

HIAS (HEBREW IMMIGRANT AID SOCIETY) LOCATION AND FAMILY HISTORY DEPARTMENT

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Hours of Operation:

Monday to Friday: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Closed Saturday, Sunday, Jewish and legal holidays.

Closest Public Transportation, Directions, Description of Facility:

Not applicable. Inquiries may be made by mail, e-mail, or telephone. Search request forms ("Location Service Request" and "Arrival Card Request") are available online.

Description of Resources:

HIAS, founded in 1881, is the oldest international migration and refugee resettlement agency in the U.S.A. and is an important resource for immigrant family information.

1. Case Files: Case files 1979–1988 (microfilm) and original records, 1996 to the present, are at HIAS' Office. Case files, 1960–1995, are in HIAS' warehouse. See "Restrictions on Use."

YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH - ARCHIVES keeps pre-1960 HIAS case files and other HIAS records. YIVO also has case files of agencies affiliated with HIAS such as the Joint Distribution Committee, German-Jewish Children's Aid, National Refugee Service, and United Service for New Americans. AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY has HIAS Boston office case files, late 1920s–1970s and arrival cards, 1882–1929.

2. Photo Archives: HIAS has a collection of photographs including some of refugee ships bringing displaced persons to the United States after WWII.

3. HIAS Location Service:

The HIAS Location Service was established to help émigrés and others around the world re-establish contact with relatives and friends. It is now possible to access Location Service information and initiate search requests online.

a. In addition to using HIAS own case files, the Location Service works closely with a network of affiliated agencies around the United States, Jewish organizations worldwide, other international agencies, libraries, and national archives.

b. HIAS maintains an online forum for persons who do not provide enough information for an individual search. Notices submitted on a HIAS Location Service Search Request form (available online) may be translated into Russian and placed on the HIAS Location Service web page. This online forum is updated monthly.

c. For those engaged in genealogical research, HIAS Location Department assists in finding archival records or other related information from the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Finding Aids:

HIAS uses the following indexes to locate records:

1. Arrival Index Cards, 1909–1985 (81 reels), include information on immigrants that were assisted by HIAS. For the earlier years, these include immigrants at ports of entry all over the U.S.A. The cards, arranged by year of arrival, port of entry, then alphabetically by surname, summarize information about each member of the family traveling together and include: date of arrival, conveyance (name of ship/plane), port, family name, first names of each family member, birth dates and country of birth, sex, marital status, country of last residence, occupation, sponsor and sponsors' address.

Case file numbers appear on these cards beginning in 1955. Ports of entry pre-1940 included New York, Boston, Baltimore, Galveston, Philadelphia, Providence, San Francisco and Seattle. For 1940–1964, they included also Bradley Airfield (Hartford County, CT), Charleston, Gulfport, Laredo (TX), Miami, Mobile, New Orleans, Newport, Niagara Falls, Norfolk, Oswego, Portland, Rouses Point, Savannah, and Wilmington (DE). Arrival Cards 1965–1967 include only “eastern U.S. ports” and are arranged by year and surname. Arrival Cards, 1968–, includes arrivals at the port of New York only. There are three additional series included here — “Canadian arrivals (various cities)” for 1921–1923, 1927, 1939–1952, 1954; “Portland,” 1914, 1915, 1921 and “S.S. *St. Louis*” passengers, 1939. NOTE: The quality of these films varies. Some cards are illegible.

2. Master Card Index-Central Files Cases, c. 1938–1979 (5 reels). This index, arranged by HIAS’ Case Name Indexing System (Soundex), identifies all members of the traveling party. (See Appendix A for a description of HIAS’ Soundex.) Index cards include case number, name of immigrant, wife’s name including maiden name, names of other “case unit members” (i.e. children), birth dates, country of birth, marital status, relationship to first person listed and arrival date. The back side of the card includes “interested U.S. persons,” their address (or borough), case number if serviced by HIAS and their relationship to the immigrant. Listed at the bottom under “Cross Reference Cases - Changes- Additional Data” are names of later arrivals and their case numbers where the immigrant here is listed. Index, 1970–1979 (original cards), include alternate spellings of the surname, and if wife previously married, the surname from her first marriage.
3. Cross Reference Index-Central Files Cases, c. 1955–c. 1982 (most from the 1960s and 1970s) are arranged by HIAS’ Soundex (46 reels). A separate card is included for all adults (except head of the immigrant household) for cases opened in the 1960s. For cases opened 1970–1979, there is a card for each adult (including head of household). The cards for head of household appear to be duplicates of the Master Card Index, 1970–1979. Separate cards are included for (1) immigrant wife (by her maiden name), (2) alternate names for the immigrant husband (“man”) and (3) names of relatives and friends provided by the immigrants. If any of this latter group were HIAS clients, their case numbers are included.

Researchers should check both the Master Cards and the Cross Reference Index to find an adult included in a 1960s case but need only check the Cross Reference Index for 1970s cases.

4. Computerized Index. From 1980 to the present, HIAS has a computerized case index accessible to HIAS staff.
5. Holocaust Arrivals, c. 1935–c. 1953 (most from 1940s, post-war) also known as the NRS-USNA-UHS Case File Index Cards (10 reels). These 4" x 6" cards are arranged by HIAS Soundex for immigrant head of household’s surname. The cards include case number, name of immigrant, wife including maiden name, children, birth dates and countries of birth, dates of arrival, U.S. address (or addresses), address abroad, affiant(s) and address of affiant, date case was opened/closed. The back side of the card includes “cross references,” usually name(s), addresses of relatives showing the relationship to immigrant and that person’s case number if also assisted by HIAS. NOTE: “NRS” is the National Refugee Service; “USNA” is the United Service for New Americans. “UHS” or United HIAS Service was the name used by HIAS when it merged in December, 1953 with these two agencies.
6. Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) index cards, c. 1946–1949 (5 reels). This index is arranged alphabetically by surname. The form for this card includes surname and first names of members of the family. Space is provided for birth date and place, present address (in Europe), dates case opened and closed, persons interested and relationship. These fields are mostly blank. Names, address and date case opened are generally filled in. There are no case numbers on these cards.

Fees/Copies:

There is a fee of \$30.00 for either posting inquiries online, for conducting a basic search or for a copy of an arrival record. There may be an additional fee if an advanced search is requested, depending on labor and expenses incurred.

Restrictions on Use:

Searches cannot be conducted by researchers at HIAS’ office. However, researchers can view microfilm of the Arrival Index Cards, 1909–1979, Master Index Cards, c. 1938–c. 1972 (mostly 1960s), Cross Reference Index [MKM 28], NRS-USNA-UHS Case File Index Cards (Holocaust Cards) and JDC Index at the YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH, ARCHIVES; and Arrival Cards, 1882–1929, ports of Boston, MA and Providence, RI at the AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY. Copies of individual case files at HIAS, 1960 to the present, can be made only for the individual or a relative.

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