

BRUST FAMILY PAPERS, 1914-1955

1992.13.11

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

Title: Brust family papers

Dates: 1914-1955

Accession number: 1992.13.11

Creator: Brust family

Extent: 1 box

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

Abstract: The Brust family papers documents the wartime and post-war experiences of Elek Brust, Livia Brust, and their daughter Eva Brust in Hungary and later the United States. The papers contain correspondence, identification and immigration papers, restitution paperwork, family photographs, and Eva's poesie book / autograph book.

Languages: Hungarian, English, French

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), Brust family papers (1992.13.11) United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Lilly Brust-Gach donated the Brust family papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1992. Eva Brust Cooper also donated the Brust family papers in 2014 and 2018. The Brust family papers (1992.13.11) is comprised of three accessions, 1992.13, 2014.392.1 and 2018.409.1.

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

Separated materials: Eva Brust Cooper also donated four paintings to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. These paintings include portraits of Livia Brust (1912-2001), Adolf Schwarcz (1880-?), Serena Schwarcz (1892-1942), and Eva Brust Cooper (1934-).

Related materials: Other materials related to the Brust family are found within the museum's collections. The Photo Archives contains photographs of the Brust family (PN 75507, PN 77510, PN 75506, N02808.18, N02080.16, N02080.20, PN 88665, PN 75511). Video of the Brust family on winter holiday before the Holocaust (2014.392.2; RG-60.1836; 4175); the Brust family exploring northern Slovakia (2014.392.2; RG-60.1835; 4174); the Brust family swimming, family takes a train in June 1940 (2002.175.4; RG-60.1821; 4164); and the Brust and Vogel families swims and ice skates before the Holocaust in Hungary (2002.175.4, RG-60.1820, 4163) is also available. Eva Brust Cooper's oral history which was conducted on December 9, 1991 (1991.A.0137; RG-50.030.0056) and a green knapsack used by Elek Brust during forced labor (2002.176.1) are also held by the museum.

Processing history: Katelynn Vance, June 2019

Biographical note

Eva Brust Cooper was born on March 18, 1934, in Budapest, Hungary, the only child of Elek Brust (1899-1957) and Livia Lilly (Lilly, née Schwarcz, later Gach, 1912-2001). Elek was born on December 15, 1899, to Bela and Roza Orova Brust in Budapest, Hungary. Lilly was born on January 23, 1912, to Adolf (b. 1880) and Serena (née Deutsch, 1892-1942) Schwarcz, and had a younger brother, Laszlo (Leslie, 1919-1990.) Adolf had a prosperous watchmaking business, with a partner named Vogel. Both Eva's grandparents and parents were university educated, upper class, and assimilated. Elek Brust and Lilly Schwarcz married on June 4, 1933. Elek owned a wholesale paper company and was a prominent member of the Jewish community. The family lived in a large apartment in Pest, with a chauffeur, cook, maid, and governess. They attended the Dohány Street Synagogue. Eva went to public school, where she received lessons in Judaism, and had tutors for English and French.

In spring 1939, Eva's maternal grandparents visited the World's Fair in America, and settled in New York, where they reestablished their watch business. In 1941, Eva's father Elek was sent to a Hungarian forced labor camp. After several months, Lilly obtained his release using papers acquired on the black market. In August 1941, Eva's maternal uncle Leslie left to join his parents in New York. In 1943, Elek Brust was again drafted into forced labor service, now under the control of the Hungarian Army. Lilly helped run the business while her husband was away and found ways to send Elek packages of warm clothing.

Sometime in March 1944, Elek was released from forced labor service. On March 18, 1944, Eva's 10th birthday, German troops occupied Budapest. From their window the Brusts could see German soldiers marching through the streets. Afterwards, Jews were segregated and required to live in designated yellow star buildings. Elek used his connections to have their building declared a Jewish building, which allowed the Brusts to stay in their home. The Brust family lived in one room, while family friends lived in the other rooms. To assist the family, Eva and a friend would go outside and gather old cigarette stubs, repackage the tobacco, and sell them. Eva's parents tried to shield her, but she heard the whispers and rumors and was aware of a growing sense of doom. She knew large trains of people were being sent to camps and witnessed trucks picking up people in the streets.

