

## **REGINA WOLBROM PAPERS, circa 1920-1942**

### **1995.A.0484.2**

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

Title: Regina Wolbrom papers

Dates: circa 1920-1942

Accession number: 1995.A.0484.2

Creator: Wolbrom, Regina, 1925-

Extent: 15 folders; 2 book enclosures

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

Abstract: The Regina Wolbrom papers contains Rotenberg family documents, a photocopy of one of the four letters written by Regina Rotenberg (age 19) while in prison awaiting transport to Auschwitz concentration camp, dated May 19, 1944, two Poesie books kept by Regina, 1935-1955, as well as personal photographs and studio portraits of the Rotenberg, Frankel, and Wolbrom families prior to World War II. The photographs also include images of the Rotenberg siblings (Regina, Wolfgang, Siegmund, and Sonja) before the war and while in hiding, and group photographs of Bnei Akiva events, 1940-1942. The photographs in this collection contain images of both survivors and victims of the Holocaust taken in Germany, Belgium, and Poland.

Languages: Polish, German, French, Hebrew

#### **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), Regina Wolbrom papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Regina Wolbrom donated the Regina Wolbrom papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1995 and 2002. The collections accessioned as 1995.A.0484 and 2002.415.1 have been incorporated into this collection.

Related materials: The oral histories of Regina Wolbrom, Sigmund Rotenberg, and Izak Wolbrom were recorded by the US Shoah Foundation Institute. Onsite access to the oral histories is provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Entries for Izak Wolbrom and Regina Wolbrom are available in the USHMM Holocaust Survivors and Victims Database.

Additional photographs of the Rotenberg family can be found in the USHMM Photo Archive. These photographs include Tema, Max, and Sonja Rotenberg, Belgium, 1942 (No. 59987); Wolfgang, Regina, and Siegmund Rotenberg, Belgium, circa 1942-1943 (No. 59991); Wolfgang, Regina, Siegmund, and Sonja, Belgium, circa 1943-1944 (No. 59990); Father Louis Celis and Maria Tabruyn arrived at the Lod Airport accompanied by the Rotenberg siblings, Israel, circa 1948-1940 (No. 58182); a portrait of Father Louis Celis, 1951 (No. 59988); and a portrait of Maria Tabruyn, circa 1950 (No. 59989)

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

Processing history: Katelynn Vance, January 2019

### **Biographical note**

Regina Rotenberg was born on October 13, 1925 in Gera, Germany to Max (Moshek) Rotenberg (born in Łódź, Poland, October 30, 1896-1942) and Tema (Toni) Frankel (born in Busk, Poland, February 3, 1900-1942). They had four children Regina (born in Gera, Germany, October 13, 1925), Wolfgang (born in Berlin, Germany, June 4, 1929), Siegmund (born in Berlin, August 4, 1934), and Sonja (born in Brussels, Belgium, September 11, 1940). In October 1938, Max Rotenberg, a Jewish Polish citizen, was deported to Poland. He was eventually released, likely from Zbąszyń, and lived with one of his sisters in Łódź. While Max was deported, Tema and her three oldest children remained in Berlin, Germany. In February 1939, the children were sent on a Red Cross Kindertransport to Brussels, Belgium. The family was reunited in Brussels sometime in the summer of 1939. The youngest of the Rotenberg siblings, Sonja, was born on September 11, 1940. While in Brussels, Max worked illegally selling leather in order to support the family. Regina briefly attended school but she was eventually sent to work alongside a dressmaker, so that she could learn a trade. After the Nazis began deporting young girls, Regina stayed with the dressmaker for a month. Soon the dressmaker became concerned that they would be caught. She sent Regina to live with a cousin in Halmael, Belgium. After paying the woman that would sheltered them, the rest of the Rotenberg family joined Regina in Halmael.

While in Halmael, the family became friendly with the parish priest, Father Hubert Celis. In October 1942, Tema asked Father Celis to help hide the children. Regina (age 17) and Sonja (age 2) were sent to stay with Celis' father, Joseph Celis. Wolfgang (age 13) and Siegmund (age 8) were sent to live with Hubert's brother, Father Louis Celis, also a priest, and his housekeeper, Marie-Louise Tabruyn. The last time Regina saw her mother was on her birthday, October 13, 1942. Her mother had brought her a birthday cake to celebrate her birthday while in hiding. On October 29, 1942, Max and Tema were denounced, deported to the Malines transit camp, and then sent to Auschwitz concentration camp where they perished in October or November 1942.

