

**WILLIAM AND HELEN LUKSENBURG PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION,
circa 1918-1940s
1988.132.4**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
Washington, DC 20024-2126
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Descriptive Summary

Title: William and Helen Luksenburg photograph collection

Dates: circa 1918-1940s

Accession number: 1988.132.4

Creator: Luksenburg, William, 1923-

Additional creator: Luksenburg, Hellen, 1926-

Extent: 8 folders

Repository: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW, Washington, DC 20024-2126

Abstract: The William and Helen Luksenburg photograph collection consists of pre-war, wartime, and post-war photographs of relatives of the Luksenburg and Chilewicz families. The photograph collection includes images of both Holocaust victims and survivors.

Languages: Polish, English

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open for use, but is stored offsite. Please contact the Reference Desk more than seven days prior to visit in order to request access.

Reproduction and use: Collection is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: (Identification of item), William and Helen Luksenburg photograph collection (1988.132.4), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: The William and Helen Luksenburg donated the William and Helen Luksenburg photograph collection to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1988 and 2005. There are two accession numbers associated with this collection, 1988.132 and 2005.441.

Accruals: Accruals may have been received since this collection was first processed, see archives catalog at collections.ushmm.org for further information.

Processing history: Katelynn Vance, September 2019

Biographical note

Welek (William) Wolf Luksenburg (1923-2014) was born on February 1, 1923 in Dąbrowa Górnicza, Poland. His father, Simcha (Simon David, 1896-1942), was a wholesale meat merchant, born in Poland in 1896. His mother, Rozalia Feiner (1901-1942), was born in Sosnowiec in 1901. His brother, Szlomo Luksenburg (1917-1943), was born in 1917 and trained to be dentist. The family was Orthodox and active in Zionist organizations.

After the creation of the ghetto in 1941, the Luksenburg family was forced to house three other families with them. Szlomo Luksenburg was sent to provide dental services to the SS in a German work camp and Welek Luksenburg worked in a factory producing supplies for the German Army. In August 1942, all Jews had to register at the local sports arena. Afterwards, Rozalia and Simcha Luksenburg were deported to Auschwitz concentration camp where they perished on August 3, 1942. After his parents' deportation, Welek found a job in Sosnowiec, Poland. At some point Szlomo broke his leg and was sent to an unnamed Jewish hospital. The hospital was emptied weekly and the patients were sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Welek secured his brother's release by exchanging the family's valuables. The brothers then returned to Dąbrowa Górnicza, Poland. At some point Welek was arrested and sent to Sosnowiec, but he escaped. He hid at an uncle's house, but they eventually asked him to leave. Welek returned to Dąbrowa Górnicza but was re-arrested. Szlomo was deported to Auschwitz where he perished in 1943. In 1943, Welek was sent to Blechhammer labor camp, a sub-camp of Auschwitz concentration camp.

On March 2, 1943, Welek was transferred to the labor camp, Gleiwitz, where he was assigned to the task of building a carbon factory for the Deutsche Gasrusswerke. On May 3, 1944, Gleiwitz became a sub-camp of Auschwitz concentration camp. Afterwards, Welek tattooed with number 187295. During his internment, Welek helped fellow camp inmates by stealing potatoes but was ultimately caught and punished.

While in Gleiwitz, Welek met Hinde (Helen) Chilewicz. They spoke through the fence and wrote each other letters. Welek promised to marry her if they both survived the war. On January 19, 1945 the camp was evacuated and the prisoners were sent on a forced march during which Welek found Hinde. They were sent on a train to Oranienburg where the men were unloaded and the women were sent on to Pomerania.

In mid-February 1945, Welek was transferred to Flossenbürg concentration camp. While hauling stones in the quarry, Welek broke his ribs. Welek was then sent to Regensburg concentration camp, a sub-camp of Flossenbürg, where he worked at a train station. After a few weeks, the prisoners were sent on a forced march. Welek collapsed on the march and was left where he fell. A farmer found him in the snow the next morning and assisted him. Welek was liberated the next day when the American 6th Army passed through the area. He weighed 65 pounds and was sent to an American camp hospital to recover.