Eva and her mother attended a Catholic Church and completed the steps needed for conversion papers. On October 17, 1944, there was a coup by the fascist Arrow Cross Party. Eva's parents obtained protective passes for the family from the Swedish consulate, initialed by Raoul Wallenberg. They left their home one night, taking no suitcases, but wearing multiple layers of clothes. Eva took her favorite pillow and her long braids were cut in case of lice. They stayed one night with Gentile friends and then moved around, hiding in various locations. They went to a Swedish safe house, but it was very crowded and her parents thought they would be safer elsewhere. They then went to an apartment building they had owned and stayed in the basement, and then in a vacant apartment. The building manager brought them food when he could. The city was under constant bombardment. By December 1944, Budapest was under siege by Soviet forces, and there was no electricity, gas, or water, and food was scarce. As the Red Army closed in, the family decided to get out of the city and walked to the countryside. Once, they were arrested and lined up with a group to be shot, but a bomb fell and the soldiers, either German or Russian, ran away. They stayed with a friend and then mainly on farms.

The family was in Érd, Hungary when Budapest was liberated by the Soviets on February 13, 1945. When they returned home many of their belongings had been stolen, but the building was livable. Elek restarted his business and Eva returned to school. Most of Lilly's extended family perished, many killed in Auschwitz concentration camp. As Soviet control over Hungary tightened, they decided to leave Budapest and applied for visitor's visas to the United States. On May 21, 1947, they left from England, travelling first class on the Cunard liner, *Mauretania*. When the family arrived in New York, Eva's uncle Leslie met the boat. He had served in the US Army, landing in France during the D-Day invasion in June 1944. The Brust family settled in New York. Elek went to work in his father-in-law's watch business. In 1955, Eva married Elihu Turgell and had a daughter in 1957. Eva worked as a teacher, and received a Master's degree in special education. She later married Leslie Cooper. Her father, Elek Brust, died in 1957. Her mother Lilly, 89, now Lilly Gach after her 1983 remarriage, passed away in November 2001. Biography written by Dr. Rebecca Erbelding and Katelynn Vance.

Scope and content of collection

The Brust family papers document the wartime and post-war experiences of Elek Brust, Livia Brust, and their daughter Eva Brust in Hungary and later the United States. The papers contain correspondence, identification and immigration papers, restitution paperwork, family photographs, and Eva's poesie book / autograph book.

Biographical materials include identification documents, immigration documents and restitution paperwork. Items of note include two membership identification cards for the Dohány-utcai templom (Dohany Street temple), 1935; identification papers for Elek Brust, 1941-1944; copy of death certificate for Szereu (Serena) Schwarcz, 1942; three Schutz-passes for the Brust family initiated by Raoul Wllenberg, August 24, 1944; two certificates issued by the Swedish embassy exempting Lilly and Eva Brust from wearing the yellow star, August 24, 1944; a transfer ticket for Elek and Eva Brust, 1944; a certificate of release for Elek Brust, September 22, 1944; reissued birth certificates for Elek Brust and Eva Brust, 1946; applications for nonimmigrant visas for Elek, Livia, and Eva Brust, May 19, 1947; Elek Brust's United States declaration of intention, May 2, 1952; naturalization certificate for Elek Brust, 1953; copy of two death certificates: Elek Brust, February 1, 1957, and Adolf Schwarcz, March 31, 1959; an inventory of Brust family household goods, undated; and restitution paperwork for the Brust family, 1961,1993-1994.

The correspondence series includes letters and postcards written in Hungarian by Elek Brust to his wife Livia Brust, 1933-1942; postcards; and letters relating to immigration, passports, and property in Hungary, 1946-1955. The financial materials series includes a bank deposit book, 1938-1944. A drawing of the Brust family bookplate is also include among the papers.

