



RECORD OF ALIENS HELD FOR SPECIAL INQUIRY.

To better understand the process that created Lists of Aliens Held for Special Inquiry (Board of Special Inquiry, or BSI), follow the case of one Roumanian Jewish immigrant and his family who were held for a hearing. The case of Hocher Bodner demonstrates that the BSI list found today on New York passenger list microfilm since 1903 *served as an index to additional records*. Unfortunately, those additional records for the vast majority of immigrants who had BSI hearings were destroyed long ago. Hocher Bodner's records survive, and can help us understand the experience of our own immigrant ancestors by showing how to "read" a BSI list.

The Bodner family arrived at New York on September 11, 1906 aboard the SS *Nieuw Amsterdam*.

1. The Primary Immigrant Inspector (in the Great Hall) "holds" the immigrant for Secondary Inspection (a BSI hearing).

Immigrant Inspectors usually annotated the manifest to show that the immigrant was referred for a hearing. Typical annotations signalling the hold are discussed on the page for [Annotations in the Left Margin](#). The Inspector held any immigrant whom he suspected might fall into any one of the "excluded classes" barred from admission by U.S. immigration law. He did not have time to investigate--his job was to keep the line moving. Three Inspectors sitting on a BSI would question the immigrant further and decide whether to admit the immigrant or not. Later, the annotation might be "stamped" to show the outcome of the hearing.

[Hocher Bodner & Family Held for SI](#)

The most common exclusion was "LPC" or "Likely Public Charge," taken from the section of law which excludes anyone who might become a burden on the public. Many LPC cases were coupled with Medical Certificates, because it was a medical condition or physical disability which caused officials to think the immigrant would not be able to earn their own living. U.S. Public Health Service officials issued the Medical Certificates during medical inspection. The doctors saw the immigrant first, so if a certificate was issued it would be known to the Immigrant Inspector who saw the arriving passenger next. Sometimes, the fact that an immigrant was held on the basis of a Medical Certificate would also be annotated on the passenger list.

[Passenger list annotation regarding Medical Certificate](#)

[Medical Certificate for Hocher Bodnar](#)

Index No.	NAMES.	MANIFEST.	
		GROUP. No.	No. PERSONS.
✓ 50 n-55	Bodner, Hocher wf and 2ch	131/4	4

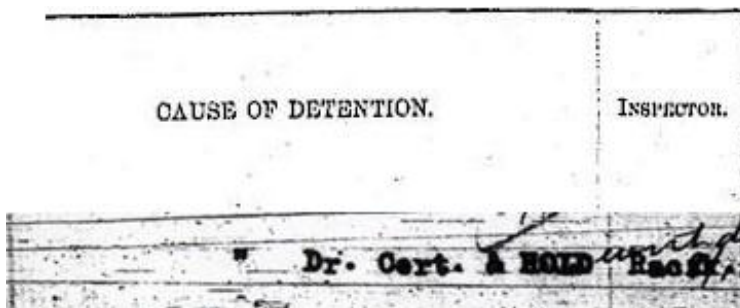
2. Hocher Bodner and his family are listed on a List of Aliens Held for Special Inquiry, showing the cause of exclusion.

Like other passengers sent for a hearing, the Bodners waited while a clerk entered preliminary information on the List of Aliens Held. Most lists begin, at far left, with the age and sex of the immigrant (i.e., 50 m, for a 50 year-old male). The next number, or "Index Number," is the number on the BSI list (as opposed to the passenger's number on the main passenger list).

The following column listed the name of the immigrant held. Often an entire family will appear on one line, because only one member of the family has been ordered to a hearing. Hocher Bodner was held, and so the Name column on this record reads "Bodner, Hocher wf and 2ch" (wife and 2 children). His family is included because they are dependent upon him. In contrast, if two adult brothers traveled together and only one were held, the other, admitted independently, would not appear.

After the name come two columns which connect the immigrant to his passenger list record. The "Group" number is what we consider a page number. The number ("No.") is the passenger list line number within that page. Finally, the "No." of persons shows how many people would be held in detention--at the expense of the steamship company--on account of the one immigrant's detention. In Hocher's case, the number is "4" (himself, his wife, and two children).

The List of Aliens Held also shows the cause of exclusion under the heading "Cause," and gives the name of the Immigrant Inspector who decided the immigrant should have a hearing. In Hocher Bodner's case, the cause was a Medical Certificate. Click here to see a table listing [abbreviations and explanations of other causes](#).