Fearing that the Nazis would search for the Rotenberg children, their rescuers temporarily moved them from their hiding places with the Celis family. Regina and Sonja were sent to stay with a family who owned a flourmill, while Wolfgang and Siegmund were sent to stay with another priest in the region. The family was unable to shelter the two year old Sonja for long. Father Hubert, who also worked for the underground resistance, found a hiding place for Sonja with Alfons and Clementina Maris who were farmers along the Dutch border. Regina brought her sister by bike to the train station and gave her to an anonymous woman dressed in brown. Sonja was passed between three more people before arriving with the Maris family who cared for her throughout the war. Only Father Hubert knew exactly where Sonja Rotenberg was hidden. A few weeks later, the three other Rotenberg children returned to their original hiding locations among the Celis family.

Around Christmas in 1942, Father Hubert issued Regina false identification papers and took her to visit her sister. After the visit, the farmers requested that Regina not visit for several months because Sonja had screamed excessively after her sister left. Regina would later visit her siblings once a month, always with her false identification card. On May 3, 1944, the same Nazis who deported Max and Tema came looking for their children. Despite Joseph Celis claiming that Regina was his niece the Nazis demanded to see her identification papers. Regina claimed she could not find them. The Nazis searched her room, found the document, and arrested her. She was interrogated in a cellar but refused to tell them the locations of her siblings. Instead, she lied and told her interrogators she had not seen them in two years. She also lied about her identification paperwork, claiming that her father Max, not Father Hubert had issued the document. While she was imprisoned, Father Hubert's sister-in-law brought Regina food. Regina told her in Flemish the lies she had told to protect Father Hubert. The sister-in-law was able to inform Father Hubert of the false claims. During his detention and questioning Father Hubert collaborated Regina's story and was released.

Regina was sent to the Malines transit camp where she stayed for about two weeks before being transported to the Birkenau concentration camp in Poland. While in the cattle car on her way to Birkenau, Regina was able to slip five letters through the floor of the train. Two of them were found by a farmer, Van Hoof, who mailed them to the Celis family. Regina was selected for forced labor twice while in Birkenau. Regina also contracted rabies and jaundice. During a third selection she hid in the toilets to avoid selection and detection of her illnesses. Eventually

Regina was sent to the camp hospital. After her recovery, she remained at the hospital assisting with the removal of the dead. In January 1944, Regina was sent on a death march to several concentration camps, first to Ravensbrück in Germany, then to Malchow, and Leipzig. While marching near Leipzig, Regina was able to escape with her friend, Frieda Midzinsky. They found shelter in a home in Risa, Germany, and two days later, the town was liberated by the Russians.

Wanting to be among the Americans, Regina and Frieda left the liberated town and walked 150 kilometers over five days to the American zone. Upon arrival, they were placed in a temporary camp and then sent to Belgium. While on the way to Brussels, they passed through the town where Joseph Celis lived. Regina left and made her way to Joseph Celis' house. The family was surprised and delighted to see her. Her siblings came to visit her the following day.

Regina immediately began searching for surviving relatives and discovered two aVunts living in Brussels. Wolfgang and Siegmund were initially sent to live with them. However, the arrangement did not work. Regina was able to arrange for her brothers to be on the last children's transport to Palestine. Unfortunately, Regina was too old and Sonja was too young to travel with them. Regina promised that one day the family would be reunited there. Sonja continued to live with the family that rescued her until 1947 when Regina married Izak (born Jitzchak) Wolbrom, a fellow survivor. The Wolbroms became Sonja's legal guardians and she stayed with them until her own marriage in 1961. In 1949, the family joined Wolfgang and Siegmund in Israel. Regina and Izak had two children, Nechemia (Norman, b. 1952) and Tamar (b. 1953). The Wolbrom family immigrated to the United States in 1956, and Wolfgang and Siegmund Rotenberg followed in 1957.

### **Scope and content of collection**

The Regina Wolbrom papers contains several Rotenberg family documents, a photocopy of one of the four letters written by Regina Rotenberg (age 19) while in prison awaiting transport to Birkenau concentration camp, dated May 19, 1944, two Poesie books kept by Regina, 1935-1955, as well as personal photographs and studio portraits of the Rotenberg, Frankel, and Wolbrom families prior to World War II. The photographs also include images of the Rotenberg siblings (Regina, Wolfgang, Siegmund, and Sonja) before the war and while in hiding, and group photographs of Bnei Akiva events, 1940-1942. The photographs in this collection contain images of both survivors and victims of the Holocaust taken in Germany, Belgium, and Poland.

The biographical materials include family documents reissued to the Rotenberg family, 1922-1939. These materials include a civil registry for Moszek Lejzor Rotenberg issued in Łódź, Poland, November 30, 1922; a marriage certificate for Tema Frankel and Moszek Rotenberg, reissued on February 6, 1929 in Łódź, Poland; a birth certificate for Tema Frankel reissued on August 22, 1921 in Busko, Poland; and a birth certificate for "Rikel Regine" (Regina) Rotenberg reissued in Gera, Germany, January 18, 1939. Also included is an "Israelitische Vereinigung...Einlaßkarte" seating card for issued to Toni Rotenberg in 1936.

