

WILHELM BAUMANN PAPERS, 1928-1980

2015.254.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Wilhelm Baumann papers

Dates: 1928-1980 (bulk, 1939-1948)

Accession number: 2015.254.1

Creator: Baumann, Wilhelm

Extent: 1.2 linear feet (2 boxes, 2 oversize folders)

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

Abstract: The Wilhelm Baumann papers consist largely of correspondence, immigration documents, educational records, identification documents, newspapers, and ephemera. The records document the emigration of Baumann and his parents from their native Austria in 1939, his life in the United Kingdom and subsequent classification as an enemy alien, his subsequent deportation to Australia in 1940 on the HMT Dunera, and his experiences in two internment camps in New South Wales and Victoria (Camp Hay and Camp Tatera). The collection also contains an extensive selection of his correspondence with other German and Austrian Jewish émigrés in Australia and elsewhere, his subsequent release from the camps and activities in the Jewish communities of Victoria, and his immigration to the United States, including his reunion with his parents, in 1947.

Languages: German, English, 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.

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Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Wilhelm Baumann papers, 2015.254.1, (Box number), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

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

Processing history: Brad Bauer, June 2015.

Biographical note

Wilhelm Theodor Baumann was born in Vienna, on 11 May 1922. His parents were Jakob Baumann who was born in Gwozdice, Kolomea, Poland (present-day Kolomyia, Ukraine) on 28 Sept 1895 and Anna Baumann (née Steinherz), who was born in Vienna on 20 November 1893. Jakob and Anna were married in Vienna on 22 July 1921, and documents from the period show that Jakob practiced the trade of carpenter. Wilhelm Baumann attended school in Vienna up through 1938, attending both the public schools as well as a Jewish school, where he was instructed in the Torah. With the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, however, he and his parents decided to immigrate to Britain, with Wilhelm leaving first, in March 1939, and arriving in Swansea, Wales, where he and other young Jewish immigrants from Austria were cared for by the local Jewish community and the family of Rabbi J. Freedman. Wilhelm's parents arrived in the following year, but lived instead in Manchester, re-establishing contact with their son as best as they could. However, with the declaration of war between Britain and Germany in late 1939, immigrants like the Baumans were soon forced to register as enemy aliens, and Wilhelm, along with many of the young men he knew from Swansea, were soon detained, and either sent to internment camps elsewhere in Britain or Canada, or as in Wilhelm's case, to Australia.

Following his journey on the HMT *Dunera* in 1940, Wilhelm was interned at Camp Hay, in New South Wales (1940-1942), and then in Camp Tatura, in Victoria (1942-1943). While there, Wilhelm associated with a group of approximately 200 other internees who identified themselves as "strict Orthodox" Jews, who kept kosher and maintained a kosher kitchen in the camps. During this period, his parents had managed, thanks to the help of relatives, to immigrate to the United States in 1941 and settle in Shreveport, Louisiana, where Wilhelm had hoped to join them, but his attempts to immigrate to the United States while he was still interned were fruitless. In March 1943, thanks to the sponsorship of another émigré who owned a fruit farm in Shepparton, Victoria, Wilhelm was released, and worked on this farm, but was also actively involved with the Orthodox Jewish community of nearby Melbourne. As he enjoyed writing songs and plays, his skills were often sought by local Jewish organizations for theatrical productions and other social events, including those they sought to raise funds and garner support for the establishment of the state of Israel following the end of World War II, through the "Land for Liberty" campaign.

During this period, he continued to attempt to immigrate to the United States, which he was permitted to do in 1947. He initially rejoined his parents in Shreveport, but soon moved to New York, where he married Beatrice Blach in 1949. The Baumans (he dropped one "n" in his last name after settling in the United States) raised two sons, and eventually settled in Englewood, New Jersey.

Scope and content of collection

The Wilhelm Baumann papers consist largely of correspondence, immigration documents, educational records, identification documents, newspapers, and ephemera. The records document the emigration of Baumann and his parents from their native Austria in 1939, his life in the United Kingdom and subsequent classification as an enemy alien, his subsequent deportation to Australia in 1940 on the HMT *Dunera*, and his experiences in two internment camps in New South Wales and Victoria (Camp Hay and Camp Tatera). The collection also contains an extensive selection of his correspondence with other German and Austrian Jewish émigrés in Australia and elsewhere, his subsequent release the camps and activities in the Jewish communities of Victoria, and his immigration to the United States, including his reunion with his parents, in 1947.

Included are documents related to the period of the emigration of the Baumann family from Austria, including passports, letters of reference from employers, education records, identification documents, and similar materials.

