

**WELLISCH AND AUERBACH FAMILIES PAPERS, 1925-1961**  
**2018.646.1**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
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**Descriptive summary**

Title: Wellisch and Auerbach families papers

Dates: 1925-1961

Accession number: 2018.646.1

Creator: Wellisch (Family : Vienna, Austria)

Additional creator: Auerbach (Family : Vienna, Austria)

Extent: 1.5 linear foot (2 boxes, 1 oversize box)

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

Abstract: The Auerbach and Wellisch families papers include biographical materials, correspondence, a photocopy of a diary, and photographs. The records document the Auerbach and Wellisch families from Vienna, Austria, Kurt Wellisch's arrest by the Gestapo and incarceration in several Viennese prisons following the German annexation of Austria, his escape to Zurich with his wife Frieda, and their immigration to the United States. The papers also document their unsuccessful efforts to bring Frieda's parents, Ignatz and Rosine Auerbach, to the United States, and the Auerbachs' deportation to the Łódź ghetto.

Languages: German, English, Hungarian, French

**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: Wellisch and Auerbach families papers (2018.646.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Fred Wellisch, son of Kurt and Frieda Wellisch and grandson of Ignatz and Rosine Auerbach, donated the Wellisch and Auerbach families papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2018.

Separated material: Fred Wellisch also donated two publications to the Museum: *Erzählung von Israels Auszug aus Aegypten, für die beiden ersten Abende des Pesach-Festes, mit einer deutscher Uebersetzung und Illustrationen* (2018.646.2) and *Das Buch Esther mit worttreuer Uebersetzung und mit Erklärungen* (2018.646.3).

Processing History: Julie Schweitzer, August 2019

### **Biographical note**

Wellisch family:

Kurt Wellisch (1910-1982) was born on September 10, 1910 in Vienna, Austria. His parents were Sam (Samu, Samuel) Wellisch (1881-1971), born October 12, 1881 in Hungary and Laura (Lina) Wellisch (née Strauchbaum, 1882-1967), born October 15, 1882 in Vienna, Austria. He also had a younger brother Heinz (1917-2010), who was born December 13, 1917. The family lived at Borseplatz 6 in the First District of Vienna. Samu was a manufacturer's representative; at one point Laura owned a fashionable clothing store. Kurt attended the Wasa Gymnasium and then the University of Vienna, graduating with a doctorate in law.

Kurt Wellisch married Frieda Auerbach (1912-1990) in Vienna's Stadttempel on June 13, 1937, and they lived with his parents at Borseplatz 6. Kurt practiced law until shortly after the Anschluss when the Nazis barred Jews from the profession. He was arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo on May 4, 1938 and incarcerated in various Viennese jails for six weeks. He meticulously recorded his appointments with the Gestapo as well as his arrest, imprisonment and transfer among these jails in his 1938 lawyer's appointment book. On June 14th, the day after his first wedding anniversary, he was released on the condition that he and his family leave Austria. During his incarceration, Frieda had secured the necessary exit documents and transit visas and, on July 30<sup>th</sup>, Kurt, Frieda, and his brother Heinz fled Vienna and traveled to Switzerland via Italy, arriving in Zurich on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. They remained in Zurich for approximately eighteen months, working at various jobs under the auspices of the Zionist Congress. After receiving the necessary affidavits, they booked passage on what was to be the last voyage of the Italian ship *Rex* out of Genoa on May 1, 1940. Upon their arrival in the United States, they spent several weeks in New York, ultimately settling in Miami, Florida. Kurt worked as an elevator operator, piano salesman and bookkeeper. He later went back to school at the University of Miami, receiving both his Bachelor of Business Administration and his J.D. He became a C.P.A. and practiced probate and tax law. He also did reparations work for German and Austrian refugees. Frieda initially worked as a milliner and salesperson in several Miami department stores. She later became a homemaker. They had one son, Fred Allen Wellisch, born October 12, 1947 in Miami, Florida. Kurt and Frieda were divorced in 1978. Kurt remarried but Frieda remained single. Kurt died on April 15, 1982. Frieda died on June 26, 1990.

Kurt's father Samu was already in Zurich by the time Kurt, Frieda and Heinz arrived there. He remained in Switzerland during the war and then immigrated to the United States, settling in Miami, Florida where he became a part-time bookkeeper. Kurt's mother Laura left Vienna for Budapest in November 1939

and was later able to immigrate to the United States. She joined Samu in Miami, Florida, where she helped Samu with his bookkeeping. Samu died on October 13, 1971. Laura died in November of 1967.

