

MAIER AND GRUBER FAMILIES PAPERS, 1875-1962
2004.709.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
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Descriptive summary

Title: Maier and Gruber families papers

Dates: 1875 - 1962 (bulk 1934-1947)

Accession number: 2004.709.1

Creator: Maier (Family : Vienna, Austria)

Additional Creator: Gruber (Family : Vienna, Austria)

Extent: .5 linear feet (1 box, 3 oversize folders)

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

Abstract: The papers consist of documents, photographs, passports, clippings, and identification cards relating to the Gruber and Maier families, their experiences in Austria, and their immigration to the United States during the Holocaust.

Languages: English, German, 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.

Physical access note: Negatives are housed separately and may not be available for research.

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), Gruber and Maier families papers (2004.709.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: This collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Museum by Robert J. Gross, Erich Maier's grandson, in 2004.

Separated materials:

The following objects are housed with the USHMM collections:

- Scrip (2004.709.3-2004.709.13)
- Bar of soap (2004.709.2)

The following materials were transferred to the USHMM Library.

- Fernsprechnetzen Wien: Amtliches Teilnehmerverzeichnis, Ausgabe Mai 1938, Herausgegeben von der Telegraphendirektion für Wien, Niederösterreich und Burgenland (Vienna phone book, May 1938, with Nazi insignia)
- World Jewish Congress Information Bulletin: Activities of the World Jewish Congress, Reports on the World Jewish Situation, May 1946 (3 copies)
- World Jewish Congress Information Bulletin: Activities of the World Jewish Congress, Reports on the World Jewish Situation, July 1946
- World Jewish Congress: Bulletin of the Department of Culture and Education, May 1946
- World Jewish Congress: Bulletin of the Department of Culture and Education, August 1946

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

Processing history: Kate Cooper, 2014. Updated by Jen Wachtel, December 2019.

Biographical note

Maier (Family : Vienna, Austria)

Erich Maier (1889-1963) was born on August 25, 1889, to Max and Julia Kohn Maier in Neunkirchen, Austria, where his father (d. 1929) was also born. The family was descended from the revered Talmudic scholar, Rabbi Eisenstadt (d. 1744, Hungary). Erich's mother was born on August 6, 1854, in Lajtaszentmiklos, Hungary (now Neudorf, Austria). Erich had five brothers: a twin Ernst, Otto, b. 1877, Leo, b. 1882, Benno, b. 1884, and Arthur, b. 1886, and three sisters: Flora, b. 1878, Helena, b. 1880, and Minna, (approximately 1892-1932). Erich had a law degree from the University of Vienna and was active in the Jewish community. He became an associate in a law firm with Leo Hermann Gruber, who died of cancer in 1934. His widow Ella (Elisabeth) Hochstadt Gruber (1908-1987) handled the firm's business records and agreed to let Erich take over the practice. Erich and Ella married on December 15, 1935. Ella had two daughters from her first marriage, Amelia (b. 1929) and Gerda (b. 1931). Erich and Ella were a well-to-do Jewish family.

Nazi Germany annexed Austria in March 1938 and enacted anti-Jewish laws to disenfranchise Jews and remove them from many activities and professions. Erich's law practice was forced to close in June, and the family's home was often searched by the Gestapo. On one visit, they demanded to see Leo Gruber, and Ella had to give them directions to his gravesite to prove that he had died. They confiscated personal belongings, including a doll carriage.

The Maier family decided to leave Austria. Ella found a cousin, Nathan Rennert, in America, who provided an affidavit of support for the family. The Austrian exit fees were extremely costly, but on November 8, 1938, they fled Vienna for Le Havre, France. They were not allowed to take anything of value, and when their train was searched by German authorities, Ella hid her jewelry in her soup. The family fled on the SS *Normandie* and arrived on November 24 in New York, where they remained. Erich's brother, Ernst, his wife, Margit, nee Fleischmann, and 7 year old son Thomas escaped to the United States in 1939 with his help. Erich and Ernst's brother Arthur joined them in 1941. Their mother, Julia Maier, 85, had died in Vienna in approximately 1939.

Ella's parents Jonas (1875-1950) and Jetty Tannenblatt Hochstadt (1874-1952) were on the Romanian quota for the United States, which was very small. Ella arranged exit visas to England, which were so expensive they had to sell properties in Vienna, but the visas expired by the time the properties were sold. Ella then obtained transit visas for Bolivia via the United States and her parents arrived in New York in August 1940. They were allowed to remain and moved in with Ella and her family.

Erich got a position with the World Jewish Congress and, by 1942, Ella worked there as well. Both Erich and Ella became naturalized citizens in 1944. Ella and Erich submitted 24 affidavits of support for relatives, and 15 family members reached the US. The others perished. After the war ended in May 1945, they learned that Erich's other five siblings were killed in concentration camps: Benno in Jasenovac in Croatia in 1941; Leo in Gyor, Hungary, presumably during forced labor service; Leo's wife Sarika in Auschwitz in 1944; Otto in Theresienstadt in February 1944; Flora Frankl and Helena Salz in Auschwitz on October 12, 1944; and Helena's husband Moritz in Theresienstadt in 1943.

