

EUGENIUSZ AND IRENA WOJTAS PAPERS, circa 1930-1968 and undated 2013.397.1

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

Title: Eugeniusz and Irena Wojtas papers

Dates: circa 1930-1968 and undated

Accession number: 2013.397.1

Creator: Wojta, Eugeniusz, 1910-1977

Additional creator: Wojtas, Irena

Extent: .2 linear feet (3 folders)

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

Abstract: The Eugeniusz and Irena Wojtas papers includes biographical material and photographs relating to Eugeniusz Wojtas and Irena Wójcik (later Wojtas) and their family's experiences pre-war in Poland and post-war in the Wildflecken and Heilbronn displaced persons camps in Germany. Eugeniusz and Irena, both Roman Catholics, were persecuted by the Nazis during WWII. Eugeniusz was captured and held as a prisoner of war at Stalag XIII A and Irena was a forced laborer in Karlstadt, Germany. They met and married as displaced persons and lived in Wildflecken and Heilbronn, Germany, where their children Elizabeth and Jan were born before the family immigrated to the United States. Documents include mainly post-war identification cards, DP camp employment certificates, and birth, baptism, and wedding certificates for Eugeniusz and Irena. Photographs include pre-war photographs of Irena in Poland as well as post-war photographs of Irena and Eugeniusz in DP camps with friends and family members.

Languages: Polish, German, English

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open for use.

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), Eugeniusz and Irena Wojtas papers (2013.397.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Irena Wojtas donated the Eugeniusz and Irena Wojtas papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2013.

Related material: Irena Wojtas also donated a forced labor badge (2013.379.2) in 2016 and *Na wychodźczym szlaku : album, naświetlający : przyczyny powstania, historyczny przebieg, prace, zadania i* (E184.P7 M35 1952) to the Library.

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

Processing history: Morgan Voth, March 2020; edited October 2021

Biographical note

Irena Wójcik (later Irene Wojtas) was born on October 25, 1919, in Goluchowice, Poland, to Jan and Franciszka Nowak Wojcik. She was the middle child in a large Catholic family. In the late 1930s, she was living with her eldest sister Włada Szymczuk in Częstochowa and worked in her sisters tailor shop. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland from the west and, three weeks later, the Soviet Union invaded from the east. Poland was partitioned between the two powers, per the terms of the August 1939 German-Soviet Pact. Germany annexed much of eastern Poland. The area acquired under the Pact was placed under German administration as the General Government. Irena's home village was near the border between the General Government and a newly formed German province called Warthegau. On one visit home she was arrested, with her younger brother, Stanisław, for suspicion of black market activities. She was interrogated and later released. Stanisław was severely tortured and sent to prison. Irene returned to Częstochowa, although her official address was Goluchowice and she was expected to live there. Around April 1943, there was a round-up in Goluchowice by the Germans, selecting Poles for forced labor. Irena was not there, and the authorities arrested her father because she was not present to be taken. The family sent word to Częstochowa and Irena returned and reported to the police so that her father could be released.

In April 1943, Irena was deported, via Kielce, to Karlstadt am Main, Germany. She was assigned to work on the farm of George Gold, a German farmer in Karlburg. Living conditions were harsh and she was treated brutally. George Gold's son was a member of the German military. He would occasionally take Irena and the other Polish girls working there, to the river to photograph them for his soldier friends.

After the war ended in May 1945, Irena lived in a series of displaced persons camps: Wurzburg, Aschaffenburg, Wildflecken, Heilbronn, Ludwigsburg, Waiblingen and Bremen-Grohn. She met Eugeniusz Wojtas in Aschaffenburg or Wildflecken and they married on February 8, 1948. Eugeniusz, also Catholic, had been captured while serving in the Polish military at the beginning of the war. He had been a forced laborer in Germany from October 1940 – April 1945. Their first child, a daughter, was born in Wildflecken on September 24, 1948. They were later sent to Heilbronn, where a son was born on May 10, 1950.

In May 1951, the family left Ludwigsburg DP camp for Bremerhaven where they boarded the USS General Harry Taylor. They arrived in New York City on June 1, 1951. From there, they travelled to South Bend, IN. The Parakowski and Kowalski families, whom they had met in the DP camps, had arranged the paperwork for their move to South Bend. The trip was sponsored and paid for by the ACRPDP: the American Committee to Resettle Polish Displaced Persons. Eugene, 67, died in February 1977.

