

**THEKLA SAMUELS PAPERS, 1938-1987, UNDATED (BULK 1938)
1995.A.1207**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Thekla Samuel papers

Dates: 1938-1987, undated (bulk 1938)

Accession number: 1995.A.1207

Creators: Thekla Samuel (1916-1991)

Extent: 10 folders

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

Abstract: The Thekla Samuel papers contain documents relating to Thekla Samuel, a Jewish nurse from Cologne, Germany who sought refuge from Nazi persecution in Belgian Congo in 1938. At the time of increasing hostility towards Jews, Thekla fled Germany by marrying her pen pal, German born watchmaker, Erich Samuel who lived in Elisabethville, Belgian Congo. Included among her papers is correspondence from friends and family in Germany, primarily from her father, Moritz Bamberger, and papers documenting her travel preparations including a fiancée visa request filed by Erich, her ship passage information, and currency exchange paperwork.

Languages: German, French, 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), Thekla Samuel papers (1995.A.1207), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: The Thekla Samuel papers were donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1995 by Thekla's granddaughter, Liza Beth Rochelson.

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

Processing history: Colleen Benoit, November 2015

Biographical note

Thekla Samuel (1916-1991) was a Jewish nurse who lived with her parents, Moritz and Jeanette Bamberger in Cologne, Germany. In an effort to escape persecution from the Nazis, Thekla fled to Belgian Congo in 1938 and married her pen pal, Erich Samuel (1906-1981), a German-born master watchmaker who was living in Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo). In October, 1938 Thekla departed Antwerp, Belgium on board the SS *Léopoldville*. She and Erich married on November 12, 1938 just three days after meeting. Thekla's mother, father, and two sisters were shot in a concentration camp in January, 1942.

Thekla and Erich had their first daughter, Lydia in October, 1939 in Belgian Congo. Shortly after, Erich was taken prisoner of war and held for 2 years before eventually being released. Upon his release, Thekla and Erich had two more daughters, Ellen (1942-) and Rose Jeanette (1946-), before immigrating to the United States in 1947. The family stayed in Brooklyn, New York for two years and moved to Rochester, New York in 1949. Thekla went on to work as an obstetric nurse. She passed away in 1991 in Rochester.

Scope and content of collection

The Thekla Samuel papers largely document Thekla's immigration from Germany to Belgian Congo and consists of correspondence from friends and family members in Germany and paperwork documenting her travel preparations in 1938. The correspondence is in the form of postcards and letters and the majority was written to Thekla in the days leading up to her departure from Europe on October 21, 1938. Much of the correspondence is from Thekla's father, Moritz and other family members. Several notes have greetings from more than one person. Only a few pieces of correspondence were sent to Thekla upon her arrival in Belgian Congo and subsequently, the United States. One such letter, was written by Thekla's sister-in-law, Ellen Samuel in 1940 and discusses Erich's detention as a prisoner of war. Another was written by a friend living in Chile in 1964 and is addressed to Thekla in Rochester, New York.

Among Thekla's travel preparation documents is a fiancée visa request submitted by Erich in Elisabethville in May of 1938 and a letter detailing her travel itinerary aboard the SS *Léopoldville*. Also included are bank statements certifying currency exchange.

System of arrangement

The Thekla Samuel papers are arranged as a single series.

Indexing terms

Samuel, Thekla.

Bamberger, Moritz.

Samuel, Erich.

Samuel, Ellen.

Jews—Germany.

Jewish refugees—Congo (Democratic Republic).

Nurses—Germany.

Holocaust survivors—United States.

Cologne (Germany).

Congo (Democratic Republic).

United States--Emigration and immigration--History--20th century.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Thekla Samuel papers, 1938-1987, undated

Folder	Title
1	Certificate of Currency Exchange, 1938
2	Correspondence, 1938
3	Correspondence, 1939
4	Correspondence, 1964
5	Correspondence – Bamberger, Moritz and family, 1938-1939
6	Correspondence – Samuel, Ellen, 1940
7	Family genograms, 1987
8	Fiancée visa request, 1938
9	Passage to Belgian Congo, 1938
10	Postcard depicting a coffee house in Cologne, undated