

## WORLD WAR II FOURTH REGISTRATION DRAFT CARDS: A NEWLY-RELEASED 20th-CENTURY RESOURCE FOR 19th-CENTURY RESEARCH

by Leslie Corn, M.A.

### **"ALL MEN 45-64 REQUIRED TO REGISTER AT WEEK-END."**

This notice appeared on page 10 of *The New York Times* on Friday, April 24, 1942, along with a list of draft board addresses for the five boroughs of New York City, a sample registration card—D.S.S. Form 1—for the men to clip, fill out, and take with them when they registered, and instructions:

"All men in New York City, whether citizens or aliens, who reached their forty-fifth birthday on or before Feb. 16, 1942, or who will not have reached their sixty-fifth birthday by April 27, 1942, must register for selective service either tomorrow or Sunday between 1 P.M. and 6 P.M. or on Monday between 7 A.M. and 9 P.M."<sup>1</sup>

Men across the United States—some of them veterans of the Spanish-American War and World War I—were being given similar instructions, as the Fourth Registration of the draft by the Selective Service System was about to take place nationwide. The men who registered, all born in the 19th century, were not liable for military service. The draft, a type of "occupational census," was organized to document the men's skills for possible use later in the war. After registering, the men were sent three-page occupational questionnaires.

"The purpose of this questionnaire was to secure special information on the industrial capacity and training of the registrants. The United States Employment Service furnished a list of 190 special occupations which were regarded at the time as critical."<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the questionnaires have not survived. But the original 4" x 6" draft cards from this registration in New York City (911,630 cards), the state of New Jersey (approximately 611,100 cards), and Puerto Rico (approximately 144,900 cards)<sup>3</sup> are now available for viewing at the National Archives Northeast Region in New York City. The cards, part of National Archives Record Group 147, Records of the Selective Service Commission, 1940–, are among the few sources for date and place of birth of men in this time period, whether they were born in the United States, naturalized citizens, or alien residents.

### **THE FOURTH REGISTRATION, APRIL 25-27, 1942**

Reports of the older men's enthusiastic response during the first of the three days of registration on Saturday, April 25, 1942, in New York City, made front-page news:

<sup>1</sup> Not required to register were men in the Armed Forces and reserves, and certain diplomatic representatives.

<sup>2</sup> Selective Service System. "Inventory of Manpower—Registrations: The Fourth Registration," *Selective Service in Wartime, Second Report of the Director of Selective Service, 1941-42*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, April 3, 1943, 99-100.

<sup>3</sup> Estimates for New Jersey and Puerto Rico supplied by NARA-NE, N.Y.C. Number for New York City from *The New York Times*, April 28, 1942, page 1.

**"269,100 OLDER MEN IN EARLY RUSH HERE FOR DRAFT LISTING . . . DRAFT BOARDS IN METROPOLITAN AREA REPORT EAGERNESS TO CONTRIBUTE TO WAR"** (*The New York Times*, Sunday, April 26, 1942, 1:1 and 38:7).

By the second day of registration, Sunday, some draft boards, swamped with registrants, opened an hour early. Hundreds of extra registrars and interpreters were dispatched to the most overloaded draft boards.

**"1000 A MINUTE SIGN IN DRAFT; 588,752 ARE ENROLLED HERE"** (*The New York Times*, Monday, April 27, 1942, 1:2 and 18:4). ". . . the average waiting time ran about an hour in mid-afternoon. However, everyone seemed cheerful and good-natured as the lines moved slowly ahead into the vacant stores, school houses and fire houses that served as registration places. . . . Men came equipped with camp chairs or stools on which they sat and chatted with their neighbors. . . ."

**"68,000 CLERKS KEPT ON GO AS 'GRANDPAS' RUSH TO SIGN"** The *New York Daily News* story on the same day (page 4:1) noted that 60,000 of the clerks were volunteers and that registrants weren't the only ones who waited in line. "Remarkable about yesterday's registration was the large number of women in the lines—not to register, of course, but to chat with their husbands during the wait."

The third day of registration, Monday, also saw the need for more registrars to relieve the long lines at certain draft boards. At 3 P.M., all public school teachers were released from classes to act as emergency registrars. 1000 members of the Fire Department also assisted.