Eugeniusz Wojtas (later Eugene) was born on May 7, 1910, in Medynia Głogowska, Poland, to Catholic parents, Błazej and Zofia Stopa Wojtas. When he was a child, his family moved to Kolonia Józefin, in the Lublin area. He served in the 5 P.S.P. [Pułk Strzelców Podhalanskich--Podhale Rifles Infantry Regiment], and was stationed in Przemysł. In 1934, Eugeniusz was released from military service and returned home to Kolonia Józefin. During the late 1930s, Nazi Germany remilitarized and annexed Austria, the Czech Sudetenland, and in March 1939, dismembered the remainder of Czechoslovakia. On August 5, 1939, Eugeniusz was recalled to the military as Poland prepared to mobilize its Armed Forces. He was assigned to the 43 P.P. [Pułk Piechoty--Infantry Division] stationed at Dubno.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland from the west and, three weeks later, the Soviet Union invaded from the east. On September 20, Eugeniusz was captured by the Soviets. On November 14, there was a German-Soviet prisoner exchange. Eugeniusz was transferred to German custody because his home town was in eastern Poland, which was designated German territory under the August 1939 German-Soviet Pact. He was then transported to Stalag XIII C in Hammelburg, Bavaria, Germany. From October 18, 1940, Eugeniusz was registered for various labor battalions, including Arbeitskommando 371 and 1190. After Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 22, 1941, Eugeniusz was most likely used in civilian forced labor. For much of the war, he was stationed for work in the vicinity of Gemunden am Main, in Bavaria. Eugeniusz was liberated by American troops on April 4, 1945. Germany surrendered on May 7.

Eugeniusz worked for the US military for twenty-two months. He then went to Wildflecken displaced person camp. He met Irena Wojcik in Wildflecken or Aschaffenburg DP camp. Irena, also Catholic, was born in 1919 in Goluchowice, Poland. In April 1943, she had been selected for forced labor and deported to Karlstadt am Main, Germany, where she worked on a farm until liberation. The couple married on February 8, 1948, in Wildflecken. Their daughter, Elzbieta, was born there on September 24, 1948. They were later transferred to Heilbronn DP camp, where Eugene worked as a camp policeman. Their son, Jan, was born there on May 10, 1950.

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Biography by Kate Cooper, June 2015

Scope and content of collection

The Eugeniusz and Irena Wojtas papers includes biographical material and photographs relating to Eugeniusz Wojtas and Irena Wójcik (later Wojtas) and their family's experiences pre-war in Poland and

post-war in the Wildflecken and Heilbronn displaced persons camps in Germany. Eugeniusz and Irena, both Roman Catholics, were persecuted by the Nazis during WWII. Eugeniusz was captured and held as a prisoner of war at Stalag XIII A and Irena was a forced laborer in Karlstadt, Germany. They met and married as displaced persons and lived in Wildflecken and Heilbronn, Germany, where their children Elizabeth and Jan were born before the family immigrated to the United States.

Documents include mainly post-war identification cards, DP camp employment certificates, and birth, baptism, and wedding certificates for Eugeniusz and Irena including a Polish Armed Forces ID card, a vaccination booklet, notices that Eugeniusz was employed while in the DP camp, and copies of birth and marriage certificates for Eugeniusz as well as copies of birth and marriage certificates for Irena. Also included are birth and baptism certificates for Elzbieta Wojtas and naturalization certificates for Eugeniusz, Irena, and Elzbieta.

Photographs include pre-war photographs of Irena in Poland as well as post-war photographs of Irena and Eugeniusz in DP camps with friends and family members including their children, Elizabeth and Jan, who were born in the DP camp. Family members depicted in the photographs include Eugeniusz Wojtas, Josef Wojtas, Blazej Wojtas, Zofia Stops Wojtas, Irena Wojcik, Albina Wojtas Dominiak, Jan Wojtas, and Wanda Wojtas.

System of arrangement

Eugeniusz and Irena Wojtas papers are arranged as three folders.

Indexing terms

Person:

Wojtas, Eugene, 1910-1977.

Wójcik, Irena.

Corporate:

Wildflecken (Displaced persons camp)

Topical Subject:

Poland--History--German occupation, 1939-1945.

Catholics--Nazi persecution--Poland.

Forced labor--Germany.

World War, 1939-1945--Conscript labor--Germany.

World War, 1939-1945--Prisoners and prisons.

Geography:

United States--Emigration and immigration--History.

Częstochowa (Poland)

Kolonia Adampol (Lublin, Poland)

Genre/Form:

Correspondence.

Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Eugeniusz and Irena Wojtas papers, circa 1930-1968 and undated

Folder	Title
1 of 3	Documents, circa 1945-1968
2-3 of 3	Photographs, circa 1930-1951 and undated (2 folders)