The section pertaining to Wilhelm Baumann's life in the two Australian internment camps includes correspondence with various authorities, including the U.S. Department of State, regarding his efforts to obtain release from the camps, in the hopes—after early 1941—of being able to immigrate to the United States, to rejoin his parents. In addition, while there are no documents related to the voyage on the *Dunera*, there are many documents about life in the camps after arrival in Australia, including documents related to the kosher kitchen that Baumann worked in; a newsletter produced by internees in Camp Hay, titled "The Boomerang," with artwork by Baumann on the cover; and miscellaneous documents from Baumann's period in the camps, ranging from samples of camp scrip, records of educational courses taken by Baumann in the camp, letters of reference, and documents pertaining to his release and parole in 1943.

By far the most extensive body of documents in this collection is in the form of correspondence received by Baumann, mostly during his period in Australia from 1940 to 1948, but in particular during his internment and in the immediate aftermath. Extensive correspondence from his parents document their efforts to maintain contact with him after his deportation from Britain on the *Dunera*, his father's internment as an enemy alien in a camp on the Isle of Man, his parents' immigration to the United States in February 1941, and their first impressions of New York and of Shreveport, Louisiana, and their adaptation to life in the latter city and preparation for his eventual arrival there. Other family correspondence includes letters from the family of his uncle, Julius Steinherz, in New York, who had facilitated his parents' immigration, as well as returned mail that Baumann had sent to his grandmother in Vienna, Elsa Steinherz, presumably after her deportation to the camps in 1942. The bulk of the remaining correspondence is from other current and former internees, several of whom Baumann befriended while living in Swansea, others of whom were cousins of his, and with whom he stayed in contact during the following years, as they were each deported to different camps for enemy aliens in England, Canada, or Australia, or in the years following their release, when some enlisted to fight in the British Army, and others settled in Australia, Palestine, or other places. A few files also contain correspondence from pen pals who wrote to Baumann in order to encourage him during his internment in the camps. One example, the correspondence of Gisela Heideman, began when a representative of a Jewish women's group visited her home town in Australia, and asked other women who were Jewish emigres to write to men interned in these camps (Heideman's family had immigrated from Germany to Australia a few years earlier, and she often shared reflections about her attempts to assimilate into Australian culture). Additional correspondence from various aid groups, who sought to help the internees of Camp Hay and Camp Tatura, is also included.

The last group of documents, from his post-camp life, including his immigration to the United States, contains documents related to his years in Australia from 1943-1948, as well as items documenting his immigration to the United States in 1948 and its immediate aftermath. Material from his life in Australia include educational records, financial records, arrangements to obtain transport to the United States, including several unsuccessful ships to obtain passage on a ship in 1946-1947, as well as some documents related to his activities in various Jewish communities in Victoria during this period. Included in the latter category are texts of plays, songs, and theatrical productions authored by Baumann, articles he submitted to newspapers for publication, and items related to a theatrical production staged by the "Young Mizrahi," which Baumann helped produce.

Also included are documents relating to Baumann's immediate post-immigration life in the United States, including an art exhibition in Shreveport that he took part in during 1947, correspondence, invitations and other material from his wedding to Beatrice Blach in 1949, and files from synagogues he attended or was affiliated with in the following years.

Two oversize folders also contain Australian newspapers issued on V-E and V-J day in 1945, and a calendar from Melbourne, from 1947. Various drawings, one by Robert Hoffmann, the remainder by Baumann (signed with his nickname, Toby), have been removed from the collection and cataloged individually as artifacts.

System of arrangement

The Wilhelm Baumann papers are arranged in four series:

- Series 1. Biographical
- Series 2. Camp Life
- Series 3. Correspondence
- Series 4. Post-camp life and immigration

Files are generally arranged alphabetically by subject or by name of correspondent within each series.

Indexing terms

Jews--Austria--Vienna.

Jewish refugees--Wales.

Jewish refugees--Australia.

Jewish refugees--Government policy--Australia.

Australia--Emigration and immigration.

Jews--Australia--Victoria.

Jews--Australia--Shepparton (Vic.)

World War, 1939-1945--Concentration camps--Australia.

World War, 1939-1945--Australia--Victoria--Tatura--Prisoners and prisons.

Swansea (Wales)

Melbourne (Vic.)

Shepparton (Vic.)

Shreveport (La.)

