

The Farm Cadet from Bukovina

Harry (Heinrich) Engel · Tzvi (צבי)

Ben's stepfather's grandfather · Engel line · 1896 – 1983



A Bukovina boy who landed at Ellis Island at seventeen, Harry Engel farmed upstate New York, tried to fight the Kaiser, searched for his parents through Washington, and ended his days on a Connecticut farm.

Harry Engel was born on 12 January 1896 at Toporoutz in Bukovina, then part of Franz Joseph's Austria. His Hebrew name was Tzvi; at home he was Hersch, the Yiddish name behind the American Harry, and his middle name Heinrich later became Henry. His parents, **Wolf Engel** and **Elka Engel née Morgenstern**, had been well-to-do farmers before the war, by his own later account. In 1913, aged 17 and single, he sailed from Hamburg on the S.S. President Grant and landed at Ellis Island on 1 October. The manifest lists him as 'Hersch Engel', a clerk, Austrian and Hebrew, last living at Boian, a village just east of Toporoutz, with his father there as nearest relative.

He found his way to the farms of Tompkins County, New York. In June 1915 a 'Harold Engel', 19, born in Austria, was a hired man on Dana Bush's farm on Kline Road in Lansing, next to Groton; it is probably him. That October Harry swore his Declaration of Intention before the Tompkins County court, giving his occupation as farming. Around Groton he worked farms, attended Groton High School, drove a truck for the Ithaca Fire Department and took the winter short course in agriculture at the state college at Cornell.

Days after the United States entered the war in April 1917 he enlisted at Syracuse, ready to fight 'until there isn't a kaiser left'. The Dryden Herald called him 'an ardent American' who had not been able to reach his people since the war began, and the Ithaca Journal reported that he had joined the regular cavalry. At Fort Slocum he was rejected for a slight hearing defect and came back to Groton; that May he was released from school as a farm cadet. His service

BORN	12 January 1896, Toporoutz, Bukovina
DIED	January 1983, Connecticut
HEBREW NAME	Tzvi; Hersch in Yiddish
ALSO WRITTEN	Heinrich; Harold; Harry Henry Engle
ARRIVED	Ellis Island, 1 October 1913, S.S. President Grant from Hamburg
NATURALIZED	2 August 1920, Washington, D.C.
MARRIED	Jennie Green, Manhattan, 3 June 1923
HOME	Farm on Foxon Hill Road, Foxon, East Haven, Connecticut

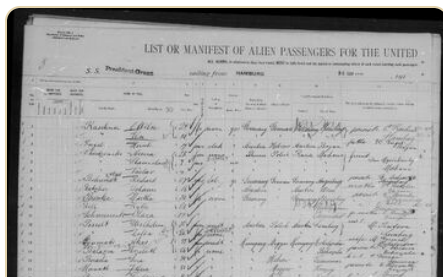
remains unresolved. He registered for the draft that June; a Harry H. Engel, 21, probably him, served as a private in Company M, 4th Infantry, New York Guard, the state home-defence force, from November 1917 to April 1918. A Veterans Administration card gives him an Army service number and the 1950 census marks him a veteran of the war, yet the local papers say every wartime attempt to enlist was refused.

All the while there was silence from Bukovina. In March 1919 Harry, then of Ithaca, asked for the State Department's help in finding his parents. A local man, very likely the Groton newspaper editor M. V. Atwood, carried his case to Washington, first through Congressman Pratt and then through Representative Houghton, and the petition and the Acting Secretary's reply survive. The answer came from Harry himself. On 8 January 1920 the Groton Journal and Courier printed his letter from New Brunswick, New Jersey, under the headline 'Harry Engel Finds His Parents Escaped Death'. They had survived, but lost nearly everything: "They have a little store in the city neighboring where they used to be... now just make a living." That August he became an American citizen in Washington, D.C.

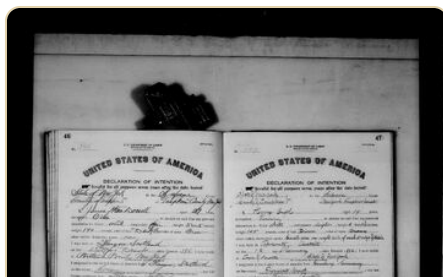
On 29 May 1923 he took out a Brooklyn license to marry **Jennie Green**, daughter of **Israel** and **Esther**, and they were married on 3 June on Avenue B in Manhattan by Rabbi A. J. Sinkin. Harry, 27, was then running a fruit store in Brooklyn. By the end of the decade they were farming on Foxon Hill Road in the Foxon district of East Haven, Connecticut, where the name settled into the farm spelling Engle. His 1942 draft card finds him there, self-employed, with Jennie as his contact; the 1950 census records the farm, and a 1956 drainage plan in the town land records still marks the ground 'Harry H. Engle'. They raised two daughters, **Esther**, who married **Aharon Shmuel Lamm**, and **Elsie**, the mother of **Eliahu Soffer**.