The three-day registration was over; the total number of registrants counted. The heading of the front-page story from *The New York Times*, Tuesday, April 28, 1942, announced:

**"13,000,000 REGISTERED IN 4TH DRAFT,  
INCLUDING 911,630 IN NEW YORK CITY"**

### **OTHER DRAFT REGISTRATIONS, 1940-43**

This draft was the fourth in a series of six registrations, plus one "extra" registration for Americans living abroad, that took place from October 16, 1940 through December 31, 1943. The official date of each registration was typically the date registration was completed, with populous localities having more days of registration than smaller localities. Dates of registration in the U.S. territories of Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico were usually later than those in the states.<sup>4</sup> The seven registrations and the ages of the men registered were:

<sup>4</sup> Information about the seven draft registrations obtained from *Selective Service and Victory: The 4th Report of the Director of Selective Service, 1944-1945, With a Supplement for 1946-1947*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948, p. 60. A National Archives pamphlet may also be helpful, although there are errors in data about the registrations: *Preliminary Inventory, Number 27: Records of the Selective Service System, 1940-47*, compiled by Richard G. Wood, 1951.

**WORLD WAR II FOURTH REGISTRATION DRAFT CARDS** (continued)

- First Registration: October 16, 1940. Men 21-35 years.
- Second Registration: July 1, 1941. Men who had reached the age of 21 since the first registration.
- Third Registration: February 16, 1942. Men 20-21 and 35-44 years.
- Fourth Registration: April 27, 1942. Men 45-64 years, not liable for military service.
- Fifth Registration: June 30, 1942. Men 18-20 years.
- Sixth Registration: December 10-31, 1942. Men who had reached the age of 18 years after June 30, 1942.
- "Extra Registration": November 16-December 31, 1943. American men living abroad, aged 18-44 years.

After the sixth registration of December 1942, registration was required of every man upon reaching his eighteenth birthday.

**THE SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM**

The Selective Service System was created by law September 23, 1940 and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 8545—the first United States draft legislation in peacetime.

Established were the Selective Service National Headquarters in Washington, D.C., State Headquarters under the authority of governors of each state, and local draft boards, one for each county and one for each unit of 30,000 population within cities. 90% of the Selective Service System's officials—about 202,000 by the end of World War II—were uncompensated volunteers.<sup>5</sup>

**CONTENTS OF WORLD WAR II  
FOURTH REGISTRATION DRAFT CARDS**

The registration cards, D.S.S. Form 1, were numbered with a "U" prefix and a serial number from 1 up. The space for an order number was left blank, as these men were not liable for service. After the top line "REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)" and the serial number, the front of each card contains numbered spaces for the following information:

1. Name (First/Middle/Last)
2. Place of residence (Number and street/Town, township, village, or city/County/State)
3. Mailing address
4. Telephone (exchange, number)
5. Age in Years; Date of Birth (Mo./Day/Yr.)
6. Place of Birth (Town or county and State or country)
7. Name and Address of Person Who Will Always Know Your Address
8. Employer's Name and Address  
[Note: no information was required about the registrant's occupation, as a request for that information would be part of the occupational questionnaire.]

<sup>5</sup> National Headquarters, Selective Service System. *The Selective Service System: Its Concept, History and Operation*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, n.d., 29.

9. Place of Employment or Business (Number and street or R.F.D. number/Town/County/State)

The registrant signed below the oath: "I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true."

The reverse side of the card is the Registrar's Report, consisting of a description of the registrant, with check boxes following the categories:

Race: White/Negro/Oriental/Indian/Filipino

Height (Approx.)

Weight (Approx.)

Eyes: Blue/Gray/Hazel/Brown/Black (plus two blank boxes)

Hair: Blonde/Red/Brown/Black/Gray/Bald (plus one blank box)

Complexion: Sallow/Light/Ruddy/Dark/Freckled/Light brown/Dark brown/Black

Space for remarks follow the statement, "Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in Identification."

The registrar then signed below a printed oath, with two blank lines available for handwritten additions: "I certify that my answers are true; that the person registered has read or has had read to him his own answers; that I have witnessed his signature or mark and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:" The signature of the registrar was followed by his or her insertion of "Registrar for Local Board" number, city or county, and state, and the date of registration. The stamp of the local board, including its number and address, was to be inserted in a box below the date of registration.

Additional information can be found on some cards, such as a registrant's change of address or note of his death. If a man had a residence in one state, but worked in another, both addresses would be noted. Some cards include attachments held by staples or paper clips, such as death notices or obituaries from local papers.

**EXAMPLES OF  
FOURTH REGISTRATION DRAFT CARDS**

Among the first-day registrants was New York City-born Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia, who, at 1:20 PM, registered at the public school at 37 West 111th Street that was Manhattan Local Board 49. Henrietta M. Murray, a school teacher, registered the mayor with serial number U0305, noting his eyes as brown, his hair black, and complexion dark. He supplied his residential address as 1274 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y.; mailing address as City Hall, New York, N.Y.; telephone: Cortland 7 1000 and Canal 6 2000; age 54; date of birth 12/11/1882; place of birth New York, N.Y.; his employer: City of New York; his height 5' 3½"; weight 175 (see illustrations next page).