ACTIONS OF THE BOARDS OF SPECIAL INQUIRY.									
DEP.—EXCL.			REHEARINGS.			ADMITTED.			
Date.	Page.	Sec'y.	Date.	Page.	Sec'y.	Date.	Page.	Sec'y.	Time.

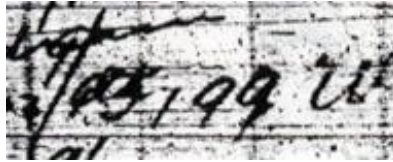
3. Actions of the Board of Special Inquiry

Initial Hearing. Most immigrants appeared at a brief hearing and were admitted after explaining their situation or producing a recent letter from a friend or relative at their destination. Others might not have the proof with them, so they would wait until someone came to testify in their behalf or sent a telegram. In the case of sick immigrants, a doctor might appear and testify as to whether the immigrant's ailment was or was not curable (if incurable, the immigrant was summarily excluded and sent back). If the Board could not decide the case immediately, the case would be continued until later re-opened in a rehearing.

Reference to the initial hearing will be found at either the left or right under the heading "Actions of the Board of Special Inquiry." At left are three columns for immigrants found excludable and deportable. At right are three columns for immigrants admitted by the Board. Each has the same three columns--Date, Page, and Secretary. These three data elements are the date of the hearing, the initials of the

recording stenographer/secretary, and the page number in the stenographer's notebook where a transcript of the hearing would be found (if it had not been destroyed years later).

Hochoer Bodner was initially excluded and ordered deported by the Board. The List of Aliens Held for BSI records these facts in tiny boxes in the left-side columns under "Actions of the Board of Special Inquiry" (shown at right). They reveal his hearing occurred on September 13, ("9/13") 1906, and a transcript of the hearing was recorded on page 199 of the stenographer's notebook of "W." If you click the link at right to view the transcript of that hearing, you will see the stenographer was named "Wallace," and he noted "W-199" at the top of the proceedings.



[Transcript of Hochoer Bodner's Initial Hearing](#)

Later (sometimes later the same day), in a rehearing (see more on rehearings, below), the new evidence would be produced, or the doctor would certify the immigrant as cured, and the Board would admit the immigrant. The transcripts of most rehearings recorded the testimony of friends or relatives who came to collect the immigrant, or included letters or telegrams from relatives too far away to appear. Some researchers wonder why immigrants spent days in detention waiting for hearings, or more accurately, rehearings. Hochoer Bodner's case illustrates that in most cases the wait was worthwhile.

While the Bodners waited, friends, relatives, and immigration officials worked to collect the information needed to decide his case. Someone at Ellis Island (probably an HIAS representative) sent a telegram to the Bodner's cousins in St. Paul, Minnesota. The cousins, Harry Chifer and David Moskovich, then turned to their Rabbi, Isaac Rypins, who on September 17th sent a letter to Ellis Island. The letter promised the cousins would care for Hochoer [whom he referred to as Asher] Bodner and his family.

[Rabbi Rypins' Letter](#)

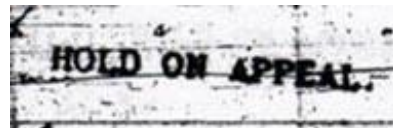
DEPARTMENTAL AND EXECUTIVE ORDERS.			DEPORTED.		
DATE.	RECORD NO.	ORDERS.	DATE.	SHIP.	OFFICER.

4. Departmental and Executive Orders--Deportation Appeal (in rare cases). Perhaps Hochoer was nervous, or

it may be he needed to delay his deportation while his cousins made arrangements, because on September 18th Hocher Bodner filed a formal appeal, asking that the BSI decision to deport him be overturned. Someone from HIAS or another immigrant aid society probably helped him draft the appeal document. Hocher's appeal of the Board decision is the reason his records survive. Only appeal cases are preserved at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The BSI excluded and ordered the deportation of only comparatively few immigrants who had BSI hearings. And of those denied admission, only a small fraction of them appealed the decision. Thus BSI records survive for only a very small fraction of immigrants, and chances are very slim such records survive for your immigrant.

