

ANSBACHER FAMILY PAPERS, approximately 1875-1990 2015.534.2

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Ansbacher family papers

Dates: approximately 1875-1990

Accession number: 2015.534.2

Creator: Ansbacher (Family : Dinkelsbühl, Germany)

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 Ansbacher family papers consist of biographical materials, correspondence, photographs, and printed materials documenting the Ansbacher family from Dinkelsbühl, Germany, Sigrid Ansbacher's deportation to Theresienstadt with her parents, Sigrid's transfer to Auschwitz, her recuperation from typhus in Sweden after liberation, and her immigration to the United States in 1946 to rejoin her parents. The papers include documents from the family's internment in Theresienstadt, a postcard Selma Ansbacher wrote pleading that Sigrid be spared from the Auschwitz convoy, and a postcard Sigrid wrote to her parents using a code to let them know she had reached Auschwitz.

Languages: German, English, Swedish, Czech

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.

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), Ansbacher family papers, 2015.534.2, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Sigrid (Jean) Ansbacher Strauss donated the Ansbacher family papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2015 and 2016. Collections accession as 2015.534.1 and 2016.552.1 have been incorporated into this collection.

Related material: An oral history conducting with Sigrid Strauss on October 29, 1996 that forms part of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive can be viewed onsite at the Museum.

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

Processing history: Processed by Julie Schweitzer, August 2018.

Biographical note

Sigrid Ansbacher (later Jean Strauss, b. 1928) was born in Dinkelsbühl, Germany to Selma Schlossberger (1897-?) and Ludwig Ansbacher (1888-1950) and had two older brothers, Manfred (1922-2012) and Heinz (1925-approximately 1943). Ludwig Ansbacher worked with his father as a cattle dealer and spoke the Lachoudisch dialect. Ludwig later entered the fabrics business in Dinkelsbühl and married Selma and Schlossberger in 1921.

Around 1936, Sigrid's older brother Manfred was sent to an agricultural school in Ahlem (near Hannover) and prepared for emigration to Palestine. In 1939 Manfred was sent via England to Australia, and he changed his last name to Anson. (Sigrid's Uncle Julius Ansbacher also took the name Anson in America.) The situation for Jews grew difficult in Dinkelsbühl, and in 1937 the Ansbachers moved to Frankfurt. Sigrid and Heinz planned to join Manfred in Australia, but after they obtained visas, ships stopped sailing to Australia. In May 1942, Heinz was called for deportation and was killed in Majdanek at age 17.

On Sept. 15, 1942, Sigrid and her parents were sent to Theresienstadt. They were initially spared from deportation to Auschwitz because of Ludwig's status as a wounded WWI veteran. Sigrid lived in the children's home at Theresienstadt and could freely visit her parents. Adults tried to protect the children from the truth of what was happening in Theresienstadt, but the children knew that people were dying in high numbers elsewhere in the camp. Sigrid worked in the gardens, and her mother worked in the "glimmer" (mica) factory.

In October 1944, Sigrid was included on a transport list suspected to be headed for Auschwitz, whose name they knew from rumors. Her mother pleaded for her removal from the transport but was unsuccessful. Sigrid's transport was indeed sent to Auschwitz, her head was shaved, and she sent her parents a postcard using coded script to let them know where she was. She was never tattooed with an Auschwitz prisoner number because six days later she was transferred to Kurzbach, a subcamp of Gross-Rosen. She and her fellow prisoners were forced to dig tank traps in the woods to slow the advancing Russians. Around January 1945 they were evacuated by foot to Gross-Rosen, and ten days later they were sent in open cattle cars to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. Ten days later they were sent by train to Bergen-Belsen where Sigrid was forced to carry tree trunks long distances on starvation rations until the camp was liberated in April.

Sigrid weighed only 32 kg and was suffering from typhus at liberation. She was taken by ambulance to a hospital in Bergen, and in July 1945 she argued to be transferred by hospital ship to Sweden because she did not want to remain in Germany. She was hospitalized in Kalmar. Her parents had been liberated at Theresienstadt in May 1945 and Sigrid's uncle Julius Ansbacher (aka James Anson) in Boston that they were looking for Sigrid. Anson had seen a notice in the *Aufbau* that listed Sigrid among the names of survivors living in Sweden and contacted her to let her know her parents had survived. She transferred to a rehabilitation facility in Hjälmared and then moved to Alingsås where she worked in a chocolate factory while she assembled her American immigration papers.