The printed materials series include a newspaper clipping; segments of three unknown songbooks, undated; the passenger list of the R.M.S. *Mauretania*, May 21, 1947; and the 82nd Congress, 1st Session H. Con. Res. 145 document dated July 26, 1951, which grants the status of permanent resident of the United States to the Brust family.

The Brust family photographs include photographs of the Elek, Livia, and Eva Brust in Hungary, as well as various unidentified friends and family members, 1914-1951, bulk dates circa 1930s-1940s. Images of the grave of Béla Brust, an unidentified grave yard, and a rubble filled street are also included.

Eva Brust's poesie book, 1942-1946, includes entries from friends and family members including Elek Brust, Eva Brust, Terez Pimler, Penter Panczno, Istvan Vogel, Geza Fischer, Rozsi Fischer, Marta Deutsch, Oskar Deutsch, Istvan Deutsch, Gyula Falkai, Gloria Hidveggy, Eva Penres, Eva Szerres, Panni Deveny, Edit Veres, Judith Szilagyi, and Zsuzsa Urbach.

System of arrangement

The Brust family papers is arranged into seven series.

- Series 1: Biographical materials, 1921-1994, undated
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1933-1955
- Series 3: Financial materials, 1938-1944
- Series 4: Printed materials, 1947-1951, undated
- Series 5: Artwork, 1942
- Series 6: Photographs, 1914-1951
- Series 7: Poesie book, 1942-1946

Indexing terms

People:

Brust, Béla.
Brust, Elek, 1899-1957.
Brust, Livia, 1912-2001.
Cooper, Eva.
Deutsch, Istvan.
Deutsch, Marta.
Deutsch, Oskar.
Deveny, Panni.
Falkai, Gyula.
Fischer, Geza.
Fischer, Rozsi.
Hidveggy, Gloria.
Panczno, Penter.

Penres, Eva.
Pimler, Terez.
Schwarcz, Adolf.
Schwarcz, Leslie.
Schwarcz, Szereu, 1889-1942.
Szerres, Eva.
Szilagyi, Judith.
Urbach, Zsuzsa.
Veres, Edit.
Vogel, Istvan.

Corporate:

Budapest (Hungary)--History--Siege, 1945.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Hungary--Budapest.
World War, 1939-1945--Conscript labor--Hungary--Budapest.

Topic:

Children.
Families.
Holocaust survivors.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)
Jewish children.
United States--Emigration and immigration.
Weddings.
World War, 1939-1945.
World War, 1939-1945--Refugees.

Geography:

Budapest (Hungary)
Hungary.

Genre / Form:

Identification documents.
Correspondence.
Photographs.
Artwork.
Poesie book.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Biographical materials, 1921-1994, undated

Box / Folder:	Title:
1.1	Identification documents and certificates, 1921-1947
1.2	Identification documents and certificates, 1948-1959
1.3	Inventory of home goods, undated
1.4	Restitution paperwork, 1961, 1993-1994

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1933-1955

Box / Folder:	Title:
1.5	Letters from Elek Brust to Livia Brust, 1933-1942
1.6	General correspondence, 1946-1955
1.7	Postcards, July - October 1942
1.8	Copies of letters, 1941-1945

Series 3: Financial materials, 1938-1944

Box / Folder:	Title:
1.9	Bank deposit book, 1938-1944

Series 4: Printed materials, 1947-1951, undated

Box / Folder:	Title:
1.10	Newspaper clippings, undated
1.11	Songbooks, undated
1.12	R.M.S. <i>Mauretania</i> passenger list, May 21, 1947
1.13	"H. CON. RES. 145, Concurrent Resolution," July 26, 1951

Series 5: Artwork, 1942

Box / Folder:	Title:
1.14	Brust family bookplate, 1942

Series 6: Photographs, 1914-1951

Box / Folder:	Title:
1.15	Brust family photographs, 1914-1951

Series 7: Poesie book, 1942-1946

Box / Folder:	Title:
1.16	Eva Brust's poesie book, February 1942 - April 1946