[Bodner's Formal Appeal](#)

When Hocher appealed, officials annotated the BSI list with a stamp--shown at right-- under the heading "Departmental and Executive Orders." The stamp clearly indicates appeal activity which involved the Department in Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, information in this column has NOT been found to be a reliable indicator of the existence of additional records. Some records with information in this column have no additional file, and some with additional files have no information in this column.



Immigrants deported by the BSI, or ordered deported after an appeal, should have the ship name and date of their deportation. In some cases, the columns contain only the date of deportation and the steamship company responsible.

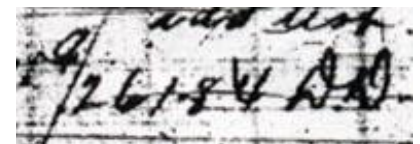
Transmission of Appeal. The Port Commissioner at Ellis Island, Robert Watchorn, forwarded Bodner's appeal to the Commissioner-General of Immigration in Washington, D.C. on September 19. Watchorn did not necessarily object to the admission of the Bodner family. He was more concerned with the government's need for assurances that immigrants excluded on LPC charges would not eventually become public charges.

[Letter Transmitting the Appeal](#)

Investigation. In Washington, officials decided on September 20 to obtain the cousins' testimony, if possible. They sent word to Immigrant Inspector W.D. Morse in Minneapolis to investigate the cousins in St. Paul, and take their testimony. On September 22, Inspector Morse visited both Harry Chifer (or Sheffer) and Mrs. Annie (or Ainnie) Moskovich. Both swore to support the Bodners should they fall into distress.

[Harry Chifer's Affidavit](#)
[Annie Moskovich's Affidavit](#)
[Inspector Morse's Report](#)

Rehearing. Hocher Bodner's case reopened in a rehearing to hear new evidence, as indicated in the "Rehearing" columns under the "Actions of the Board of Special Inquiry" section of the List of Aliens Held for Special Inquiry. As in the example from the initial hearing, above, the column boxes hold references to the hearing date, recording secretary, and page number in the stenographer's notebook. Hocher's rehearing was held September 26



("9/26"), and the transcript would be on page 184 of "DD's" notebook (if the notebook had not been destroyed years later)

A transcript of the rehearing shows the recording secretary was Inspector Downing ("DD"). During the hearing the BSI reviewed Inspector Morse's report and the testimony of Bodner's cousins (referred to as exhibit A in the transcript). And they asked Hocher if he had anything further to add. Then, they voted again to exclude and deport Hocher Bodner and family. The board probably bore no ill-will toward the Bodners personally. Rather, they were concerned with the fact that many immigrants fell into distress and their relatives, who earlier promised to help, later refused to do so. Local politicians criticized Ellis Island for admitting too many immigrants who later became public charges, and the Board was responding to those complaints.

[Transcript of Bodner Rehearing](#)

Again, New York Port Commissioner Watchorn did not wish to make a "test case" of Hocher Bodner. He transmitted the transcript of the second BSI hearing to Washington and continued to recommend that Hocher Bodner and family be admitted. He recommended the "appeal be sustained," meaning he recommended the Department of Commerce and Labor uphold (agree with) Bodner's appeal. As in all the appeal documents, he notes the next sailing of a ship belonging to the steamship line responsible for the return of the Bodners.

[Watchorn's second letter](#)

In Washington, Acting Commissioner-General of Immigration Frank Larned agreed with Watchorn. In a memorandum for the Secretary of Commerce and Labor, Larned too recommended the appeal be sustained.

[Larned's memo and recommendation](#)

Decision on Appeal (sustained or not sustained). In the Office of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor, a formal decision would usually be written and signed. In Hocher Bodner's case, the decision document does not appear in his file. But a telegram sent to Ellis Island transmitting Secretary Metcalf's decision, dated September 28, 1906 does survive.

[Metcalf's Telegram](#)

Execution of Decision (Admitted or Deported). As a result of Hocher's appeal being sustained by the Department, the Bodners were finally admitted on September 29, 1906, eighteen days after their arrival at Ellis Island. Following their release, officials at Ellis Island completed a form reporting the "execution of decision on appeal" and later sent the form to Washington. Thus closed the case of Hocher Bodner and family.

[Report of Execution of Decision on Appeal](#)

5. Bookeeping

MEALS.			
BREAKFAST.	DINNER.	SUPPER.	