Sigrid immigrated to New York in December 1946 from Gothenburg, Sweden aboard the SS *Drottningholm* and was reunited with her parents who had immigrated in July 1946. In 1948 she married Fred Strauss (b. Miehlen, Germany, 1926-2013) who had immigrated to America via France and served in the US Army during WW II. Sigrid was naturalized in 1950 and had two children: Larry Strauss (b. 1951) and Marsha Alter (b. 1954). Sigrid's brother Manfred remained in Australia, served in the Australian army during WWII, and subsequently owned a florist shop. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1963, married, and had two children.

Scope and content of collection

The Ansbacher family papers consist of biographical materials, correspondence, photographs, and printed materials documenting the Ansbacher family from Dinkelsbühl, Germany, Sigrid Ansbacher's deportation to Theresienstadt with her parents, Sigrid's transfer to Auschwitz, her recuperation from typhus in Sweden after liberation, and her immigration to the United States in 1946 to rejoin her parents. The papers include documents from the family's internment in Theresienstadt, a postcard Selma Ansbacher wrote pleading that Sigrid be spared from the Auschwitz convoy, and a postcard Sigrid wrote to her parents using a code to let them know she had reached Auschwitz.

Biographical materials include identification papers, Theresienstadt documents, military papers, medical documents, travel and immigration papers, and restitution files documenting the Ansbacher family, Ludwig's WWI military service, the German expropriation of their property, their internment in concentration camps during the Holocaust, their immigration to the United States, and their efforts to receive restitution for losses suffered during the Holocaust.

Letters include notes Sigrid wrote to her parents in Theresienstadt, aboard the transport to Auschwitz, and from Auschwitz; Selma's 1944 letter begging authorities to spare Sigrid from the October transport to Auschwitz; letters updating the family about what happened to them during the Holocaust. Postwar correspondence include letters from Sigrid in Sweden to her parents in America, reply telegrams, and a letter from her uncle James Anson. Additional postwar correspondence documents the family's efforts to receive restitution for losses suffered during the Holocaust.

Photographs depict Sigrid Ansbacher, her parents, and friends before, during, and after the war in Germany, Sweden, and New York and at a reunion of Theresienstadt survivors in 1975. A photograph album includes images of Sigrid with friends in Sweden in 1945 and 1946 and friends and family in Boston, Manila, Melbourne, New York, Sao Paolo, and Vienna from 1945-1947.

Clippings document Sigrid's great-grandmother's 100th birthday, Ludwig and Selma in Theresienstadt, Sigrid in Sweden, Manfred in Australia, postwar Frankfurt, the 1975 reunion of Theresienstadt survivors Sigrid attended, and Theresienstadt scrip. Postcards depict Theresienstadt and the SS *Drottningholm*.

System of arrangement

The Anbacher family papers are arranged as four series:

- Series 1: Biographical materials, 1935-approximately 1990
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1944-1946
- Series 3: Photographs, approximately 1875-1975
- Series 4: Printed material, 1927-1989

Indexing terms

Auschwitz (Concentration camp)

Theresiensadt (Concentration camp)

Jews--Germany--Dinkelsbühl.

Jewish refugees--Australia.

Holocaust survivors--Sweden.

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Reparations.

Frankfurt am Main (Germany)

Sweden.

Australia.

United States--Emigration and immigration.

Correspondence.

Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Biographical materials, 1935-approximately 1990

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Ansbacher, Ludwig, 1935-1946
1.2	Ansbacher, Salomon, 1946
1.3	Ansbacher, Selma, 1939-1946
1.4	Ansbacher, Sigrid, 1942-1946, undated
1.5	Karl, Rosa, 1942
1.6	Leib, Irma Ida Ansbacher, 1945
1.7	Schlossberger/Strauss family tree, approximately 1990

Series 2: Correspondence, 1944-1946

Box/Folder	Title
1.8	Ansbacher, Ludwig ; Anson, James J.; note about addresses, approximately 1945

1.9	Ansbacher, Selma, 1944
1.10	Ansbacher, Sigrid, Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, approximately 1942-1944
1.11	Ansbacher, Sigrid, post war, 1945-1946
1.12	Restitution, 1948-1955
1.13	Telegrams, approximately 1945-1946

Series 3: Photographs, approximately 1875-1975

Box/Folder	Title
1.14	Ansbacher family and friends, approximately 1875-1948
1.15	Ansbacher, Selma and Ludwig, approximately 1925-1947
1.16	Ansbacher, Sigrid, approximately 1942-1946
1.17	Sigrid Jean Ansbacher Strauss at Theresienstadt reunion, 1975
2.1	Photo album, 1945-1947

Series 4: Printed material, 1927-1989

Box/Folder	Title
1.18, OS 1, OS 2	Clippings, 1927-1989 (3 folders)
1.19	Postcards, 1940s