

## **ZEHNGUT AND WEISS FAMILIES PAPERS, circa 1900-2005**

### **2018.504.1**

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

Title: Zehngut and Weiss families papers

Dates: circa 1900-2005

Accession number: 2018.504.1

Creator: Zehngut (Family : Vienna, Austria)

Additional creator: Weiss (Family : Vienna, Austria)

Extent: 1.0 linear foot (1 box, 1 oversize box, 4 oversize folders)

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

Abstract: The Zehngut and Weiss families papers consist of biographical materials, correspondence, photographs, and research material relating to the Zehngut and Weiss families from Austria. The papers document the immigration of Inge and Kitty Weiss among the "50 children" brought to the United States from Vienna by Brith Sholom and Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus, as well as the immigration of their parents Stella Zehngut Weiss and Leon Weiss.

Languages: English, German

#### **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), Zehngut and Weiss families papers (2018.504.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Tina Michaels Coverman donated the Zehngut and Weiss families papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2018. Tina Coverman is the daughter of Inge Weiss Michaels.

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

Separated materials: Tina Michaels Coverman also donated a swimming medal (2018.504.2) and a copy of *Wien seit 60 Jahren* (DB854 .W54 1908) to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Related materials: The Museum also holds an oral history interview conducted with Kitty Weiss Penner (2016.240.1).

Processing history: Julie Schweitzer, October 2019

### **Biographical note**

#### Zehngut family

Stella Zehngut Weiss (1903-1963) was born July 4, 1903 in Vienna, Austria, to Ernestina (née Deutsch) and Julius Zehngut, who owned a photography studio in Vienna. Stella had two sisters, Olga Zehngut Uhrmacher and Annie Zehngut Tager. Olga Uhrmacher had two children, Herta and Freddy. Olga's husband left his family and moved to Caracas, Venezuela, Olga stayed with her parents in Vienna, and Herta and Freddy went to England on a Kindertransport. Herta lived with a family as their governess. Freddy lived with a tailor's family and learned the tailor trade but was not treated well. He changed his last name to Harding, married, and later divorced. He had one daughter and twin grandchildren. Herta married a man with the surname Rennie and had five children, one of whom was disabled. Julius Zehngut died of natural causes in 1942. Ernestina and Olga were deported to Theresienstadt, transferred to Auschwitz, and killed. Annie Tager's husband deserted her, and she had no children. She survived the Holocaust, possibly spending time in an internment camp in France, and immigrated to the United States after the war with help from her surviving sister Stella.

Stella Zehngut and her husband, master carpenter Leiser (Leon) Weiss (1893-1980) from Knihynicze, Poland (now Kniahynychi, Ukraine), immigrated to the United States in August 1939. Their daughters Inge and Kitty had immigrated in June as part of the "50 children" rescued by Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus and the Brith Sholom organization. The family settled in the Bronx, and Leon operated a carpenter shop and invested in New York apartments. Leon and Stella resettled in Florida in 1958.

#### Weiss family

Inge Weiss Michaels (1931-2002) was born February 1, 1931 in Vienna, Austria to carpenter Leiser (Layzer, Leon) Weiss (1893-1908) and his wife Stella Weiss (née Zehngut, 1903-1963). Inge had one sister, Kitty (born August 7, 1933, Vienna). Leiser was the oldest child and supported his large Polish family after the death of his father. He was talented and intelligent, worked as a carpenter, and owned real estate. The family lived in a home on one of the inner ring streets in Vienna and also had a summer home. Stella was always able to buy a new hat for the holidays, which was an important status symbol at the time.

One of Leon's apprentices was a member of the Hitler Youth and warned Leon of trouble. One day he let Leon know that the Nazis were coming, so the family hid at home with the lights out and were safe. Leon had previously received an affidavit from his mother and younger brother living in the U.S., who told him to immigrate first and then send for his family, but Leon secured a visa for Stella as well. Stella convinced Leon to send Inge and Kitty to America in June 1939 as part of the "50 children" rescued by Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus and the Brith Sholom organization. Stella and Leon sent jewelry ahead to his mother and brother, but his brother turned out to be a gambler and squandered their assets. Stella and Leon Weiss immigrated in August 1939 and were reunited with Inge and Kitty. They first lived with Leon's mother and brother, then in another apartment, and later bought a house with a porch in the Bronx. Leon was initially angry about purchasing the house in a Catholic neighborhood until he realized what a good deal they had made. He rented a place near the Grand Concourse for his carpentry shop, and Stella was a homemaker.

Inge and Kitty attended public schools in New York. Inge was initially placed in a lower grade at school while she learned English, but within a year she joined her own grade. After high school, Inge's mother wanted her to learn a trade and become a seamstress instead of attending college. Kitty attended college, studied music and arts, and became an art teacher and artist. She married a man with the last name Penner and had two sons, Charlie and Jonathon. Charlie Penner lives in Ann Arbor and has two daughters, Julie and Leah. Jonathon Penner lives in LA and has two children, Cooper and Ava.

Inge wanted to be independent from her family and got married young to Bernard Wagman. He was dishonorably discharged from the military, but Inge thought their marriage would survive because he was from a well-to-do Jewish family. His parents bought them a house on Long Island and a liquor store for Bernie to run, and their daughter Tina was born in 1950. Unfortunately, Bernie was a gambler, and when Inge learned he was spending the cash from the store to fund his gambling debts, she left him. She and Tina moved in with her parents, and Inge worked as a film editor and held another job to supplement her income.