According to the story reported in *The New York Times* the following day, when Mrs. Murray asked the mayor the name and address of the person who would always know his address, he answered, "My wife Marie, and that's no fooling."

WORLD WAR II FOURTH REGISTRATION DRAFT CARDS (continued)

**REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)**

SERIAL NUMBER **U 0305** 1. NAME (Print) **Fiorello H. LaGuardia** ORDER NUMBER

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) **1274 Fifth Ave New York N.Y.**  
(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)  
 (THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL)

3. MAILING ADDRESS **City Hall New York N.Y.**  
(Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same)

4. TELEPHONE **Coastland 7 1000** 5. AGE IN YEARS **54** 6. PLACE OF BIRTH **New York N.Y.**  
(Number) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)  
 DATE OF BIRTH **May 11 1888**  
(Month) (Day) (Year) (Town or county) (State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS **Marie La Guardia Wife**

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS **City of New York**

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS **City of New York**  
(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. B. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42) (over) 16-21630-3 *[Signature]* (Registrant's signature)

Two days later on the final day of registration, a foreign-born New Yorker registered at Manhattan Local Board 44, 155 East 88th Street. Irving Berlin, serial number U3306, gave his address as 129 East 78th St., N.Y., N.Y. (later changed on the card to 1 Gracie Square, N.Y., N.Y.; registrants were required to report changes of address and marital status to Selective Service), mailing address, "Same"; telephone But 8-4647; age 53; place of birth Tehmen [sic], Russia,<sup>6</sup> date of birth May 11, 1888; person who will always know your address: Mrs. Irving Berlin, 129 East 78th St., N.Y.C.; employer's name and address: Irving Berlin, 799 Seventh Ave., N.Y.C. His height was noted as 5 ft. 6 in., weight 132, eyes brown, hair brown, complexion dark; other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification: none.

(see illustrations next page)

For locating birth dates and places of native- and foreign-born men, these draft cards are invaluable resources and can open up a wealth of possibilities for additional research about the men and their ancestry. A search in Manhattan for the Eichberg surname revealed the cards of three men born in different parts of Germany: Albert Eichberg, born March 23, 1889 in Osterspai, Germany; Felix Eichberg, born November 23, 1886, in Hengstfeld, Germany; and Richard Albert Eichberg, born October 27, 1888, in Berlin, Germany.

If a man was away from his home state at the time of the draft, he registered at a draft board in the state he was visiting. On April 27, 1942, 46-year-old Alvin Rafael Jacobsen, born in Newark, New Jersey, his residence Malcolm Rd., Mahwah, Bergen County, New Jersey, registered at Local Board F in Pulaski, Arkansas, serial number U455. He worked at the Arkansas Ordnance Plant of Ford, Bacon & Davis in Jacksonville, Arkansas. Still working in the same place, he again registered on October 28, 1942, at his Local Board I in Ramsey, Bergen County, New Jersey. Comparison of the two cards shows that certain changes had taken place in the five months since his first registration: his wife, who had previously been living in New Jersey, was now with him in Arkansas. And the bespectacled Mr. Jacobsen (noted in the section about "other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification") was now sporting a mustache.

Draft cards can offer insights into registrants' relatives and friends. While the entry of a spouse's name in the box for "Name and Address of Person Who Will Always Know Your Address" was probably the most frequent, names and addresses

**REGISTRAR'S REPORT**

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

RACE	HEIGHT (Approx.)	WEIGHT (Approx.)	COMPLEXION
White	5-3 1/2	175	Brown
Negro	Blue	Blonde	Ruddy
Original	Gray	Red	Dark
Indian	Hazel	Brown	Freckled
Philippine	Brown	Black	Light brown
	Black	Gray	Dark brown
		Bald	Black

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification: **none**

I certify that my answers are true; that the person registered has read or has had read to him his own answers; that I have witnessed his signature or mark and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

Registrar for Local Board **49 New York N.Y.**  
(Number) (Town or village) (State)

Date of registration **April 25, 1942**

(STAMP OF LOCAL BOARD)  
 (The stamp of the Local Board having jurisdiction of the registrant shall be placed in the above space)

16-21630-1

Front and back sides of Mayor LaGuardia's card.

<sup>6</sup> Controversy exists whether Irving Berlin (Israel Baline) was born in Mogilev, Russia, per his naturalization petition, or in Siberia, per his name change petition. The entry of "Tehmen, Russia" on his draft card is one more indication that his birthplace was Siberia.

