

ROBERT KALDECK PAPERS, 1929-1984
2018.125.2

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

Title: Robert Kaldeck papers

Dates: 1929-1984

Accession number: 2018.125.2

Creator: Kaldeck, Robert, 1910-1998.

Extent: 1.25 linear feet (3 boxes, 2 oversize folders)

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

Abstract: The collection consists of documents and correspondence regarding the experiences of Dr. Robert Kaldeck, including his emigration from Vienna, Austria in September 1938 with the intention of going to Mexico, where he had been granted asylum; his denial of entry into the United States and Mexico; his stay in Havana, Cuba, where he was given refuge after meeting with Cuban leader, Fulgencio Batista in February 1939; and his immigration to the United States in September 1939. The collection also documents his medical career in Austria and the United States, his efforts to rescue his parents Moriz and Ella Kohn and sister Alice Kohn from Austria during the Holocaust, and the post-war search for their fate.

Languages: German, English, Spanish, Yiddish, Portuguese

Administrative Information

Access: There are no known restrictions on access to this material.

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Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Robert Kaldeck papers (2018.125.2), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Robert Kaldeck's daughter E. Smith in 2018. An accretion was also donated in 2018. The previous accessions numbered 2018.125.1 and 2018.129.1 have been incorporated into this collection.

Separated material: The following newspapers were also donated and transferred to the USHMM library: one issue of the Mexican Spanish-language newspaper, *El Dictamen*, from 10 February 1939 and two issues of the Cuban Yiddish newspaper, *Vida Habanera*, 18 February and 6 May 1939.

Related material: Documents related to Robert Kaldeck's connection with the National Committee for the Resettlement of Foreign Physicians, the Boston Committee on Medical Emigres, and the Jewish Family Welfare Association of Boston are available in the holdings of the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota. Records related to Moriz Kohn's Austrian military service are available at the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Kriegsarchiv, Vienna, Austria.

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

Processing history: Adam Fielding, October 2018; updated March 2022; Updated May 2023

Biographical note

Robert Kaldeck (1910-1998) was born Robert Kohn on 2 February 1910 in Vienna, Austria to Moriz (b. 1876) and Ella (b. 1879) Kohn. His father was a World War I veteran and earned a bronze medal for bravery. He had two sisters, Alice (nicknamed Lizzy or Lizzi, b. 1911) and Edith (nicknamed Ditty, 1905-1957). Robert changed his last name to Kaldeck in 1929. He graduated from the University of Vienna Medical School in 1935 and practiced medicine in Vienna.

After the German annexation of Austria in March 1938, Robert made plans to emigrate. In September 1938 he and six other Austrians (Benjamin Wolf Frostig, Walter Kleim, Kurt Kleim, Ernesto Myer, and Egon and Hermina Bachrach) left Austria with the intention of immigrating to Mexico. They sailed from Hamburg to Lisbon, Portugal where they remained until early January 1939. Robert received a transit visa from the American Consulate in Lisbon on 15 December 1938 to go to Mexico via New York and Laredo, Texas. They sailed to New York via England but were detained on Ellis Island from 23 January until 3 February 1939. Robert's transit visa was denied, and he was told he would have to reach Mexico by boat rather than bus, at a significant cost. Robert and the other Austrians boarded the *SS Orizaba* to Mexico and Cuba, but despite having valid paperwork, they were denied entry into Mexico. Future Cuban president Fulgencio Batista was also on board the ship, and Robert and Benjamin Frostig spoke with him in Spanish about their situation as refugees. Batista agreed to allow the Austrians to go to Havana, Cuba. Robert remained in Cuba from 16 February 1939 until 12 September 1939 when he immigrated to the United States.

Robert wrote about his and Frostig's meeting with Batista in several letters in which he referred to their entry into Cuba as "an exceptional landing" and a great success. He also wrote a thank-you letter to Batista, and gave him one of his paintings as an expression of gratitude for allowing him to come to Cuba. An accomplished amateur artist, he left Austria with a series of his charcoal sketches of locations

in Austria. He made watercolor and oil paintings while in Portugal and Cuba and took his art with him to the USA.

While in Cuba, Robert wrote multiple letters to HIAS who helped him obtain an affidavit of support, without which he could not have entered the USA. Alfred G. Baker Lewis, a wealthy man from Boston, signed an affidavit for him. Robert corresponded with his family about their efforts to get sponsors as well. Edith, who was already in England, exerted great effort to obtain affidavits for Ella, Moriz and Lizzy. He continued this effort after arriving in the USA, working with HIAS in Boston.

He settled in Massachusetts, first in Roxbury, then in Brighton, both Boston neighborhoods. As a resident physician, he briefly lived in Clarksburg, West Virginia from March to December 1941 then moved back to Massachusetts, eventually settling in Lowell. Robert married Dorothy Levine in June 1941, in Boston.

Robert learned after the war that his parents, Ella and Moriz, and younger sister Alice perished during the Holocaust. They were deported to the Riga ghetto in 1942. Alice was later deported to the Stutthof concentration camp in 1944.