Afterwards, he worked cleaning soldiers' barracks. Eventually he returned to his uncle's house in Bayreuth, Germany where he learned of the death of his family at Auschwitz.

Welek and Hinde were reunited in October 1945. They married at the displaced persons camp in Weiden in der Oberpfalz on March 2, 1947. Assisted by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency, William attended a technical school organized by the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training. In September 1949, Welek and Hinde Luksenburg immigrated to the United States and changed their names to William and Helen Luksenburg. William became a mechanic with his own business. They had three children. William and Helen were dedicated to Holocaust education. William Luksenburg died on January 29, 2014.

Helen Luksenburg (1926-) was born Hinda Chilewicz on April 4, 1926 in Sosnowiec, Poland. Her father, Chaim Chilewicz (d. 1943), owned a textile mill and her mother, Chana (née Tzudzinovski or Chudnovski, d. 1943), tended to the house and children. Helen was the eldest of three children. She had a younger sister, Bluma (1929-1943), and an older brother Abraham (Mumek, 1927-1944). The family was a comfortable middle-class family.

Helen was just thirteen years-old when German troops invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Three days later, they occupied Sosnowiec and terrorized the Jewish community, killing more than a dozen people and setting fire to the Great Synagogue. By the end of the year, a host of discriminatory laws had been imposed upon the Jews, including an order to wear armbands emblazoned with the Star of David. Helen's father was forced to close his business and the family had to sell whatever they could to have food to eat.

In the spring of 1942 an open ghetto was established in Sosnowiec and the Germany authorities began deporting Jews from Sosnowiec to Auschwitz concentration camp. In order to avoid deportation and obtain their Ausweis, the necessary ID cards, Helen, her father and her brother worked at a metal factory. The following spring the remaining Jews, including Helen's family, were forced into a closed ghetto. Since the beginning of the occupation Jews had been forced to register so the authorities could keep track of them. After the move to the closed ghetto, Helen and her brother were listed as "missing." One day, while her brother was away, the authorities came looking for them. They took away Helen and her mother (in place of her brother). Helen was sent to the Gogolin transit camp where she was selected for forced labor. Her mother was sent to Auschwitz concentration camp where she perished in 1943.

From Gogolin, Helen was deported to Gleiwitz, a sub-camp of Auschwitz, where she worked in a factory that produced soot for rubber. It was at Gleiwitz that Helen formed a close friendship with Welek (later William) Luksenburg, a fellow inmate. In January 1945, as the Soviet army approached, the prisoners were evacuated from Gleiwitz to Ravensbrück, first on foot and then in cattle cars. In May 1945 Helen was sent on a death march, but she was soon liberated by Soviet troops. Returning to Sosnowiec, she learned that her father and younger sister, Bluma, had been deported to Auschwitz when the ghetto was liquidated in August 1943; they perished. Her brother, Abraham, had been sent to Markstaedt, a labor camp in Germany, and died on a death march in 1944 at the age of 17.

Helen remained in Poland for about two months, living with cousins who had been in Auschwitz, but she felt unwelcome in her hometown. She and her cousins left Poland for Czechoslovakia, but they were detained near Prague because they had no papers and no money. It was around this time that Helen learned that William Luksenburg was in Prague but she was not able to find him. She sent William a note telling him where he could find her when she arrived in a displaced persons camp in Weiden, Germany.

They were reunited in October 1945 and married on March 2, 1947. In September 1949, Helen and William immigrated to the United States and settled in the Washington, DC area. They have three children. Helen is a volunteer at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Scope and content of collection

The William and Helen Luksenburg photograph collection consists of pre-war, wartime, and post-war photographs of relatives of the Luksenburg and Chilewicz families in Poland. The photograph collection includes images of both Holocaust victims and survivors. The pre-war family photographs were taken in Dąbrowa Górnicza and Sosnowiec, Poland. The wartime photographs were taken in Sosnowiec, Poland and feature members of the Hanoar Hatzioni Zionist Youth Movement. Additional wartime photographs include young Jewish women in the Sosnowiec ghetto wearing armbands with the Star of David.

