

**BETTY SKLOW PAPERS, 1897-1949**

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**Appendix A. Biography of Betty Sklow**

The following biography of Betty Sklow (née Behrendt, 1880-1961) is housed in the donor files of the United State Holocaust Memorial Museum. The author of the biography is Carla Williams Gelbaum, Betty Sklow's great-granddaughter.

## A Brief Biography of Betty Sklow and Her Family



*Betty Sklow, Germany, 1897*

**Betty Sklow** was born in 1880, in Germany; she had two sisters, Meta and Trude, and a brother Arthur. Her parents were Adolph and Rosa Jacobson Behrendt. After marrying Hermann Sklow on July 6, 1902, they raised two daughters, Lotte Paula (b: 1904) and Leni (b: 1907) in Gera, Thuringia, Germany. Hermann owned a department store called Tietz in Gera. In 1923, Lotte married William Rosenthal, a young man who had fought as a German shock trooper in World War I (where he received an Iron Cross). After their marriage, William managed his father-in-law's business in Gera. Lotte and William had three children: Brigitta (b: 1925), Ursula (b: 1927) and Peter Max (b: 1928). In 1934 the Sklow and Rosenthal families moved to Berlin. Without recognizing the danger closing in on them, William tried to settle

into life in Berlin, owning and managing his own department store, called WIRO.

The situation for Jews worsened. By the end of 1937 William was forced to leave his store. Fortunately, with the help of his father-in-law, Hermann, and the sponsorship of one of his brothers already in the United States, William was able to leave Germany on the steamship *Nieuw-Amsterdam*. He arrived in New York City on June 30, 1938, and prepared for his wife and children, who would follow as soon as they could get their visas.

Betty Sklow was a well educated woman and she often shared her love for music, art and literature with her family. For instance, in August of 1938 she visited *Kinkelhahn*, in Thuringer Wald (a mountain range and forest in the province of Thuringia near the town of Kassel) with her husband. On top of of this mountain is a hut with a plaque on which is written Goethe's famous poem, "*Über allen Gipfel ist Ruh*" (Calm reigns above all the tree tops...). With the storm of the Nazi terror crashing below, she reflected on Goethe's words. She said in a letter to her grand-daughter Brigitta, dated August 17, 1938, "He thought of these words up here in this restful and peaceful atmosphere. And when we are standing up there, we'll recite those words and feel their meaning."

In the early fall of 1938, first Hermann Sklow and then his daughter Leni were arrested by the Nazis in Berlin. Leni was released, but very soon after, on October 18, 1938, Hermann died in the prison.

In the next few weeks, Ursula and Peter were forced to leave their boarding school in Kaputh (outside Berlin) when it was abruptly closed and destroyed by Nazis. They came to stay with their mother in Berlin. Soon Brigitta joined them from her boarding school, where she was staying to improve her health, in Herlingen near Ulm. Betty and Leni Sklow also had an apartment in Berlin.

Still they waited and waited for visas to the United States. Finally, at the end of January, 1939, Lotte was able to get the visas for herself and her three children and they left Germany on the S.S. Washington steamship, stopping once in France, and arriving in New York City on February 9, 1939. Soon after, Leni Sklow left Germany for Cuba where she would work on a farm while she waited for entry to the United States, and her mother. Betty was also issued a Cuban "landing permit"—by Cuba's immigration minister, who was pocketing the money.

Betty sailed on the fateful St. Louis steamship in May of 1939, and arrived at the Havana port on May 27. Unexpectedly, the Cuban authorities would not accept the landing permits, demanding authentic visa's, which most of the passengers didn't have. Since the St. Louis was anchored outside Havana, Betty was only able to wave and call out to her daughter Leni, who would come out twice a day to see her on a small boat.

After the St. Louis was turned away both by Cuba and the United States, Betty was forced to leave her daughter far behind as the ship and her passengers made their return to Europe. Fortunately, Betty was able to disembark in Rotterdam, Holland, on June 18, 1939. Much of this trip is described in her journal written on the St. Louis.