Scope and content of collection

The collection consists of documents and correspondence regarding the experiences of Dr. Robert Kaldeck, including his emigration from Vienna, Austria in September 1938 with the intention of going to Mexico, where he had been granted asylum; his denial of entry into the United States and Mexico; his stay in Havana, Cuba, where he was given refuge after meeting with Cuban leader, Fulgencio Batista in February 1939; and his immigration to the United States in September 1939. The collection also documents his medical career in Austria and the United States, his efforts to rescue his parents Moriz and Ella Kohn and sister Alice Kohn from Austria during the Holocaust, and the post-war search for their fate.

Biographical materials include clippings, Austrian and American identification papers, a small number of documents related to Robert's sister Edith, and documents related to Robert's search for his family's fate. Included is a 1946 letter from Hans Slomniker informing him that his parents and sister Alice were deported to Riga in 1942. The identification papers include documents related to Robert changing his surname from Kohn to Kaldeck in 1929, birth certificates, government registration documents, marriage certificate, and German passport.

Correspondence includes letters received from other Austrians Robert travelled with, friends, his wife Dorothy Levine, his sister Edith who survived the Holocaust in England, and his parents and sister in Vienna.

Immigration papers include correspondence and paperwork documenting Robert's efforts to emigrate from Austria to Mexico, including his brief stays in Lisbon, Portugal, England, and Ellis Island; Mexico's refusal to allow him into the country; his time as a refugee in Cuba; and his eventual immigration to the United States. Also included are documents regarding his unsuccessful efforts to rescue his parents and sister from Austria.

Medical profession papers include report cards and other material from the University of Vienna, documentation regarding his employment in Austria, and material related to Robert getting licensed to practice medicine in Massachusetts and build his career. Also included are copies of medical journals that include papers authored by Robert.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as four series.

Series 1. Biographical materials, 1929-1984

Series 2. Correspondence, 1937-1963 and undated

Series 3. Immigration, 1938-1967

Series 4. Medical profession, 1929-1972

Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically.

1 negative has been removed to house in cold storage by Conservation for preservation purposes.

Indexing terms

Person:

Kaldeck, Robert, 1910-1998.

Corporate:

Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society of America.

National Council of Jewish Women.

Topical Subject:

Physicians--Austria--Vienna.

Refugees, Jewish--Cuba--Havana.

Refugees, Jewish--Austria.

Geography:

Vienna (Austria)

Lisbon (Portugal)

Havana (Cuba)

United States--Emigration and immigration.

Mexico--Emigration and immigration.

Genre/Form:

Correspondence.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1. Biographical materials, 1929-1984

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Clippings, 1939-circa 1942
1.2	Identification papers, Austria, 1929-1938
1.3	Identification papers, United States, 1941-1945
1.4	Kohn, Edith, 1941-1958
1.5	Search for family's fate, 1945-1947

Series 2. Correspondence, 1937-1963 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.6	Ballak, Leopold, 1941-1942
1.7	Bloch, Voltairine, 1939
1.8	Engel, Leopoldine, 1946-1949
1.9	Friedberg, M., 1939 and undated
1.10	Frostig, Benjamin Wolf and Walter Kleim, 1939-1944
1.11	Glucktstern, Rosa, 1939-1940
1.12	Kaldeck, Dorothy, 1939-1941 and undated
1.13	Kohn, Edith, 1939
1.14	Kohn, Edith, 1940
1.15	Kohn, Edith, 1942-1945
1.16	Kohn, Edith, 1946-1953
1.17	Kohn, Otto, 1941
1.18	Kohn, Richard, 1942-1963
1.19	Kohn family, 1938
2.1	Kohn family, 1939
2.2	Kohn family, 1940
2.3	Kohn family, 1941 and undated
2.4	Ludwerner, Alice, 1938-1939
2.5	"M," 1938-1940
2.6	Messinger, Heinrich, 1939-1943
2.7	Miron, Mary, 1939-1940
2.8	Sinai, Berthold, 1939-1940
2.9	Sinai, Hilda, 1938
2.10	Yomi, 1938-1940 and undated
2.11	Zikau, Grete, 1937-1941
2.12	General, 1938
2.13	General, 1939
2.14	General, 1940-1957 and undated

Series 3. Immigration, 1938-1967

Box/Folder	Title
2.15	Kohn family, 1940-1945
2.16	Selective Service, 1943-1953
2.17	Portugal and Mexico, 1938
2.18, OS 2	Portugal, Mexico, and Cuba, 1939
3.1, OS 1	United States, 1939-1967

Series 4. Medical profession, 1929-1972

Box/Folder	Title
3.2	Medical career, Austria, 1935-1938
3.3	Medical career, United States, 1939-1972
3.4	Medical journals, 1944-1949
3.5	Medical school, Austria, 1930-1935

3.6	Registration examination, United States, 1939-1943
3.7	Report cards, 1929-1934