

Mahler in America

The Ellis Island U.S. Arrival Records for Gustav Mahler, 1907-1910

by Michael Bosworth

Many Americans can trace their roots back to ancestors who passed through the Ellis Island immigration facility on their way to a new life in the "New World". Ellis Island is located off the southern tip of Manhattan Island in New York City. It is not far from Liberty Island, where the Statue of Liberty stands. My own great-grandmother was processed at Ellis Island in 1894 on her way from Norway to Minnesota. When the Ellis arrival records (or "passenger manifests") were placed on-line some 7-8-around seven years ago, I quickly logged in to the website (www.ellislandrecords.org) to locate my ancestor, and to my satisfaction I was able to find her arrival details fairly easily.

While doing this genealogical research, I noticed that the Ellis passenger manifests covered all arrivals into the United States, and not only was not restricted to foreigners intending to immigrate. Even

returning US citizens were recorded. It quickly hit struck me that I should therefore also be able to trace the four New York arrival records for Gustav Mahler (and his entourage) covering the years 1907-1911. Sure enough, I was able to find three of them almost immediately (1908, 1909, 1910). The 1907 entry eluded me, however, and it was only in 2006, with the help of another specialized website (www.stevemorse.org) that I was able to track down the 1907 arrival. As it turns out, several errors have been made at the Ellis Island Records site for the 1907 arrival: (the last name is had been transcribed as 'Mohler', and the link brings you to up manifest images for the wrong ship on the wrong arrival date).

2007 marks the 100th anniversary of Mahler's first arrival in the USA to take up a conducting position at the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York City. It is therefore timely to have a brief look at these interesting records and try to imagine the arrival/interview process as experienced by Mahler and his family as part of their Trans-Atlantic crossings. While Alma alludes briefly to the New York arrival experience in her memoirs, I have not yet come across any reference to it by Mahler himself in his the extant letters.

The ship manifests were the responsibility of the captain or

SALOON, CABIN, AND STEERAGE ALIENS MUST BE COMPLETELY MANIFESTED.

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress approved February 20, 1907, to be delivered to the

S. S. *America* sailing from *Cuxhaven* November 19th 1907

No.	Family Name	Given Name	Age	Sex	Married or Single	Calling or Occupation	Nationality	Race or People	Last Permanent Residence	The name and complete address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came.	First Destination	No. on List	Whether Arriving a Subject to such regulations.
1	Karstens	Rudolf	25	m	single	merchant seaman	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Heinrich Karstens, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	1	✓
2	Ford	Edith	37	f	single	nurse	United Kingdom	Irish	U.S.A. New York	Hammerstreet	N.Y. New York	2	yes
3	Becker	Alfred	37	m	single	seaman	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Hammerstreet	N.Y. New York	3	✓
4	Morris	Nate	36	f	single	nurse	United Kingdom	Irish	U.S.A. New York	Hammerstreet	N.Y. New York	4	yes
5	Forster	William	63	m	single	merchant	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Heinrich Forster, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	5	✓
6	Mahler	Gustav	48	m	single	conductor	Austria	Czechoslovakian	Austria Bohemia	Father: Johann Mahler, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	6	yes
7	"	Alma	39	f	single	nurse	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Mahler, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	7	✓
8	"	Cyril	4	m	single	no occupation	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Grandfather: Johann Mahler, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	8	✓
9	Sigges	Lizzie	33	f	single	nurse	United Kingdom	English	England London	Father: Johann Sigges, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	9	✓
10	Hochmeyer	Ernst	42	m	single	farmer	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Hochmeyer, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	10	no
11	Quersperg	Ernst	55	m	single	nurse	Austria	German	Austria Hamburg	Father: Johann Quersperg, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	11	✓
12	Wiest	Ernst	37	m	single	merchant	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Wiest, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	12	no
13	"	Meta	33	f	single	nurse	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Wiest, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	13	✓
14	"	Margarita	6	f	single	no occupation	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Grandfather: Johann Wiest, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	14	✓
15	Thost jr.	Carl	30	m	single	merchant seaman	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Thost, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	15	✓
16	Gabrilowitsch	Ossip	30	m	single	musician	Russia	Hebrew	Russia St. Petersburg	Father: Ossip Gabrielowitsch, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	16	yes
17	Cehlich	Justus	30	m	single	merchant	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Cehlich, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	17	✓
18	"	Jugdibike	37	f	single	nurse	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Cehlich, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	18	✓
19	Stark	Edgar	38	m	single	merchant	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Stark, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	19	no
20	Haberborn	Edmund	32	m	single	no occupation	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Haberborn, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	20	no
21	Kottelohm	Arthur	30	m	single	no occupation	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Kottelohm, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	21	no
22	"	Mary	28	f	single	nurse	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Kottelohm, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	22	✓
23	Wändisch	Robert	57	m	single	merchant	Mexico	Spanish	Mexico Vera Cruz	Father: Johann Wändisch, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	23	no
24	Schemel	Ernst	44	m	single	no occupation	Venezuela	Spanish	Venezuela Caracas	Father: Johann Schemel, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	24	no
25	"	J. A.	20	m	single	no occupation	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Schemel, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	25	✓
26	Lüders	Johannes	43	m	single	no occupation	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Lüders, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	26	no
27	"	Jonni	35	f	single	nurse	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Lüders, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	27	✓
28	Roth's child	M.	53	m	single	merchant	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Roth, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	28	✓
29	Kaiser	Kona	19	f	single	nurse	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Kaiser, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	29	✓
30	Hosch	Mathilde	30	f	single	nurse	Germany	German	Germany Hamburg	Father: Johann Hosch, 101 Broadway, New York	N.Y. New York	30	no

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Example 1

commanding officer of the vessel, to be handed over to U.S. immigration authorities upon arrival. The exact title of the forms preserved in the Ellis Island records is entitled "List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States Immigration Officer at Port of Arrival." Presumably the forms were completed at the time of boarding the ship; it would be interesting to know the exact nature of the arrival interview/review process at Ellis Island (beyond a check of physical and mental health). In any event, it seems that whoever completed the forms had decent command of written English, and the handwriting on the forms indicates that in general one person wrote all entries (subject to edits by the immigration officer).

