

JOHN HONIG FAMILY PAPERS, circa 1890-2014
2018.490.6

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: John Honig family papers

Dates: circa 1890-2014 (bulk 1938-1949)

Accession number: 2018.490.6

Creator: Honig, John, 1923-2020

Extent: 2 linear feet (2 boxes, 2 oversize boxes, 3 book enclosures, 1 oversize folder)

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

Abstract: The collection documents the Holocaust-era experiences of John Honig (born Gerhart Honig) and his parents Gertrude and Walter Honig, including their flight from Vienna, Austria to England in September 1938, their immigration to the United States in 1939, and John's enlistment in the United States Army in 1943. Included is biographical material, diaries, a small amount of immigration papers, correspondence, and photographs.

Languages: German, English

Administrative Information

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

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Preferred citation: (Identification of item), John Honig family papers (2018.490.6), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: John Honig donated the John Honig family papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2018 and 2019. The accessions numbered 2018.490.1, 2018.596.1, and 2019.605.1 have been incorporated into this collection.

Separated material: Also donated were three medals and a box (2018.490.2-2018.490.5) and the book *My family* by Katarina Hohenberg Stahre (DS135.A93 A1778 2012).

Related archival materials: John Honig's first wife Erna Kent also donated her family's papers, the Appenzeller and Dukes families papers (2017.517.1).

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, March 2019, Arrangement updated by Adam Fielding in April 2023

Biographical note

John Honig (1923-2020) was born Gerhart Honig on October 30, 1923 in Vienna, Austria. He is the only son of Walter Honig (1896-1952) and Gertrude (Trude) Weiss Honig (1901-1953). Walter was the son of Michael Honig (d. 1927) and Ottilie Lorch (d. 1937), and had one brother, Fritz (1897-1977). Trude was the daughter of the physician Dr. Julius Weiss (1864-1943) and Cecilie Theumann (1871-1920), and had two siblings: Franz (1897-1975) and Liesl (1905-1980, later Liesl Lichtenstein and Lester).

Walter owned a printing shop established by his grandfather. The firm, Jakob Honig and Sohn, was one of the largest printers in Vienna, and it was assumed that John would inherit the firm when he grew up. The family lived in a large apartment in a house owned by operetta composer, Franz Lehar, who lived above them. John attended the Real Gymnasium and was active in the Austrian Boy Scouts (Österreichischer Pfadfinderbund).

After the German annexation of Austria in March 1938, the Honigs immediately felt the effects of antisemitism. John had to attend separate classes from his Christian schoolmates. Walter could not conduct business with non-Jewish customers, and was later forced to shut down the business and turn it over to a non-Jewish competitor. The family began to make plans to emigrate. Trude's sister, Liesl and her husband Josef (Pepi) had already immigrated to England and made arrangements for John to go to England. In September 1938 he flew to England and his aunt and uncle brought him to stay at the home of Reverend Arthur G. Parry, a Baptist minister, who was caring for several other Austrian and German boys. They were also able to bring over Trude's father Julius Weiss to England.

Trude's uncle, Samuel Theumann (or Thewman) previously immigrated to the United States and worked as the director of the Metropolitan Opera of New York. He approached all his friends and asked them to send affidavits for the Honigs. In early spring, Walter and Trude obtained an affidavit of support from one of Samuel's contacts and finalized their plans to emigrate. They first flew to England where they visited John, Liesl and Pepi. From there they sailed in April 1939 to New York on board the RMS *Aquitania*. Walter found work in the printing business.

In April 1940 John (who by now went by John rather than Gerhart) sailed to the United States aboard the MV *Britannic*. He enrolled in Stuyvesant High School and graduated in 1941. He received a full scholarship to Drew University. He was drafted into the United States Army in January 1943 and was stationed in a Signal Base Maintenance Company in Hawaii. After he was discharged in 1946 he resumed

his studies. He graduated from Drew University in 1947, and then earned his Masters' degree from the University of Michigan. He later received his Ph.D from Georgetown University in 1956 and had a successful chemistry career.

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the Holocaust-era experiences of John Honig (born Gerhart Honig) and his parents Gertrude and Walter Honig, including their flight from Vienna, Austria to England in September 1938, their immigration to the United States in 1939, and John's enlistment in the United States Army in 1943. Included is biographical material, diaries, a small amount of immigration papers, correspondence, and photographs.

