

ELSA AND SELMAR BIENER PAPERS, 1927-1968
2005.65.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
Washington, DC 20024-2126
Tel. (202) 479-9717
e-mail: reference@ushmm.org

Descriptive Summary

Title: Elsa and Selmar Biener papers

Dates: 1927-1968 (bulk dates: 1936-1941)

Accession number: 2005.65.1

Creator: Biener, Selmar, 1906-1988.

Additional creator: Biener, Elsa, 1915-1958.

Extent: 2 linear feet (2 boxes; 1 oversized folder; 5 items in cold storage)

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

Abstract: The Elsa and Selmar Biener papers consists of immigration documents, correspondence, photographs, and financial materials related to the emigration of Elsa and Selmar Biener aboard the MS *St. Louis*, their disembarkation in England, and their internment on the Isle of Man.

Languages: German, 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.

Physical access note: The negatives in the collection are kept in cold storage for preservation reasons and require additional time for acclimatization before they 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: (Identification of item), Elsa and Selmar Biener papers (2005.65.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Ruth Diana Barzilay and Evelyn Hill donated the Elsa and Selmar Biener papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2005.

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

Processing history: Katelynn Vance, May 2019

Biographical note

Selmar Biener (1906-1988) was born on May 15, 1906 in Magdeburg, Germany to Philip Biener (b. 1870) and Regina Biener (née Sternberg, b. 1876). He had three brothers, David Biener, Sigmund Biener, and Eugen Biener. Elsa Biener (née Friedler, 1915-1958) was born on September 24, 1915 in Magdeburg, Germany to Abraham Friedler (b. 1887) and Frieda Miriam Friedler (b. 1895). Selmar and Elsa married in 1936. On May 13, 1939, Selmar and Elsa Biener sailed from Hamburg, Germany to Havana, Cuba aboard the MS *St. Louis*. After being denied entry to Cuba and the United States, they disembarked in England where they were interned in a camp on the Isle of Man. They were eventually released. In England, they were reunited with Elsa's siblings, Alexander, Jetti, and Hanni (Honey) Friedler. Selmar and Elsa Biener had two daughters, Evelyn Hill (b. 1943) and Ruth Diana Barzilay (b. 1947). Elsa Biener died in London, England, on November 20, 1958. Selmar Biener died on January 30, 1988 in Bournemouth, England.

Among their extended families several members perished in the Holocaust including Philip Fischel Biener at Theresienstadt concentration camp, Regina Biener and Abraham Friedler at Auschwitz concentration camp, and Eugen Biener at Dachau concentration camp. Frieda Friedler is also believed to have perished in the Holocaust. David Biener immigrated to Palestine.

Scope and content of collection

The Elsa and Selmar Biener papers consists of immigration documents, correspondence, photographs, and financial materials related to the emigration of Elsa and Selmar Biener aboard the MS *St. Louis*, their disembarkation in England, and their internment on the Isle of Man.

The correspondence includes letters and telegrams to / from Selmar and Elsa Biener, their family, and various Jewish aid societies, dated 1929-1968, and undated. The papers also includes receipts for sending registered postal packages, 1940, and a collection of messages written and received by members of the Friedler family. These messages were written on British Red Cross stationery and delivered via the British Red Cross, 1942-1943.

The biographical materials series includes genealogy materials relating to the Weissmann family and Rostholder family, as well as an address list of family members and friends, undated.

The immigration materials series consists of immigration documents for Selmar and Elsa Biener. The documents include Selmar and Elsa Biener's marriage certificate, 1936; Elsa Biener's German driver's license, 1938; an application for and notification of a receiving an immigration number from the American consulate in Berlin, Germany, 1939; a vaccination document, May 4, 1939; a certificate regarding the export of materials to Cuba, May 10, 1939; certificates of good conduct, 1939; a transcript of the "Emigration case of Selmar Biener, at present A.I.C. Lingfield-Racecourse, Surrey, Hut 7," 1940; a questionnaire regarding the experiences of Selmar Biener, 1941; and a United States Affidavit of Support for Selmar and Elsa Biener submitted by Siegmund Chusit, 1940. The papers also includes immigration

documents for Eugen Biener, Siegmund Biener, Fischel Biener (1870-?), and Siefried Mannheimer. Also included are a travel pass, undated; printed instructions for consignments to internees, June 18, 1940; a document relating to luggage insurance, May 10, 1939; a "Circular to Refugees from Germany and Austria," undated; a printed immigration document from the American consulate in Berlin, undated; a printed immigration document regarding immigration to Australia from an aid society for Jews in Germany, undated; and a blank application for a permit to enter Australia.

The financial materials relate to Philip Biener's property transfers, 1927, 1936; various receipts; a tax document, May 8, 1939; a receipt for an advertisement *The Times*, July 14, 1939; and railroad and shipping documents, 1938-1940. Various lists include items purchased for immigration, April 1939; a list of gold and jewelry to be placed in a bank safe, 1940; and lists of household goods, 1939-1941.

The miscellaneous series include handwritten notes from various family members, circa 1930s-1956; a partial set of blank binder dividers; a copy of the "Auszug aus der Reichsmeldeldeordnung vom Januar 1938;" instructions for building basement air raid shelters, 1940; instructions for cooking with a Siemens-Kochplatte; instructions for using a Frigidaire; instructions for using a typewriter, a map of the European airmail lines, 1938; and a partial architectural blueprint of an unidentified building, August 23, 1940.

The papers also include a pen and ink drawing of a menorah with barbed wire, 1940.