Using the information available online, I have prepared a comparison of key data from Mahler's arrival records for 1907-10 in table format. Most of the interesting divergences or differences from year to year in the recorded information are readily evident. Depending on the way that the information was collected (e.g., via oral interview, or through written submission), it is possible that Mahler himself was the source of the 'divergences'. On the other hand, it cannot be ruled out that errors may have occurred during the entry of data by the recording officer.

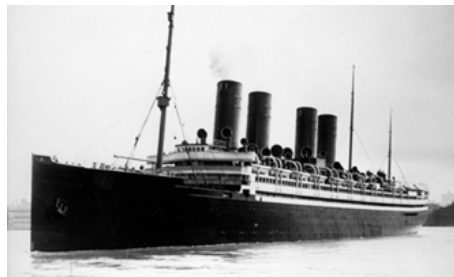
A reproduction of one page from the original ship's manifest for the 1908 arrival (obtained through the search engines available at www.stevemorse.org) is also included for reference [see Example 1]. Gustav Mahler appears on line 6 of this page. It is interesting to note that Ossip Gabrilowitsch, the Russian musician and conductor who apparently developed an infatuation with Alma around this time (as Alma reported by Alma in her memoirs), appears on the same manifest page on line 16, only a few lines below Mahler and his party.

In 1910, Gustav and Alma are reported on separate manifest pages, because Alma, Anna, and Anna's English nanny boarded the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* a day later than Gustav at an embarkation point in France. Anna's listed nanny is a new, younger one who happens to share the same surname (Turner) as the previous one (relatives, perhaps?). Alma actually gets younger, her age declared as 27 in 1910 whereas it was recorded as 30 in 1909. Again from the 1910 manifest, it is interesting that Mahler's host/sponsor is still listed as the Metropolitan Opera Company, rather than the New York Philharmonic Society.

Some other questions for further research that I have not covered here include:

- 1) What type of identification and paperwork did Mahler carry from Vienna? Did he have a passport issued by the Austro-Hungarian Empire? If he indeed carried a passport, does this document exist today in a collection somewhere?
- 2) Were travelers in higher-class cabins, such as the Mahlers, given preferential treatment at Ellis?
- 3) Has anyone inspected/located the manifests for the ships carrying Mahler on his four return journeys back to Europe?

Finally, it should be noted here that Mahlerians are eagerly awaiting the publication of volume IV of the fourth volume of Prof. Henry-Louis de La Grange's biography of Mahler biography, which will cover the New York years and therefore may contain additional details and/or possibly answers to some of the questions raised above.



Kaiser-Wilhelm II:
 Built for North German Lloyd in 1902. 19,361 gross tons; 707 (bp) feet long; 72 feet wide. Steam quadruple expansion engines, twin screw. Service speed 23 knots. 1,888 passengers

Michael Bosworth was born in 1958 in Santa Monica, California, and grew up in Los Angeles Area. He has training on the clarinet, and his academic degrees include a B.A. in Diplomacy and World Affairs; a M.S. in Foreign Service; and an MBA in International Business. He has lived, studied, and worked outside the US for most of the last 27 years, including in Taiwan, China, Switzerland, Germany, Laos, and currently Vietnam. As Bosworth describes it, his serious interest in Mahler developed during his years in Germany (1996-2001), and, as he himself states "since then I have become an 'amateur scholar' of Mahler's life and music."

Table 1: Sample data from Ellis Island Arrival Records for Gustav Mahler, 1907-1910

Arrival Date at NYC	Ship's Name	Traveling with	Nationality/Citizenship	Race or People	Age	Ht. (in feet)	Occupation	Sponsor or Host	Place of Birth
21 Dec. 1907	<i>Kaiserin Auguste Viktoria</i> boarded at Cherbourg	Alma (Anna did not go to NY this first time)	Austria	German	47	5'8"	Musical Dr. (or Dir.)	'Tourist and ret.' written on top of initial entry*	Kalisch, Bohemia
21/22 Nov. 1908**	<i>Amerika</i> boarded at Cuxhaven	Alma, Anna and Lizzie Turner (nanny)	Austria	Bohemian	48	5'2"	Band Master	Metropolitan Opera	Kalisch, Germany#
19 Oct. 1909	<i>Kaiser Wilhelm II</i> boarded at Cherbourg	Alma, Anna and Lizzie Turner (nanny)	Austria	German	49	5'6"	Musical Director	Metrip. Opera Co., NYC	Kalish, Austria
25 Oct. 1910	<i>Kaiser Wilhelm II</i> boarded at Bremen	Alma, Anna and Maud Turner (nanny); they are recorded on sep. page	Austria	Austrian	50	5'3"	Director of a Band	Metr. Opera Co., Broadway, NY	Kalisch, Bohemia

*Initial entry appears to have been "on business"

** Most of the relevant manifest pages show 21 Nov. 21ember crossed out and replaced with Nov. 2222 November; however GM's Gustav Mahler's page shows Nov. 2121 November

###likely a clerical error; : Alma's place of birth is recorded as Vienna, Germany!