Also included among the Regina Wolbrom papers is a photocopy of one of the four letters written by Regina Rotenberg (age 19) while in prison awaiting transport to the Birkenau concentration camp, dated May 19, 1944. Regina slipped the letters from the transport train and a farmer named Van Hoof later found two of the letters on the tracks and mailed them to the Celis family.

The photographs in the collection include images of both survivors and victims of the Holocaust. These include a studio portrait of Erna Frankel in Gera, Germany, 1920; David and Chana (née Rotenberg) Lokcinski, undated; Bella Rotenberg, 1928, and a portrait of Father Hubert Celis, undated. The unidentified photographs, circa 1920-1942, include an unidentified soldier, circa 1920s, and photographs of Regina Wolbrom, friends, and other family members.

The identified photographs include members of the Frankel, Rotenberg, and Wolbrom families. These are arranged either by individual or by family.

Photographs of Tema (Toni) Frankel (1900-1942) include a group photograph with Toni Frankel (4<sup>th</sup> person in second row) and several unidentified people holding beers, Gera, Germany, 1920; the Frankel siblings with two unidentified men with bicycles (Erna, Jacob, and Toni Frankel), Gera, 1920; two studio photographs of Toni Frankel taken in Gera, 1920, 1923; a studio photograph of Toni Frankel wearing a white hat, Bad Kissingen, Germany, 1921; Toni and Erna Frankel with an unidentified woman, Gera, 1921; a studio photograph of Toni Frankel and an unidentified woman, Gera, 1922; Toni Frankel and Eisig Frankel (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> from the right) with an unidentified group of people, some holding canes, Germany, 1922; an unidentified group photograph with Toni Frankel (2<sup>nd</sup> on left), Gera, 1923; Toni Frankel in Gera, 1923; and the Frankel family (Toni Rotenberg, Erna Perlman, Eisig Frankel, Sara Frankel) in Karlsbad, 1928.

Photographs of the Frankel family (Jacob, Marie, and Max) include Marie Katz, Gera, Germany, 1923; Jacob Frankel (center back) at an unidentified event with unidentified people, 1925; a studio portrait of Jacob and Marie Frankel, Weissenfels, Germany, 1930; a baby photograph of Max Frankel, Weissenfels, 1930; two photographs of Max Frankel, 1936; and a studio portrait of Marie and Max Frankel, undated.

Photographs of Ita and Marika Korn, paternal cousins of Regina Wolbrom include Ita (age 2) and Marika Korn (age 4), Łódź, Poland, undated, and Ita Korn wearing a white bow in her hair, Łódź, Poland, 1932.

Photographs of the Perlman family include a group wedding photograph of Moritz and Erna Perlman including (front row) Sara Frankel, Eisig Frankel, Toni Rotenberg, Regina Rotenberg-the flower girl, Max Rotenberg, Erna Perlman, Moritz Perlman, Marie Frankel, Jacob Frankel, 1928; a wedding portrait of Erna and Moritz Perlman, 1928; Eisig Frankel, Mortiz Perlman, and Erna Perlman standing next to a baby carriage, Karlsbad, 1932; and Wolfi Perlman, son of Erna and Mortiz Perlman, holding a ball, Karlsbad, 1932.

Photographs of Max Rotenberg (1896-1942) include Max Rotenberg holding a briefcase, Berlin, Germany, 1924; a portrait of Max and Sigmund Rotenberg in Germany, undated; Max Rotenberg (front row, center) with a group of unidentified men, undated; Max Rotenberg (1<sup>st</sup> on left) at 28 years old with a group of three other unidentified men, undated; a portrait of Max Rotenberg, 1925; a family photograph with Sigmund Rotenberg (left), Chana Rotenberg, unidentified, and Max Rotenberg (right), undated.

Photographs of Regina Wolbrom (née Rotenberg, 1925- ) include a photograph of Regina Rotenberg as a baby, circa 1926; Regina Rotenberg with a teddy bear, 1928; a photograph of Toni Rotenberg, Erna Perlman, Wolfgang Rotenberg, and Regina Rotenberg walking on a street in Karlsbad, 1931; a photograph of Wolfgang Rotenberg, Regina Rotenberg, and their cousin Wolfi Perlman, Karlsbad, 1932; two photographs of Regina Rotenberg and her brother Sigmund Rotenberg, Berlin, 1938; and Regina Rotenberg standing at an intersection with friends in Brussels, Belgium, 1942.