Columns at the far right of the BSI list are entitled "Meals," and show the number of breakfasts, lunches, and dinners served to detainees during their stay. After holding the Bodners for eighteen days in detention, the Bodner's BSI list record shows the Government would be charging the steamship line for 72 breakfasts, 76 lunches, and 72 dinners. After paying such a bill, the steamship company might exercise even closer scrutiny over ticket sales to immigrants with potential LPC issues.

Was Hocher Bodner Special?

The only thing special about Hocher Bodner and his family is that their immigration case continued to the point of appeal, thus leaving us a detailed record of Board of Special Inquiry proceedings. Every day during the era 1892-1924, ten percent or more of arriving immigrants were sent to wait for a BSI hearing. Their names appear in page after page of Lists of Aliens Held for Special Inquiry. But almost all of them were admitted to America after one hearing and either a few hours' or one night's stay at Ellis Island or any other

U.S. immigration station. The same basic procedure followed in the Bodner's case applied to every other immigrant who faced BSI hearings, though few cases were as long as protracted as the Bodner's.

Having read the documents in Hoher Bodner's case, and seen the clues a BSI list gives to those documents, researchers should re-read other BSI lists with a new eye. The scribbles under "Actions of the Board of Special Inquiry" should take on new meaning, and suggest the activities behind the summary record that survives on New York passenger list microfilm today.

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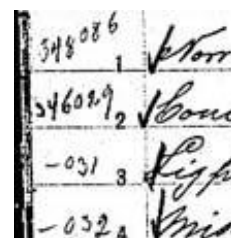


Markings on the Manifest's Left

Margin

Nearly every manifest annotation found in the far left margin was made either prior to or upon arrival, usually during immigrant inspection. Steamship company clerks found the small margin of empty paper space useful for noting a variety of information. Immigrant Inspectors also used the empty space to leave clues as to whether an immigrant passed through inspection easily, or faced closer scrutiny.

Numbers, often in consecutive order

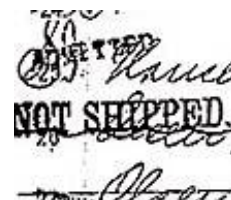


Numbers like those above are occasionally found in the left margin, especially on lists of ships from England. The numbers can have as few as 2 or 3 digits, and as many as 6 or 7 digits. These are "contract ticket" numbers issued by the steamship companies when contracting with the immigrant for their passage. The number may or may not have appeared on the immigrant's actual ticket or receipt. The steamship lines used the number as a personal identifier, and recording the number allowed the companies to match the manifest record with other business records. The numbers bear no relation to any other United States records. However, they may be useful in matching a U.S. passenger arrival record with a British departure record (British "outbound lists").

Lists from the 1890's or even the very early 1900's may have been printed by the steamship line with a "Contract Ticket" number column. This has been seen on passenger lists of the American Line from England in the mid-1890's. The presence of such a column demonstrates the importance of the information to the steamship company, and helps explain why it might be annotated at left on a list without a "Contract Ticket" column.

In some rare cases, typically on earlier lists prior to addition of the "Head Tax" column, a solitary number will appear to the left of a passenger's name. These lonely numbers are usually Head Tax receipt numbers. Notation of the receipt number may indicate either that the immigrant requested a receipt, disputed his/her requirement to pay the tax, or was only passing through the U.S. in transit (in which case the Head Tax deposit would be refunded upon their departure).

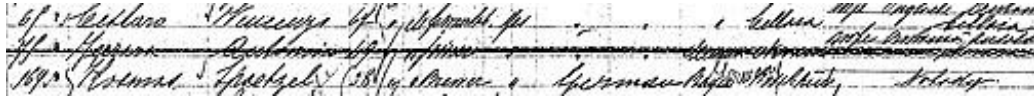
"Not Shipped," N.O.B., or "Did Not Sail"



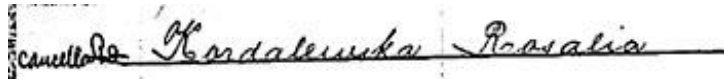
Often passengers booked to sail on a given ship did not depart. Perhaps they missed the ship, or changed their travel plans, or became ill and health officials prevented them from boarding the ship. Whatever the

case, in some instances the change or decision occurred so late there was no time to amend the passenger list. Their names and passenger information remain on lists for ships upon which they never arrived.