Inge married Charles Michaels, who had two children from his first marriage. In 1957 they moved to a town outside Pittsburgh where Charlie worked as a salesman and Inge worked for Alcoa. After a year, they moved to Florida where Charlie had family. Inge initially found it difficult to find a job, but eventually became a secretary in a real estate office and later obtained her sales and broker's licenses. Her parents also moved to Florida in 1958, selling the New York apartments they had invested in and purchasing property in Coral Gables. Charlie also went into real estate, encouraged and tutored by Inge in the business. They established Michael's Real Estate around 1960.

Inge and Charlie were strict parents. Inge wanted Tina to become a teacher. Tina attended the University of Florida in Gainesville for one year, but her parents made her return home and attend to the University of Miami. In 1971, Tina married physician Michael Coverman. They lived in Seattle for four years while he was a resident and then two years in Nebraska while he served in the Air Force and she obtained her MA in Business Administration. They then moved to Texas and raised two daughters, Anya and Tess.

### **Scope and content of collection**

The Zehngut and Weiss families papers consist of biographical materials, correspondence, photographs, and research material relating to the Zehngut and Weiss families from Austria. The papers document the

immigration of Inge and Kitty Weiss among the “50 children” brought to the United States from Vienna by Brith Sholom and Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus, as well as the immigration of their parents Stella Zehngut Weiss and Leon Weiss.

Biographical materials include school records, a birth certificate and naturalization certificate, resumes, and a memorial program and obituary documenting Inge Weiss as well as an autograph book Inge used to collect signatures and poems from family members and friends before leaving Vienna. This series also includes Leon and Stella Weiss’ German passports “for foreigners” and American naturalization certificates and a family tree documenting the ancestors of Inge’s granddaughter Anya Coverman.

Correspondence includes a letter alerting Stella Weiss that Inge and Kitty were well settled in America, a letter signed by Gilbert Kraus that enclosed vaccination certificates, and a congratulatory letter on the birth of Inge’s daughter, Tina. Later correspondence includes a 70<sup>th</sup> birthday reception invitation in honor of Louis Levine, a 1991 letter from Kitty to Inge commenting on their family’s fate, and a photocopy of a letter from Kitty to the Austrian Consulate asking to begin a restitution claims against Austria.

Photographs primarily consist of prewar images of the Weiss family and their relatives and friends in Austria. They depict Leon, Stella, Inge, and Kitty Weiss; Ernestina, Julius, Olga, and Annie Zehngut; Herta, Ronnie, and Sheila Rennie; Joseph and Keith Uhrmacher; and Arthur, Emil, Grete, and Paulette Kronberg. The Kronberg family was related to Ernestina Zehngut’s sister, Carolina Kronberg. Several of the Zehngut photographs were taken at the Zehngut photography studio. The photograph album primarily depicts the Weiss family and their relatives and friends in and around Vienna before World War II. The album also includes photographs of Inge and Kitty and the other “50 children” with Gilbert and Eleanor Kraus aboard the ship that brought them to America in 1939.

Research files include correspondence, notes, and printed materials documenting Inge’s search for information about the arrival of the “50 children.” Correspondence includes Inge’s letters to newspapers and the National Archives searching for copies of photographs and ship manifests documenting the arrival of the “50 children.” Notes include a name list of the “50 children.” Printed materials include original and photocopied clippings describing the arrival of the “50 children,” B’rith Sholom’s work, and Steven Pressman’s book about the “50 children.”

### **System of arrangement**

The Zehngut and Weiss families papers are arranged in four series:

- Series 1: Biographical materials, 1931-2002
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1939-1991
- Series 3: Photographs, circa 1900-2000
- Series 4: Research, 1939-2005

### **Indexing terms**

#### **Personal names**

- Kraus, Eleanor, 1903-1989.
- Kraus, Gilbert, 1897-1975.

### Corporate names

B'rith Sholom (Philadelphia, Pa.)

### Topical terms

Jews--Austria--Vienna.

World War, 1939-1945--Jews--Rescue--Austria--Vienna.

Jewish children in the Holocaust--Austria.

Jewish refugees.

### Geographic terms

Vienna (Austria)

Austria--Emigration and immigration.

United States--Emigration and immigration.

### Genre terms

Certificates.

Correspondence.

Photographs.

## CONTAINER LIST

### Series 1: Biographical materials, 1931-2002

Box/Folder	Description
1.1	Weiss, Inge, 1931, 1939-1940, 1946-1950, 1975-1977, 2002
1.2	Weiss, Inge, Autograph book, 1939
1.3	Weiss, Leiser (Leon), 1939, 1944
1.4	Weiss, Stella, 1939, 1945
OS 1	Family tree, circa 1990s

### Series 2: Correspondence, 1939-1991

Box/Folder	Description
1.5	Correspondence, 1939, 1950, 1958, 1991

### Series 3: Photographs, circa 1900-2000

Box/Folder	Description
1.6	Kronberg family, circa 1900-1946
1.7	Rennie family, circa 1946-1953
1.8	Uhrmacher family, circa 1939-1957
1.9-1.10, OS 2	Weiss, Inge, circa 1931-2000 (2 folders, 1 oversize folder)
1.11	Weiss, Kitty, circa 1938-1950

1.12	Weiss, Leon (Leiser), circa 1918-1950
1.13, OS 3	Weiss, Stella, circa 1953
1.14	Weiss family, 1931-1943
1.15	Zehngut family, circa 1900-1941
1.16	Friends and family, circa 1936-1952
2, 1.17	Photograph album, circa 1914-1947

**Series 4: Research, 1939-2005**

<b>Box/Folder</b>	<b>Description</b>
1.18	Correspondence, 1979, 1986-1992
1.19	Notes, circa 1979-1992
1.20, OS 4	Printed material, 1939, circa 2001-2005