CONTAINER LIST

I. Biographical, 1928-1947

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Baumann, Anna; emigration, Austria, 1939
1.2	Baumann, Jakob; emigration, Austria, 1939
1.3	Baumann, Jakob; immigration, United States: affidavit documents from Philip Lieber, 1940, and alien registration, 1946
1.4	Baumann, Jakob; professional documents, 1924-1930
1.5	Baumann, Jakob and Anna; marriage, 1921
1.6	Baumann, Jakob and Anna; naturalization, United States, 1947
	Baumann, Wilhelm
1.7	Education, 1928-1938
1.8	Emigration from Austria, 1939
1.9	Identification, Great Britain, 1940
1.10	Miscellaneous, 1936-1943

II. Camp life, 1941-1943

Box/Folder	Title
1.11	Attempts to gain release from camps, 1941-1943
1.12	"The Boomerang" (newsletter, Camp Hay), No. 12, 16 May 1941
1.13	Correspondence to parents, 1940-1941
1.14	Drawings by Baumann, undated
1.15	Education, 1941-1942
1.16	Financial, including camp scrip
1.17	Kosher kitchen
1.18	Miscellaneous, Camp Hay
1.19	Miscellaneous, Camp Tatura
1.20	Release and parole, 1943

III. Correspondence: Friends and family

Box/Folder	Title
	Baumann, Jakob and Anna
1.21	1940
1.22	1941
1.23	1942
1.24	1943
1.25	1944
1.26	1945-1947
1.27	1949
1.28	Blumenthal, Rabbi H., Sydney and Melbourne, 1943
1.29	Buchbinder, Michael; British Army, Middle East Forces, 1943-1944

1.30	Chary, Heinz; Quebec, London, and Swansea, 1941-1943
1.31	Clark, Alfred; Fitzroy, Victoria, 1942-1943
1.32	Ellen (no last name, Shreveport), 1943-1945
1.33	Feldmann, Eva; Sydney, 1941
1.34	Feuchtwanger, Oscar; Tel Aviv, 1942-1943
1.35	Feibes, F. H.; Melbourne, 1942
1.36	Feldschuh, Emil (Haifa), 1944
1.37	Freedman, Rabbi Joseph, and family (Swansea), 1940-1944
1.38	Grunfeld, Alfred (Sydney), 1941
1.39	Hackenbroch, Josef and Willi (Haifa, Tel Aviv), 1942-1944
1.40	Heideman, Gisela (Seven Hills, NSW), 1941-1945
1.41	Herz, Hermann (Hobart), 1943
1.42	Hofmann, Robert (Camp Tatura and Melbourne), 1943-1944
1.43	Kramer, Robert (New York), 1943-1944
1.44	Lamm, Erwin (8 th Australian Employment Company, St. Kilda, Melbourne), 1942-1945
1.45	Landberger, Willy "Molly" (Australia and Palestine), 1942-1944
1.46	Lewin, Manfred (St. Kilda, Melbourne), 1943
1.47	Levy, Manfred (Carlton), 1943-1944
1.48	Lissauer, M.I., 1943
1.49	Loebenstein, Eli (St. Kilda, Melbourne), 1942-1943
1.50	New Year's greeting cards (various)
1.51	Popper, Josef (Hobart), 1943-1944
1.52	Rapaport, J. (U.S. Army, Camp McCoy, WI and England), 1944
1.53	Reich, Greta (Sydney), 1941
1.54	Rosenbluth, Ernst (England), 1942-1944
2.1	Steinherz, Anna and Julius (New York), 1940-1945
2.2	Steinherz, Elsa (Vienna, mailed sent by Baumann and returned to him), 1943
2.3	Strauss, George (Melbourne), 1943
	Various
2.4	Friends, 1941-1943
2.5	Friends, 1944-1948
2.6	Friends, Swansea, 1941
2.7	Vollmer, Heinz (Camp No. 2, Tatura), 1943
2.8	Wolff, Abi, 1943

IV. Post-camp life and Immigration

Box/Folder	Title
2.9	Art exhibition, Shreveport, 1947
2.10	Australia, ration card, receipts and applications (miscellaneous), 1943-1946
OS 1	Australian newspapers, V-E Day and V-J Day, and related, 1945-1946
OS 2	Calendar, Mitchell's Brooms and Brushes, with map of Melbourne, 1947
2.11	Dunera commemorations (newsletters, clippings), 2000 and undated
2.12	Education, 1943
2.13	Greeting cards, from Beatrice and others, undated
2.14	Immigration to United States, 1945-1947

2.15	Income tax, Australian, 1943-1944
2.16	"Land for Liberty Campaign," Melbourne, 1945-1946
2.17	Newspapers, submission of stories and cartoons, 1944-1945
2.18	Postcards: Australia (Shepparton, Melbourne), Shreveport, New York, and miscellaneous, circa 1944-1949
2.19	Reparations and pension application (Austrian), 1963-1977
2.20	Synagogues, New York and New Jersey, 1952-1980
	Wedding
2.21	Announcement of engagement
2.22	Congratulatory letters from friends and family
2.23	Marriage certificate and mock newsletter from family
2.24	Writings (plays, songs, etc.), 1948 and undated