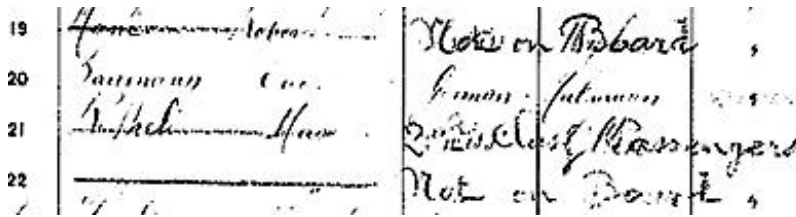
To indicate the record is meaningless, steamship company employees would mark the record in one of several ways. The most common was to "line out" the entire record with dark grease pencil or ink. Some of the lines are straight across and can be difficult to differentiate from scratches on the microfilm. Others are deliberately "wavy."



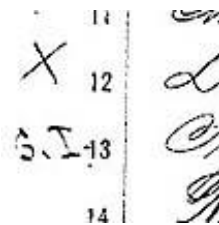
Some records remain without a line, but are noted in the left margin as "N.O.B." (Not On Board), "did not sail," or, like the stamp above, "Not Shipped." It was important for the steamship company to make clear who was and was not on board the ship when it arrived in the United States. The company was responsible for paying the Head Tax on each immigrant landed, and government officials calculated the company's monthly bill using the manifest lists. The passenger booked below "cancelled."



Note well that some of those names "lined out" were on board, but are officially recorded on another page of the passenger list. The example below includes two crossed-off names because they were "Not on Board," but one name is lined-out (line 21) because he/she is a "2nd class passenger." The official record of that person is, then, on the list of second class passengers.

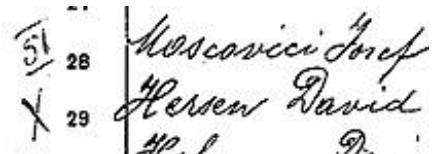


Letters (including "X," "D," "S.I.," "B.S.I.,") or the word "Held"



Extremely common are letters and stamps in the left margin relating to an immigrant's detention or their being held for a Board of Special Inquiry hearing. The general rule is that some notation was made at left to indicate the immigrant was held for some reason. One cannot determine the reason by looking at the annotation, and unless it was subsequently stamped "Admitted" or "Deported," one cannot determine the outcome.

In practice, variation can be found between the records of different ports. For example, the annotation "D" on a New York list means the immigrant was temporarily detained. But on a Philadelphia list, "D" can indicate either that the immigrant was temporarily detained or that he/she was held for a Board of Special Inquiry. The letters "X," "D," and the word "Held" can mean either that the immigrant went to temporary detention or had a Special Inquiry hearing. The more specific "S.I." and "B.S.I." indicate the immigrant was held for a hearing.



Unfortunately, for many passenger lists there is no additional information on the immigrant's fate. To date, additional records are known to survive for only two ports, and only for certain years. These ports are New York and Philadelphia.

Beginning in 1903, the Immigration Service at New York began filing [Records of Detained Aliens](#) and [Records of Aliens Held for Special Inquiry](#) at the end of each passenger list. Whenever a researcher finds an annotation in the left margin suggesting the immigrant was detained or held for a hearing, he or she should turn to the end of the passenger list and check these appended records to see if they contain further information.

Philadelphia records of detained immigrants (including those held for hearings) are extensive. They date from 1882 but only extend to ca. 1909. Some, dating from 1893 to 1909, are on microfilm as National Archives publication M1500. The majority remain in hard copy at the Regional Archives in Philadelphia. Anyone finding a detention annotation on a Philadelphia passenger list from this era should seriously consider investigating the Philadelphia detention records. And for Jewish immigrants, they might also consider the HIAS records in the Jewish Archives at Philadelphia's Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies.

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Causes (Grounds) for Exclusion Noted on BSI Lists, ca. 1903-1924

