

Primary Sources: Passenger Lists

A passenger list is an official document prepared by a ship's officers. It records information, such as name, age and nationality, for each passenger on the ship. As a primary source, it can tell a researcher a great deal about the passengers.

Below is the passenger list for the von Trapp family singers, made famous in the movie "The Sound of Music." In this list from the ship Bergensfjord, the family arrived in New York in October 1939 from Oslo, Norway. Maria von Trapp married her husband, Georg, listed here as "Giorgio," in 1927. He was a widower with seven children from his previous marriage. Maria and Georg met when he hired her to be a tutor for his children.

Look at the list and answer the questions below. The letters "do" mean ditto, or same information as the previous person.

Status	Last name	First name	Age yrs./ mo.	Sex	Marital status	Job	Nationality	Birthplace country	city	
	von Trapp,	Rupert	27	M	S	Singer	Germany	Italy	Pola	Q
	do	AGATA	26	F	S	do	Italy	do	do	F
	do	Maria	25	F	S	do	do	Germany	Thomasback	F
	do	Georg (GIORGIO)	59	M	M	Navy Captain	Italy	Italy	Zara	F
	do	Maria Augustine	34	F	M	Housewife	do	Germany	Vienna	
UNDER 16	do	Rosemarie	10	F	S	Schoolgirl	do	do	Aizen	
UNDER 16	do	Eleanore	8	F	S	do	do	do	do	
U. S. CIT.	do	GIOVANNI	8	M	S	Infant	U.S.	do	Ph.phia.Pa.	
	do	Hedvig (EDWIGE)	22	F	S	Singer	Italy	Germany	Thomasbach	F
	do	Werner	23	M	S	do	do	do	do	F
	do	Johanna (GIOVANNA)	20	F	S	do	do	do	Aizen	F
	do	Martina	18	F	S	do	do	do	do	F

What does this passenger list tell you?

You can find out about what year a person was born by subtracting their age from the current year, in this case 1939.

About what year was Werner born?

Since Maria and Georg married in 1927, who do you think was Eleanore's mother: Maria or Georg's first wife?

About what year was Martina born?

One of the children is a US citizen who was born in Philadelphia during a concert tour. Who was it?

About what year was Eleanore born?

Where was Rupert born?