The post-war pictures include family photographs taken in Bayreuth, Germany; the opening of the Zettlitz hachshara near Weiden, Germany presided over by US Army Chaplain Saul Shapiro, 1945; weddings held at the Kibuc Zetlice in Germany, 1945; images of a memorial ceremony held at the Flossenbürg concentration camp, 1946; a Passover Seder at the home of Mary Ganzweich in Bayreuth, Germany, 1946; groups of people at the displaced persons camp in Weiden in der Oberpfalz, Germany; the wedding of Hinda Chilewicz and Welek Luksenburg in the Weiden displaced persons' camp on March 2, 1947; and William and Helen Luksenburg aboard a ship on their way to America, 1949.

System of arrangement

The William and Helen Luksenburg photograph collection is arranged in a single series.

Indexing terms

People:

Adler, Gucia.
Auerbach, Philipp.
Bank, Edzia.
Blacharz, Ada.
Blacharz, Kalman.
Chilewicz, Chana.
Chilewicz, Hinda, 1926-
Chmielnicka, Cesia.
Cudrzynowski, Beer.
Cudrzynowski, Toby.
Cudrzynowska, Rajzla.
Cudrzynowski, Alter.
Cudrzynowski, Edzia.
Cudrzynowski, Hadasa.
Feiner, Izydor.
Feiner, Moryc.
Feiner, Nehemia.
Feiner, Yehiel.
Fishel, Motek.

Ganzweich, Mary.
Garfunkel, Sala.
Gertner, Hadasa.
Gertner, Menahem.
Glejtman, Helen.
Gottfried, Moniek.
Haze, Irke.
Herszlikiewicz, Mania.
Herzl, Theodor.
Igster, Israel.
Kerner, Josef.
Kerner, Stefa.
Koziwoda, Ada.
Koziwoda, Feliks.
Landau, Fredka.
Landau, Rutka.
Lenczner, Mania.
Luksenburg, Helen, 1926-
Luksenburg, Rozalia, 1901-1942.
Luksenburg, Simcha, 1896-1942.
Luksenburg, Szlomo, 1917-1943.
Luksenburg, Welek, 1923-2014.
Luksenburg, William, 1923-2014.
Merin, Halinka.
Pfeffer, Esthera.
Pffefer, Jehuda.
Pffefer, Lola.
Piorko, Dorka.
Posner, Lorka.
Rabino, Rutka.
Shapiro, Saul.
Shenley, Henia Groudaper.
Slabecka, Rosza.
Spiro, Raila.
Spokojmy, Hela.
Spokojmy, Heniek.
Spokojmy, Mala.
Spokojmy, Symon.
Stroehlic, Heniek.
Stroehlic, Sonia.
Szegotzky, Halinika.
Szpiro, Lusia.
Szyjewicz, Jadzia.
Weingarten, Hessa.
Weingarten, Sala.
Zajac, Fredzia.
Zaks, Mania.

Corporate:

Weiden (Displaced persons camp)
Flossenbürg (Concentration camp)

Topics:

Concentration camp inmates.
Crematoriums--Germany.
Holocaust survivors.
Holocaust victims.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)
Refugees.
Wedding.
World War, 1939-1945.
World War, 1939-1945--Concentration camps--Germany.
World War, 1939-1945--Refugees.

Geography:

Germany.
Bayreuth (Germany)
Deggendorf (Germany)
Weiden (Germany)
Zettlitz (Germany)
Poland.
Busko-Zdrój (Poland)
Rabka (Poland)
Sosnowiec (Poland)

Genre / Form:

Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Photographs, circa 1918-1940s

Folder:	Title:
1 of 8	Welek (William) Luksenburg, circa 1920s-1940s
2 of 8	Szlomo Luksenburg, circa 1930s-1940s
3 of 8	Hinde Chilewicz (Helen Luksenburg), circa 1930s-1940s
4 of 8	Cudyznowski family, circa 1920s-1940s
5 of 8	Various friends and family members, circa 1918-1940s
6 of 8	Flossenbürg concentration camp, 1946
7 of 8	Passover Seder, 1946
8 of 8	Wedding of Hinda Chilewicz and Welek Luksenburg, March 2, 1947