society of New York and James Dent Walker, formerly of the National Archives and now Associate Director of the Charles Sumner School Museum Archives of Washington, DC.

Work on transcribing the lists will begin almost immediately, and we have set 1992 for completion of the project, at which time anyone visiting Ellis Island will be able to find his or her family by using the computers. It is also considered possible that the computer tapes could be made available at other locations throughout America.

All of this work, however, is very costly, and the rate of progress will depend entirely on the moneys available to move the work forward. Donations are therefore urgently needed. These should be sent to The Ellis Island Restoration Commission, Federal Hall, 26 Wall Street, New York, NY 10005. The telephone number is (212) 264-4451. Donations are tax deductible for income tax purposes.

P. William Filby
Ira A. Glazier