Harry died in January 1983, a resident of Connecticut, and he and Jennie most likely rest in East Haven's Jewish cemetery, Vilner Lodge Memorial Park. His life can be followed almost year by year: the 1913 manifest, his 1915 declaration, the Groton and Ithaca newspapers that carried his letter home, the 1919 State Department correspondence, the 1923 marriage records, two draft cards and the East Haven census and land records.

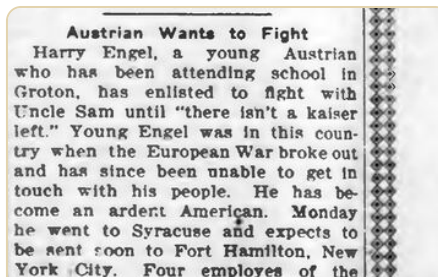
FROM THE ARCHIVE



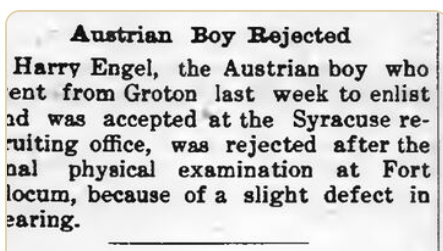
Ellis Island manifest, S.S. President Grant from Hamburg, 20 Sep 1913, line 3: Hersch Engel, 17, clerk, Austrian, Hebrew, last residence Bojan; nearest relative his father W. Engel, Bojan



Declaration of Intention, Tompkins Co. NY, 1915

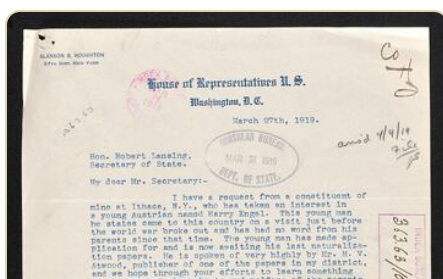


'Austrian Wants to Fight': enlists days after the US entered WWI, 'until there isn't a kaiser left' (Dryden Herald, Apr 1917)

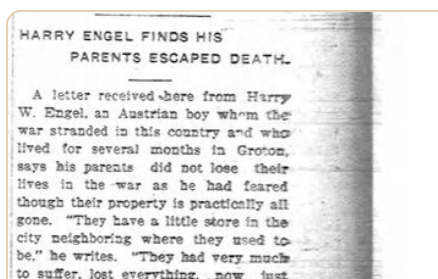


State Editors to Meet at Ithaca

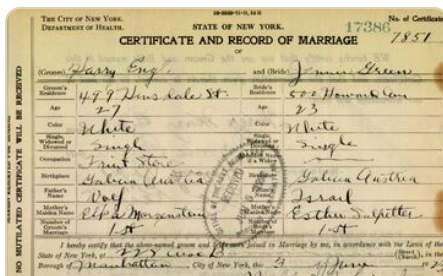
'Austrian Boy Rejected': turned down at Fort Slocum for a slight hearing defect (Dryden Herald, Apr 1917)



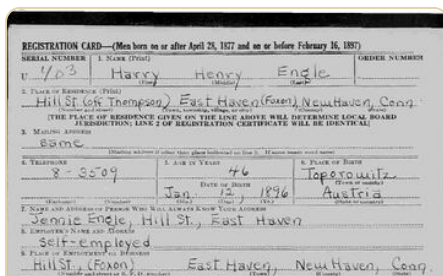
1919 State Dept petition (Rep. Houghton)



'Harry Engel Finds His Parents Escaped Death': his letter home to Groton after the war; parents alive, property gone, 'a little store in the city neighboring where they used to be' (Groton Journal and Courier, 8 Jan 1920, p.1)



Marriage certificate, Manhattan, 3 Jun 1923 (M-M-1923-0017386; Brooklyn license 7851): Harry Engel and Jennie Green



WWII draft registration, 1942: Harry Henry Engle, Hill St. (off Thompson), Foxon, East Haven; born 12 Jan 1896 'Toporowitz, Austria'; self-employed; contact Jennie Engle; his signature (FamilySearch, US WWII Draft Registration Cards 1942)

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Ben Soffer (Goldberger) Family Archive · ouryichus.com