*Betty & Hermann Sklow, Germany (on back of the postcard it says, "In memory of our silver wedding anniversary, 6.7.27")*

In Naarden-Bussum, Holland, she stayed in a small one-bedroom apartment of Leo Rosenthal, a brother of her son-in-law, his wife Hedwig, and their daughter Ilse, where she slept in a small attic room. Her quota number to emigrate to the United States was very similar to Leo's family's. Unlike Leo, Betty kept on writing letters to the consulate describing her plight and situation until she received her visa and passage on the Penland steamship which left for New York City, on April 26, 1940, only weeks before Hitler invaded Holland. Ilse recalls that, after Betty got her visa and left, "nothing moved anymore" and Leo and Hedwig remained in the Netherlands, unable to get their visas to America.

Betty arrived in New York City on May 16, 1940, where she was greeted by her daughters Leni and Lotte and her three grandchildren. She described her trip on the Penland in her journal she wrote while on the ship.

Soon after her arrival in 1940, Betty Sklow moved into an apartment at 803 W.180th Street in Washington Heights, New York City, with her daughter Leni. In the early 1950's, they were joined by her other daughter Lotte, who with her husband had raised their family in St. Paul, Minnesota. Betty lived at 180th Street until her death on October 15, 1961. Her daughters, Leni and Lotte continued to live in this apartment the rest of their lives—Leni died in 1979 and Lotte in 1985.

Leni and Lotte said that their mother Betty kept in contact with Captain Gustav Schroder of the St. Louis, who they said was fired after his return to Germany—sending him several food packages.

Betty Sklow is buried in Beth-El Cemetery, in Westwood Bergen County, New Jersey.



*Betty Sklow, 1949, New York*

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*The information for this biography was collected from letters of Betty Sklow, Lotte Rosenthal, and Leni Sklow, the various recollections of Ursula Frangiamore, Peter Roark, and Ilse Stokkink, and a NY Times article (March 31, 1999, p.A21), and written by Betty Sklow's great-granddaughter, Carla Williams Gelbaum.*



*Four generations—1952— together on the roof of Betty Sklow's apartment at W. 180th St., New York..*

*L-r: Betty Sklow, her grand-daughter Brita (Brigitta) Williams, her daughter Lotte Rosenthal, and Brita's daughter Carla Williams Gelbaum.*

## Family Tree for Betty Sklow

### Betty & Hermann Sklow... married July 6, 1927

#### Betty Sklow

b. 10/30/1880 (Germany)  
d. 10/15/1961 (NY)

#### Hermann Sklow

b. 3/14/1870 (Germany)  
d. 10/18/1938 (Germany)

### The children of Betty & Hermann Sklow:

#### • Lotte Sklow Rosenthal

b. 6/14/1904 (Gera, Thuringia, Germany)  
d. 3/28/1985 (New York)

#### • Leni Sklow

b. 2/18/1907 (Gera, Thuringia, Germany)  
d. 6/30/1979 (New York)

### Lotte (Sklow) & William Rosenthal...married 1923-1945(?)

#### William (Willy) Rosenthal

b. 1/31/1896 (Schete, Westfalen, Germany)  
d. 11/11/1972 (Lexington, Kentucky)

### Children of Lotte & William Rosenthal

#### • Brita Williams (changed her first name from Brigitte to Brita)

*born in Gera, Thuringia, Germany*

b. May 5, 1925

d. April 9, 1983 (Mill Valley, CA)

Divorced; One child: **Carla W. Gelbaum**

#### Ursula Frangiamore

*born in Gera, Thuringia, Germany*    b. 5/8/1927

Married to **Joseph Frangiamore** (*deceased*)

Three children: **David, Paul, Eva**

#### **Peter Maximillian Roark** (changed his last name from Rosenthal to Roark)

*born in Gera, Thuringia, Germany*    b. 7/7/1928

Divorced; Two children: **Cheryl & Tina**

### **Leo & Hedwig Rosenthal and one daughter, Ilse (Rosenthal) Stokkink (b. 1921)**

(Betty Sklow stayed with them in Holland, 1939-1940)

**Leopold Rosenthal** b. Sept. 20, 1875, d. May 1962

**Hedwig Rosenthal** b. Dec. 7, 1882, d. 1944. Leo and Hedwig were in hiding during the Nazi occupation of Holland. In 1943, they were betrayed and the Nazis came to their hiding place. Leo was able to hide himself, but Hedwig was discovered, seized, and deported to Auschwitz in Jan. 1943. She was never heard from again and her daughter Ilse believes she died in Auschwitz in 1944. Leo Rosenthal, who survived the war, could never find any trace of Hedwig despite all his efforts. He moved to the United States in 1948 with Ilse and her family.