WORLD WAR II FOURTH REGISTRATION DRAFT CARDS (continued)

1 Grace Square N.Y.C.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 26, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER 1. NAME (Print) ORDER NUMBER

U. 3386 IRVING BERLIN

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)

129 East 78th St. N.Y. N.Y.

3. MAILING ADDRESS

SAME

4. TELEPHONE 5. AGE IN YEARS 6. PLACE OF BIRTH

But 8-4647 53 TEHMEN

DATE OF BIRTH (Town or county)

MAY 11 1888 RUSSIA

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS

MRS IRVING BERLIN 129 EAST 78th ST N.Y.C.

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS

IRVING BERLIN 799 SEVENTH AVE. NYC.

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS

SAME

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42) (over) 18-21630-2 Irving Berlin (Registrar's signature)

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

RACE	HEIGHT (Approx.)	WEIGHT (Approx.)	COMPLEXION
White	5ft 6 in	132	Yellow
Negro	Blue	Black	Light
Other	Gray	Red	Dark
Caucasian	Brown	Brown	Dark
Indian	Black	Black	Light brown
Other	Black	Gray	Dark brown
Other	Black	Black	Black

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification

None

I certify that my answers are true; that the person registered has read or has had read to him the over answers; that I have witnessed his signature or mark and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

Registrar for Local Board

44 M.U. N.Y.

Date of registration April 27, 1942

Local Board No. 44	2
155 East 86th Street	061
New York 28, New York	044

(STAMP OF LOCAL BOARD)

(The name of the Local Board having jurisdiction of the registrant shall be placed in the above space)

18-21630-1

Front and back of Irving Berlin's card.

can be given for parents, grown children, business associates, and friends.

Percival Corn, age 58, born in New York City, serial number U681, who registered at Manhattan Local Board 25 on April 26, listed Mrs. Annie Isaacs as his contact. Annie Isaacs, it turned out, was his mother, only known in previous research as Annie Corn. She had, evidently, remarried after Percival's father died. Without this information about a new surname—and while not being able to find the name Annie Corn in telephone books—it might have been assumed incorrectly that the 80-year-old had died.

On April 25, 1942, Harry Joseph Murphy, employed by the Fire Department of New York City at Engine 306, Bayside, Queens, New York, registered at Local Board 271 in Queens. A change of address from 208-20 33rd Ave. to 39-29 213th Street, Bayside, Queens, is noted for the 58-year-old, 5' 7½", 235-pound, Laurel-Hill-born native of Queens. Edna Lane, 42-33 205th St., Bayside, is the person who would always know his address. Her relationship to him is unidentified, as is the case with contact people named on most of the draft cards.

Attached to the draft card with an old paper clip is a crumbling newspaper clipping: Harry J. Murphy's September 14, 1944, obituary from a local paper. The detailed obituary lists information about his career, his children, including the name of his daughter Edna Lane and another daughter with whom he lived, the church where his requiem mass would take place, and his place of burial. It also noted that he was born in Manhattan, a contradiction of the birthplace of Laurel Hill he told the registrar for the more trustworthy and primary source document: his draft card.

SEARCHING FOR A FOURTH REGISTRATION DRAFT CARD

Draft cards from New York City, New Jersey, and Puerto Rico are available for in-person and mail-order research at the National Archives regional facility in New York City. Information needed to search for a particular card depends on where the registrant lived. A street address of the registrant, as noted below, is required for certain localities and not for others.

NEW YORK CITY:

566 boxes. 297 Local Draft Boards. 911,630 cards

• Manhattan: Local draft boards 1-70. 264,439 cards

Research Manhattan draft cards by looking for the registrant's name. There is one set of alphabetized cards for the entire borough.

• Bronx: Local draft boards 75-127. 161,378 cards

• Brooklyn: Local draft boards 133-233. 305,784 cards

• Queens: Local draft boards 238-286. 160,726 cards

• Richmond: Local draft boards 291-297. 19,303 cards<sup>7</sup>

Locating a draft registration card for registrants in these boroughs of New York City requires a residential address for the registrant. Addresses can be obtained from telephone books, naturalization records, voter registrations, deeds, marriage records, birth records of children, family letters, SS-5 cards, alien registrations, and other records.

Finding aids at the National Archives list addresses and associated draft boards. Using the finding aids, which National

<sup>7</sup> Number of cards taken from breakout of registration by borough in *The New York Times*, April 28, 1942, 1:5. All cards may not have survived.

**WORLD WAR II FOURTH REGISTRATION DRAFT CARDS** (continued)

Archives personnel will search for you, the draft board number can easily be located. Cards are filed alphabetically by name of registrant within each draft board. Names are not soundexed.

