

## **BLAU FAMILY PAPERS, 1930-1954**

### **2005.517.1**

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

Title: Blau family papers

Dates: 1930-1954

Accession number: 2005.517.1

Creator: Blau (Family : Vienna, Austria)

Extent: 0.5 linear foot (7 folders, 1 oversize folder)

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

Abstract: The Blau family papers consist of certificates, identification papers, immigration documents, school report cards, and a poetry and autograph book documenting the Blau family from Vienna, Austria, their imprisonment in Theresienstadt, their postwar lives at the Deggendorf displaced persons camp, and their immigration to the United States in 1947. The poetry and autograph book likely belonged to Gertrude and contains entries from friends in Vienna and Theresienstadt, including many references to Palestine. School report cards document Herbert's education in Vienna and Deggendorf. Identification papers include prewar Austrian passports, wartime German passports, and a postwar repatriation card. Theresienstadt materials include a work pass, milk card, and bankbook. Deggendorf records include identification papers and certificates. Immigration documents include immigration forms and naturalization papers.

Languages: German, Hebrew, English, Czech, Russian

#### **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: A health card for Herbert Blau with a chest x-ray negative attached in oversize folder 1 is kept in cold storage for preservation reasons and would require additional time for acclimatization before it can be served to researchers.

Reproduction and use: Collection is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: Blau family papers (2005.517.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Dr. Jeffrey A. Gordon donated the Blau family papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2005.

Separated materials: Dr. Jeffrey A. Gordon also donated a large number of objects and publications to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Processing History: Julie Schweitzer, June 2019

### **Biographical note**

Gertrude (Trude) Blau (1925-2009) was born on March 14, 1925, in Vienna, Austria to Adolph Blau (1894-1958) and Elsa Rosenthal (1899-1987). Her father, Adolph, was a decorated and disabled World War II veteran who was a licensed tobacco vendor. Her mother, Elsa, was a graduate of the Vienna Conservatory of Music. Gertrude had one brother, Herbert (1931-1985). They were an observant Jewish family and Gertrude was interested in Zionist youth activities.

Following the German annexation of Austria, Gertrude and the other Jewish children were no longer allowed to attend school. For a while, they met secretly in the cemetery or at the Jewish Federation Office to have classes in Jewish culture and general subjects taught by Jewish teachers who had been banned from teaching. In August 1942, Gertrude and her family, including her 72 year-old maternal grandmother, Fanny Rosenthal, were deported by the Germans to Theresienstadt concentration camp. The family was separated as men and women were housed in different barracks. Shortly after arriving, Gertrude contracted hepatitis. While in Theresienstadt, Gertrude continued to get religious instruction, in secret, with Rabbi Leo Baeck. Trude was head caretaker in the children's barracks where Ursula Lenneberg worked. Trude later got a job in the office because of her friendship with Sigi Kwasniewski, the head of the youth homes. In October 1944, Gertrude volunteered to go to Auschwitz with friends who were selected for transport. After three days, they were sent to Kurzbach labor camp, a subcamp of Gross Rosen, where they were put to work digging ditches for the defense of Germany. Gertrude contracted typhoid fever. Around January 1945, the Germans decided to evacuate the camp because of the encroaching Soviet Army and the inmates were forced on death marches. Gertrude was too sick to go very far, and begged to be left behind. Since Gertrude spoke French, she eventually was able to join a group of French prisoners-of-wars. After 2 weeks, they were liberated by the Soviets in Liegnitz, Germany.

After the war ended, Gertrude was allowed to go to Czechoslovakia, first Prague and then Theresienstadt, to search for her family. She found them in Theresienstadt where they all had survived. The family was sent to the Deggendorf displaced persons camp in Germany to await immigration to the United States. In 1946, Gertrude was sent to Italy by a Zionist group that helped smuggle people into Palestine. While travelling through Italy she met Abraham Gordon who would become her husband. Soon after this, she learned that her group was a decoy, and that they would not be going to Palestine. She and Abraham decided to return to their families and try to immigrate to the United States. In

November 1947, with the assistance of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Gertrude and her family were permitted entry into the United States. She and Abraham reunited and married on August 22, 1948. They settled in Vineland, New Jersey, and had one son. Gertrude was the 47,000th person to immigrate to the US after the war. She worked to raise money to bring more displaced Jews to the country and remained active in Holocaust remembrance education all her life.

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

The Blau family papers consist of certificates, identification papers, immigration documents, school report cards, and a poetry and autograph book documenting the Blau family from Vienna, Austria, their imprisonment in Theresienstadt, their postwar lives at the Deggendorf displaced persons camp, and their immigration to the United States in 1947. The poetry and autograph book likely belonged to Gertrude and contains entries from friends in Vienna and Theresienstadt, including many references to Palestine. School report cards document Herbert's education in Vienna and Deggendorf. Identification papers include prewar Austrian passports, wartime German passports, and a postwar repatriation card. Theresienstadt materials include a work pass, milk card, and bankbook. Deggendorf records include identification papers and certificates. Immigration documents include immigration forms and naturalization papers.

### **System of arrangement**

The Blau family papers are arranged as a single series.

### **Indexing terms**

#### **Personal Names**

Blau, Adolph, 1894-1958.  
Blau, Herbert, 1931-1985.  
Blau, Elsa, 1899-1987.  
Blau, Gertrude, 1925-2009.  
Rosenthal, Fannie.

#### **Corporate Names**

Deggendorf (Displaced persons camp)  
Theresienstadt (Concentration camp)  
World ORT Union.

#### **Topical Terms**

Jews--Austria--Vienna--History--20th century.  
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Austria--Vienna.  
World War, 1939-1945--Deportations from Austria.  
World War, 1939-1945--Refugees--Germany--Deggendorf.  
Refugees, Jewish--Germany--Deggendorf.  
Naturalization--United States.

#### **Geographic Names**

United States--Emigration and immigration--History--20th century.  
Deggendorf (Germany)

Vienna (Austria)

## CONTAINER LIST

### Series 1: Blau family papers, 1930-1954

| Folder          |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 1 of 7,<br>OS 1 | Deggendorf, 1945-1947                             |
| 2 of 7          | Identification papers, 1930, 1937-1939, 1945-1946 |
| 3 of 7          | Immigration, 1938, 1947-1948, 1954                |
| 4 of 7          | Letter from Alois and Minna Peitl, 1948           |
| 5 of 7          | Poetry and autograph book, 1941-1943              |
| 6 of 7          | School report cards, 1938-1945                    |
| 7 of 7          | Theresienstadt, 1943-1944                         |