13(c)	Aliens ineligible to citizenship (after 1924)
ACC	Accompanying (an alien accompanying another alien who has been excluded)
ACL	Contract laborers
ALCOHOLIC	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens
ANARCHIST	Anarchistic or other subversive aliens
ASST	Assisted alien
BEGGER	Paupers, professional beggars, and vagrants
C.D.	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens (Loathsome or dangerous contagious disease)
CERT	Certificate, usually a Medical Certificate indicating illness or physical debility
CL	Contract laborer
CONST	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens (constitutional psychopathic inferiority)
CRIPPLE	Aliens likely to become public charges
D.C.D.	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens (Loathsome or dangerous contagious disease)
EPILEPTIC	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens
FAVUS	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens (Loathsome or dangerous contagious disease)
FEEBLE MINDED	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens
IDIOT	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens
ILLIT	Illiterate
IMBICILE	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens
IMM	Prostitutes, procurers, and like immoral classes
IMMORAL	Prostitutes, procurers, and like immoral classes
INELIG	Aliens ineligible to citizenship
INSANE	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens
L.D.	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens (Loathsome or dangerous contagious disease)
LCD	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens (Loathsome or dangerous contagious disease)
LPC	Aliens likely to become public charges

M.D.	Aliens with mental, physical, economic or educational disqualifications
MED	Medical - Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens
MED CERT	Medical Certificate, usually in combination with another abbreviation more specific to the ailment or problem involved
MENTAL	Aliens with mental, physical, economic or educational disqualifications
MENTAL	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens
MORAL TURP	Aliens convicted or admitting commission of a crime involving moral turpitude
P.D.	Aliens with mental, physical, economic or educational disqualifications
PAUPER	Paupers, professional beggars, and vagrants
PG	Pregnant (note, this annotation may have another or an additional meaning, as it has been seen on the records of male passengers)
PHYSICAL	Aliens with mental, physical, economic or educational disqualifications
PHYSICAL	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens
POLYGAMY	Polygamists
PREG	Pregnant
PRIOR	An alien who has been previously excluded from admission into the U.S. at a port of entry and deported
PROST	Prostitutes, procurers, and like immoral classes
PSYCH	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens (constitutional psychopathic inferiority)
SENILE	Aliens likely to become public charges
STOW	Stowaway
TRACH	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens (Loathsome or dangerous contagious disease)
TRACHOMA	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens (Loathsome or dangerous contagious disease)
TUBERCULOSIS	Mental or physical defectives and diseased aliens
UNDER 16	Children under 16 years of age, unaccompanied by or not coming to one or both parents
VAGRANT	Paupers, professional beggars, and vagrants

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Reading the RECORD OF DETAINED ALIENS

Passenger list annotations from the early 1890's indicate that some immigrants were held or detained for further questioning, but there are no additional records on the microfilm about the detained immigrants. Beginning in 1903, at New York (Ellis Island), new forms came to be filed with each manifest and bound in the manifest volumes. One of these is the list or Record of Detained Aliens. Information on the record helps to clarify why a given immigrant was detained, how long they remained in detention, and how the case was resolved.

Columns on the left hold reference information . . .

NO.	NAME OF IMMIGRANT	MANIFEST		NUMBER OF ALIENS	
		Group	Number	One year old or under	Older than one year

Information in the left columns connect the detention record to the main ship passenger list record. Included are the immigrant's name and a reference to the group (page) and line number where his or her passenger list record is found. Since other passengers dependent on the detained immigrant would also be held, two more columns show the number of immigrants, by age, detained with the principal passenger.

Columns in the middle tell why, and what happened . . .

CAUSE OF DETENTION	DISPOSITION
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Immigrants detained faced only minor obstacles to their admission. The most commonly detained immigrants were women traveling alone (or with her children), destined to a husband, fiancé, or male relative. These women could not be admitted without assurance that someone would care for and protect them. A woman may have been held to wait for her husband to come collect her, or to wait until a response was received to a telegram informing her husband or relative of her arrival. Once it was known someone expected her, she could be sent forward via rail to her destination. The "Cause of Detention" in these cases usually reads "to husb[and]," or to father, mother, sister, brother, brother-in-law (b-i-l), uncle, etc. Then, in the "Disposition" column, one will read the name and address of the person to whom the immigrant was released, even if that person is at an address far from Ellis Island. If this information is preceded by the initials "R.R.," it means the passenger was sent forward via rail.

Often, immigrant aid societies took charge of these women (or children traveling alone) and guaranteed immigration officials of the immigrants' safe arrival at their proper destination. In these cases, the person to whom the immigrant was released may be the name of the aid society, such as "Hebrew Society," "Irish Home," etc.

Another common cause for detention was an immigrant's lack of tickets through to his or her final destination. The cause listed in these cases is typically "to Tel \$," meaning a telegram had been sent to their relatives to send money for transportation fare. Once received, the immigrant was ticketed and released.

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