The biographical material includes family genealogy research, including family trees for the Honig, Weiss, Hohenberg, and Theumann families; birth and death certificates; report cards; biographies; obituaries; John's day planner/diaries from 1933-1942; John's army discharge document; material related to John's involvement with the Austrian Boy Scouts (Österreichischer Pfadfinderbund); documents regarding Walter's service in the Austrian Army during World War I; John's aunt Hermina Lorch's notebook with notes on literature; clippings about Samuel Theumann/Theuman, a relative who was an opera conductor in Vienna; and papers of Gertrude's brother Franz Weiss. Additionally, there is a scrapbook of theatrical programs kept by Gertrude and Walter with programs, tickets, and other ephemera related to shows they attended in Vienna and New York.

The immigration papers primarily document Gertrude and Walter's immigration from England to the United States in April 1939. Included is a program from St. Paul's Cathedral in London, a KLM flight pamphlet, a passenger list from the RMS *Aquitania*, and a list of belongings shipped from Vienna to New York (none of which arrived). Immigration papers of John's consist of a Deutsche Luftansa luggage tag from his flight from Vienna to London in 1938 and a telegram to his parents announcing his arrival in New York aboard the MV *Britannic* on 1 April 1940.

The bulk of the correspondence consists of letters in English to John from his parents during his army service, 1943-1945. Other correspondence includes letters to Gertrude from her brother Franz, letters to Gertrude and Walter from Reverend Arthur Parry who cared for John while he was in England, and letters from Gertrude's sister Liesl and her husband Josef (Pepi). Also includes donor-provided translations of select letters from Gertrude and Walter, 1938-1939.

Photographs include pre-war, wartime, and post-war depictions of the Honig, Theumann, and Weiss families, and John and his parents. Also included is a photocopy of Arthur Parry and a small photograph album documenting John's time in England.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as four series.

Series 1. Biographical material, 1896-2014 and undated

Series 2. Immigration, 1939-1940

Series 3. Correspondence, 1918-1949 and undated

Series 4. Photographs, circa 1890-1946 and undated

Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically.

Indexing terms

Person:

Honig, John, 1923-

Honig, Gertrude, 1901-1953.

Honig, Walter, 1896-1952.

Corporate:

United States. Army.

Topical Subject:

Jews--Austria--Vienna.

Personal narratives.

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

Jewish refugees--England.

Jewish soldiers--United States.

Geography:

Vienna (Austria)

London (England)

United States--Emigration and immigration.

Genre/Form:

Diaries.

Letters.

Photographs.

Photograph albums.

Scrapbooks.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1. Biographical material, 1896-2014 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Family genealogy
1.2	Honig, Gertrude, 1901-1953
2.12-1.14	Honig, John: Austrian Boy Scouts material, 1936-1937
1.3	Honig, John: Biographical papers, 1923-1946 and undated
2.15	Honig, John: Diary, 1933-1934
2.16	Honig, John: Diary with enclosures, 1936-1937
2.17	Honig, John: Diary with enclosures, 1937-1938
1.4, BE 1	Honig, John: Diary with enclosures, 1939
1.5, BE 2	Honig, John: Diary with enclosures, 1940
1.6, BE 3	Honig, John: Diary with enclosures, 1942
1.7, OS 1	Honig, Walter, 1902-1952
1.8	Honig family, 1896, 2014
1.9	Lorch, Hermina, 1897, 1920, undated
1.10	Thewman, Samuel, 1929-2009

1.11	Weiss, Franz, 1939-1975
1.12, 3	Scrapbook of theater programs with enclosures, 1934-1942

Series 2. Immigration, 1939-1940

Box/Folder	Title
1.13	Immigration, 1939-1940

Series 3. Correspondence, 1918-1949 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.14	Honig, Gertrude and Walter and relatives, 1918, 1939-1948
1.15	Honig, Gertrude and Walter, translations, 1938-1939
1.16	Honig, John, 1941-1942
1.17	Honig, John, 1943
1.18	Honig, John, 1944
1.19	Honig, John, 1945-1946
1.20	Honig, John, 1947-1949
2.1-2.2	Honig, John, undated (2 folders)
2.3	Lichtenstein, Josef and Liesl, 1941-1944 and undated
2.4	Parry, Arthur, 1938-1948

Series 4. Photographs, circa 1890-1946 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
2.5	Honig, John, 1928-1943
2.6	Honig, Walter, 1938 and undated
2.7	Honig family, 1894-1946
2.8	Parry, Arthur, 1939 (photocopy)
2.9	Theumann, Annie and Samuel, undated
2.10	Theumann family, undated
2.11	Weiss family, circa 1890-1946 and undated
4	Photograph album: London and Brighton, 1938-1939