Erich Maier, who was fluent in German, English, French, and Yiddish, had been working as a censor for the US War Department since 1943. After the war ended, he was sent to work in the American zone of occupation in Germany. While there, he acted as the unofficial representative of the World Jewish Congress. He visited displaced persons camps in Germany to gather information and provide aid for Jewish refugees. He collected the names of all the children at Foehrenwald, Mittelbau, and Beth Bialik DP camps, so that the WJC could send letters and care packages. The WJC tried to arrange for Erich to remain as their official representative after his contract with the US War Department ended in 1946, but they could not get the permits. He continued to work for the WJC until 1948. He then took a position with the law firm of Rosenman, Colin, et al. Erich's law license was not valid in the US, and he worked as librarian and researcher until his retirement. He also continued to volunteer with the WJC, coordinating shipments of books, clothes, and supplies, and searching for relatives of displaced refugees. Ella worked for the World Jewish Congress for over 25 years, retiring as chief archivist. Erich, 71, passed away on April 22, 1963. Ella, 79, passed away in May 1987.

Gruber (Family : Vienna, Austria)

Leo Hermann Gruber (d. 1934) and his two brothers, Erich (1895-1942) and Fritz (1900-1939) were born in Vienna to Simon and Amalie Herzstadt Gruber (d. 1900). Leo was a well-known criminal defense attorney and outspoken opponent of the Nazi Party in Austria. He married Elisabeth (Ella) Hochstadt (1908-1987) on August 2, 1925. Ella was the only daughter of wealthy parents Jonas (1875-1950) and Jetty Tannenblatt Hochstadt (1874-1952). Ella's mother Jetty was born in Usciebiskupie, Galicia, Austro-Hungary, (now Ustia (Ternopil's'ka oblast', Ukraine) on November 8, 1874, and her father Jonas was born in Rostoki, Romania, on December 20, 1875. Leo and Ella had two daughters, Amelia, born September 24, 1929, and Gerda, born April 25, 1931. When Leo died of cancer at age 41 on December

29, 1934, Ella, who handled his law firm's business records, agreed to let associate Erich Maier take over the practice, and she married him on December 15, 1935. The couple immigrated to the United States with Ella's daughters in November 1938.

Leo's brother Fritz was married to Sofia Selinger (1894-1942) and had a son Siegfried (Fred) (1922-2014). Fred, 16, received a space on a Kindertransport to Great Britain, and fled Vienna on December 16, 1938. Fritz died due to illness on April 21, 1939. Sofia was deported on November 27, 1941, to Riga, Latvia, and then to Maly Trostenic killing site near Minsk, Belarus, where she was killed on June 15, 1942. Leo's other brother Erich Gruber was deported in February 1941 to Kielce, Poland. Ella Maier received a postcard from him dated July 29, 1941, asking for food packages. The ghetto was liquidated in spring 1942, and residents were shipped to Treblinka killing center. Erich Gruber did not survive.

Ella and Leo's older daughter Amelia married and had two daughters. She passed away in 1967 while working on her PhD. Their younger daughter Gerda married Morton Gross and had three sons. She was a special education teacher, with a graduate degree in the subject.

Scope and content of collection

The papers consist of documents, photographs, passports, clippings, and identification cards relating to the Gruber and Maier families, their experiences in Austria, and their immigration to the United States during the Holocaust. The collection documents Erich Maier's legal career in Austria through 1938 as well as Erich and Ella Maier's attempts to facilitate their family members' immigration to the United States in the 1940s.

System of arrangement

This collection is arranged by individual family member and date.

Indexing terms

Person:

Gruber, Herman Leo.
Gross, Gerda.
Gruber, Amelia.
Maier, Erich.
Maier, Elisabeth (Ella).
Hochstadt, Jonah.
Hochstadt, Jetty.

Corporate:

World Jewish Congress.

Topical Subject:

Jews--Austria--Vienna--History--20th century.
Refugees, Jewish--United States.
World War, 1939-1945--Jews--Rescue.

Geography:

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

Genre/Form:
Photographs.
Passports.
Identification cards.
Clippings (Books, newspapers, etc.)
Postcards.

CONTAINER LIST

Box/Folder	Title
1.1, OS 2	Leo Hermann Gruber, 1893-1934
1.2	Gerda and Amelie Gruber, 1936-1938
1.3, OS 4	Erich Maier biographical materials, 1908-1962 (bulk 1938-1947)
1.4	Erich Maier legal education, lawyer candidacy, and early career, 1908-1938
1.5	Erich Maier university exams, 1911-1914
1.6-1.7	Erich Maier licenses to practice law, 1915-1933
1.8	Erich Maier postwar service, 1946 and undated
1.9	Elisabeth Hochstadt, 1908-1956
OS 3	Affidavit of Support for Erich Maier, Ella Maier, Amelia Gruber, and Gerda Gruber by Nathan Rennert, 1938
1.10	Jonas Hochstadt, 1875-1933
1.11, OS 5	Jetti Tanneblatt Hochstadt, 1908-1940
1.12	Jetti and Jonas Hochstadt immigration documents; 1906-1940 (bulk 1939-1940)
1.13	Jetti and Jonas Hochstadt immigration documents with Elisabeth Hochstadt correspondence, 1939-1947
1.14	U.S. census forms for Maier and Hochstadt households, 1943
1.15, OS 6	Clippings, undated
1.16, OS 1	Family photographs and negatives, undated
1.17	Dachau and likely other camp liberation photo reprints, 1945