Photographs of Regina Wolbrom's friends and Bnei Akiva events include group photographs of Bnei Akiva Organization events in Blankendeele, 1940-1941, and Brussel, 1942; Roushka Weingarten wearing a white pants outfit, 1941; a studio portrait of Lotti Szampanier, 1939; and group photograph of Jutta Appelbaum, Ruth Appelbaum, Lotti Szampanier, with an unidentified woman in Berlin, 1939.

Photograph of Sigmund Rotenberg, Regina Wolbrom's uncle, includes a group photograph in a workshop, Sigmund sitting in front, 1923; studio portrait of Sigmund Rotenberg, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1924; and Sigmund Rotenberg in Buenos Aires standing outside and holding a hat, 1926.

Photographs of the Wolbrom family include siblings Chana and Regina Wolbrom at a Jewish cemetery, 1938; Chana Wolbrom standing next to a stone wall, 1938; a studio portrait of Chaim and Chana Wolbrom with an unidentified man, possibly Izak Wolbrom, Łódź, 1939; Chaim Wolbrom, Kozięglowy, Poland, 1940; and Nechemia Wolbrom, Kozięglowy, 1940.

Regina Rotenberg kept two Poesie books which contain writings and drawings by her friends written in German, French, and Hebrew. The first untitled volume was created in Berlin, German and Brussels, Belgium, October 1935-February 1941. The second volume, titled "Poesie Regine Rotenberg" was created in Brussels, Belgium and Netania, Israel, October 1941-December 1955.

### **System of arrangement**

The Regina Wolbrom papers is arranged in three series:

- Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1921-1944
- Series 2: Photographs, circa 1920-1942
- Series 3: Poesie books, 1935-1955

## **Indexing terms**

### People:

Appelbaum, Jutta.  
Appelbaum, Ruth.  
Celis, Hubert.  
Frankel, Eisig.  
Frankel, Erna.  
Frankel, Jacob.  
Frankel, Marie.  
Frankel, Max.  
Frankel, Sara.  
Izak, Wolbrom.  
Kaner, Sonja, 1940-  
Korn, Ita.  
Korn, Marcia.  
Lokcinski, Chana.  
Perlman, Wolfi.  
Rotenberg, Bell.  
Rotenberg, Moshek, 1896-1942.  
Rotenberg, Siegmund, 1934-2018.  
Rotenberg, Tema, 1900-1942.  
Rotenberg, Wolfgang, 1929-  
Szampaniek, Lotti.  
Weingarten, Roushka.  
Wolbrom, Chaim, 1913-1944.  
Wolbrom, Chana, 1909-1944.  
Wolbrom, Chawa.  
Wolbrom, Nechamia, 1885-1943.  
Wolbrom, Regina, 1925-  
Wolbrom, Regina.

### Corporate:

Birkenau (Concentration camp)  
Bnei Akiva (Belgium)

### Topic:

Belgium--History--German occupation, 1940-1945.  
Children.  
Hidden children (Holocaust)  
Hidden children (Holocaust)--Belgium.  
Holocaust survivors.  
Holocaust victims.  
Jewish children in the Holocaust.  
Jewish children.

Jews, German.  
Wedding.  
World War, 1939-1945.

**Geographic:**

Bad Kissingen (Germany)  
Belgium.  
Berlin (Germany)  
Brussels (Belgium)  
Buenos Aires (Argentina)  
Gera (Germany)  
Germany.  
Israel.  
Koziegłowy (Poland)  
Łódź (Poland)  
Poland.  
Weissenfels (Germany)

**Gene / Form:**

Birth certificates.  
Correspondence.  
Photographs.  
Poesie books.

## CONTAINER LIST

### Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1921-1944

Box / Folder	Title:
1.1	Rotenberg family documents, 1921-1944

### Series 2: Photographs, circa 1920-1942

Box / Folder	Title:
1.2	Erna Frankel, 1920
1.3	Toni Frankel, 1920-1923
1.4	Frankel family, 1923-1936
1.5	Ita and Marika Korn, circa 1932
1.6	David and Chana Lokcinski, undated
1.7	Perlman family, 1928-1932
1.8	Bella Rotenberg, 1928
1.9	Max Rotenberg, 1924-1925, undated
1.10	Regina Rotenberg Wolbrom, 1926-1938
1.11	Regina's friends and Bnei Akiva events, 1939-1942
1.12	Sigmund Rotgenberg, 1923-1926



1.13	Wolbrom family, 1938-1940
1.14	Father Hubert Celis, undated
1.15	Unidentified photographs, circa 1920-1942

**Series 3: Poesie Books, 1935-1955**

<b>Book Enclosures</b>	<b>Title:</b>
BE 1	Untitled volume, 1935-1941
BE 2	"Poesie," 1941-1955