The Biener family photographs include fourteen photographs taken aboard the MS *St. Louis*, 1939, as well as photographs of Elsa and Selmar Biener, 1939. Five negatives are storage separately for preservation purposes.

System of arrangement

The Elsa and Selmar Biener papers are arranged into seven series.

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1929-1968
- Series 2: Biographical materials, undated
- Series 3: Immigration materials, 1936-1941
- Series 4: Financial materials, 1927-1941
- Series 5: Miscellaneous, circa 1930s-1956
- Series 6: Artwork, 1940
- Series 7: Photographs, 1939, undated

Indexing terms

People:

- Aronsohn, Kurt.
- Aronsohn, Nathan.
- Bendit, Francis E.
- Biener, David.
- Biener, Elsa, 1915-1958.
- Biener, Eugen.
- Biener, Fischel.
- Biener, Philip, 1870-?

Biener, Selmar, 1906-1988.
Biener, Siegmund.
Chaim, Georg.
Chusit, Siegmund.
Erhardt, John G.
Fellner, Ruth.
Flank, Samuel.
Freiberg, Jochen.
Friedler, Abraham, 1887-?
Friedler, Alexander.
Friedler, Frieda, 1895-?
Friedler, Hanni.
Friedler, Lene.
Geller, Leo.
Gilbert, T.
Gonzales, Manuel Benitez Y.
Herz, Bernhard.
Herz, Sara Gitel.
Hesse, Richard.
Hrosfall, G. J.
Jankelowitz, Gisela.
Joseph, H. O.
Kamnitzer, Heinz.
Laemmle, Carl.
Lecker, Else.
Lewin, Meta.
Malecon, Isaak.
Mannerheimer, Siegfried.
Marshall, F. H.
Mueller, Ralph S.
Nathan, Kurt.
Rose, Halleck L.
Schiff, Otto.
Schultz, William L.
Shaw, Violet.
Steyne, Alan N.
Weisselberger, Otto.
Zallin, Edgar.

Corporate:

Council for German Jewry (Great Britain)
Foreign Service Officer Program (U.S.)
German Jewish Aid Committee.
Hamburg-American Line.
Mueller Electric Company.
S. Stern, Stiner & Co.
St. Louis (Ship)

Topic:

Holocaust survivors.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)
Jewish refugees.
Refugees.
United States--Emigration and immigration.
World War, 1939-1945.
World War, 1939-1945--Civilian relief--Europe.
World War, 1939-1945--Refugees.
World War, 1939-1945--Refugees--Germany.

Geography:

Australia.
Berlin (Germany)
Cuba.
Germany.
Havana (Cuba)
Isle of Man
London (England)
Magdeburg (Germany)
Onchan (Isle of Man)
Tel Aviv (Israel)

Genre / Form:

Affidavit.
Artwork.
Correspondence.
Driver's license.
Genealogy.
Negatives.
Photographs.
Receipts.
Telegrams.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Correspondence, 1929-1968

Box / Folder:	Title:
1.1	General correspondence, 1929, 1933, 1935
1.2	General correspondence, July - December 1938
1.3	General correspondence, January - March 1939
1.4	General correspondence, April - June 1939
1.5	General correspondence, July 1939
1.6	General correspondence, August 1939
1.7	General correspondence, September 1939
1.8	General correspondence, October 1939
1.9	General correspondence, November 1939

1.10	General correspondence, December 1939
1.11	General correspondence, January - April 1940
1.12	General correspondence, May - July 1940
1.13	General correspondence, August - December 1940
1.14	General correspondence, January 1941
1.15	General correspondence, February 1941
1.16	General correspondence, March 1941
1.17	General correspondence, April 1941
1.18	General correspondence, May 1941
1.19	General correspondence, June - July, 1941, November 1941
1.20	General correspondence, 1946, 1949, 1960, 1968
2.1	General correspondence, undated
2.2	Elsa and Selmar Biener, correspondence, undated
2.3	Friedler family via British Red Cross, 1941-1943
2.4	Empty envelopes, 1929, 1939-1941, undated
2.5	Telegrams, 1938-1941, undated
2.6	Receipts for sending registered postal packets, 1940

Series 2: Biographical materials, undated

Box / Folder:	Title:
2.7	Genealogy materials, undated

Series 3: Immigration materials, 1936-1941

Box / Folder:	Title:
2.8	Elsa and Selmar Biener immigration documents, 1936-1940
2.9	Biener family, 1936-1940; Siegfried Mannerheimer, undated
2.10	Hamburg-Amerika Linie, MS <i>St. Louis</i> , 1939
2.11	General immigration documents, circa 1936-1941

Series 4: Financial materials, 1927-1941

Box / Folder:	Title:
2.12	Financial materials, 1927, 1936-1940, undated; tax certificate city of Magdeburg, 1939
2.13	Lists of Household Goods, 1939-1941, undated
2.14	Railroad and shipping documents, 1938-1940

Series 5: Miscellaneous, circa 1930s-1956

Box / Folder:	Title:
2.15	Notes, circa 1930s-1956
OS 1	Notes, map, and architectural blueprint, circa 1938-1950s
2.16	Blank dividers, undated
2.17	Printed materials, circa 1930s-1940s

Series 6: Artwork, 1940

Box / Folder:	Title:
2.18	Menorah, ink drawing, 1940

Series 7: Photographs, 1939, undated

Box / Folder:	Title:
2.19	Biener family photographs and MS St. Louis, 1939, undated
Items stored separately	Five negatives