As this *NYG&B Newsletter* goes to press, volunteers at the National Archives are removing the Brooklyn registration cards from their original alphabetical filing by draft board and sorting them alphabetically borough-wide by name of registrant. The volunteers also plan to put cards from the boroughs of Bronx, Queens, and Richmond in borough-wide alphabetical order.

At some point in the future, the draft cards will be microfilmed and digitized, though when either will occur has not yet been announced.

**NEW JERSEY**

291 boxes. Estimated number of cards: 611,100

Cards are organized by county, then alphabetically by name of registrant. A card can be researched by knowing only the county of residence. No street addresses are needed. Some counties are combined. The order of the cards is as follows:

- Boxes 1-29 (part): Bergen County
- Boxes 29 (part)-46 (part): Camden County
- Boxes 46 (part)-68 (part): Mercer and Morris counties
- Boxes 68 (part)-83 (part): Middlesex County
- Boxes 83 (part)-105: Passaic County
- Boxes 106-128: Union County
- Boxes 129-140 (part): Burlington and Somerset counties
- Boxes 140 (part)-150 (part): Cumberland and Gloucester counties
- Boxes 150 (part)-171 (part): Atlantic and Monmouth counties
- Boxes 171 (part) - 175: Cape May and Sussex counties
- Boxes 176 - 182: Ocean and Warren counties
- Boxes 183 - 188 (part): Hunterdon and Salem counties
- Boxes 188 (part) - 247 (part): Essex County
- Box 247 (part) - 291: Hudson County

**PUERTO RICO**

69 boxes. Estimated number of cards: 144,900

Cards for all of Puerto Rico are filed in one series, alphabetically by name of registrant.

**RESEARCH AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
NORTHEAST REGION, NEW YORK CITY**

**Research in Person.** If you are interested in researching draft cards in person, visit:

National Archives and Records Administration  
201 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014  
Phone: 212-337-1300; Fax: 212-337-1306  
e-mail: [archives@newyork.nara.gov](mailto:archives@newyork.nara.gov)  
<http://www.nara.gov/regional/newyork.html>  
Hours: Monday-Friday: 8 AM-4:30 PM

Please note that, while the National Archives is open late on Tuesdays and Thursdays and open two Saturdays a month (except federal holidays), draft cards, like other textual records, can only be researched Monday-Friday, during daytime hours.

**Research via Mail Order.** Until the records are microfilmed, the National Archives will accept mail-order requests from researchers for Fourth Registration draft cards. If you would like to request a mail-order search, write to the above address or send an e-mail request to [archives@newyork.nara.gov](mailto:archives@newyork.nara.gov). Specify the name of the person whose draft registration card you would like, where he lived, and, if known, his date (or approximate date) of birth. A search of up to three names can be requested at one time.

After research has been done, a member of the Archives staff will write back to you with the results. If the record located is what you would like, let the staff member know. You'll then be billed, usually \$10 per order, payable by check or money order.

**FOURTH REGISTRATION DRAFT CARDS  
FROM OTHER PARTS OF NEW YORK STATE**

Can you obtain Fourth Registration draft cards for men who registered in New York State, but not in New York City? Yes, you can, though the procedure requires an extra step and the research cannot be done in person. These cards are not at the National Archives in New York City.

Fourth Registration draft cards for other New York localities are, according to the Records Management Office of the Selective Service System, interfiled with registration cards of the younger men from the first, second, third, fifth, and sixth registrations and, because of privacy concerns for the younger men who may still be alive, have not been released for public viewing. If you are interested in these Fourth Registration draft cards, write to the Selective Service System for information about where to obtain specific cards, which may be in one of several storage facilities around the country. You will receive a reply telling you where to write for the card of interest.

In your query, specify the name, date (or approximate date) of birth, and place of residence of the person whose registration card you want. Mail your letter to:

Selective Service System  
Records Division  
Arlington, VA 22209-2425

Where are viewable Fourth Registration draft cards for locations beyond New York, New Jersey, and Puerto Rico? They are accessible through National Archives regional branches across the country. To determine which branch contains the locality you want, visit the National Archives Regional Records Services website at [www.nara.gov/regional/nrmenu.html](http://www.nara.gov/regional/nrmenu.html) or e-mail [inquire@nara.gov](mailto:inquire@nara.gov).

Bear in mind that other cards, like those of New York's Fourth Draft registration beyond New York City, may be interfiled with draft cards not yet open to the public and are therefore unavailable for in-person research. In that case, write to Selective Service, as noted above, for information about how to obtain the records.

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