Auerbach family:

Frieda Auerbach (1912-1990) was born on July 12, 1912 in Vienna, Austria. She was the only child of Ignatz (1873-1942) and Rosine (Regina) Auerbach (née Loewy, 1875-1942). Ignatz was born April 24, 1873 in Szenice, Czechoslovakia. Regine was born on November 23, 1875 in Pressburg, Czechoslovakia (also known as Bratislava or Pozsony). The family lived at Kirchengasse 20 in Vienna's Seventh District. Ignatz owned a hat factory at 28 Neubaugasse; Rosine was a homemaker. Frieda completed an apprenticeship at her father's hat factory and became a milliner. She married Kurt Wellisch (1910-1982) in Vienna on June 13, 1937. They fled Austria via Italy with Kurt's brother Heinz on July 30, 1938, arriving in Zurich, Switzerland on September 22nd. They immigrated to the United States aboard the Italian ship *Rex* out of Genoa on May 1, 1940 and settled in Miami, Florida.

During their 18-month exile in Switzerland and subsequent settlement in the United States, Kurt and Frieda exchanged a voluminous correspondence with Frieda's parents, Ignatz and Regine, who remained in Vienna. Some of the letters were also addressed to Kurt's mother Laura before she left for Budapest. Kurt kept copies of all the letters he sent to Vienna and preserved the letters he received from Ignatz and Regine. This correspondence began on August 3, 1938 and ended on September 4, 1941. Although many of the letters discussed family matters and everyday occurrences, they were primarily concerned with finding ways of getting Ignatz and Regine out of Austria. They were urged to press their case with the U.S. Consulate regarding their refugee status and quota numbers, to contact the Vienna Israelitische Kultusgemeinde to expedite matters, to consider immigration to various countries, and to write to numerous individuals requesting affidavits, including a relative in Montana by the name of Silas Auerbach. Simultaneously, Kurt and Frieda were doing their best from America to move the United States Consulate to action by presenting evidence that because of their secure employment status and net worth, Ignatz and Regine would not become public charges. Samu joined the correspondence from Zurich starting in March of 1941 and many of his letters deal with whether tickets for Ignatz and Regine should be booked on either the Portuguese ship *Serpa Pinto* out of Lisbon or the Spanish steamer *Motomar* out of Cadiz.

Despite these efforts, Ignatz and Regine were unable to escape the Holocaust. Their quota numbers never came up, nor were they able to obtain the necessary exit or transit visas. Additionally, the American consulate in Vienna was closed and, as of July 1, 1941, visas had to be procured through Washington. The hat factory at 28 Neubaugasse was expropriated by the Nazis, apparently sometime in 1939 and Ignatz and Rosine were relocated from their home at 20 Kirchengasse to the 2nd District (their last Vienna address was Grosse Sperlgasse 32/8). They were ultimately deported to Łódź, Poland by train on October 19, 1941 and then to Chelmno on May 4, 1942, where they are believed to have been killed shortly after arrival.

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

The Auerbach and Wellisch families papers include biographical materials, correspondence, a photocopy of a diary, and photographs. The records document the Auerbach and Wellisch families from Vienna, Austria, Kurt Wellisch's arrest by the Gestapo and incarceration in several Viennese prisons following the German annexation of Austria, his escape to Zurich with his wife Frieda, and their immigration to the

United States. The papers also document their unsuccessful efforts to bring Frieda's parents, Ignatz and Rosine Auerbach, to the United States, and the Auerbachs' deportation to the Łódź ghetto.

Biographical materials primarily document Ignatz and Rosine Auerbach and Kurt and Frieda Wellisch. Auerbach records include Rosine's birth certificate and a transport list, Łódź ghetto records, and AJDC records documenting Rosine's and Ignatz's deportation from Vienna to Łódź. Wellisch records include records documenting Frieda's education and employment, a copy of her Third Reich passport, a confirmation of her birth, a copy of Kurt's and Frieda's marriage certificate, and a copy of a photograph of the couple aboard the *Rex* en route to New York. This series also includes a 1925 letter from Ignatz' American cousin Louis Auerbach Mand and a 1940 identification card for Kurt's father Sam. Some of the records in this series are photocopies.

The correspondence series primarily consists of a collection of Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence maintained by Kurt Wellisch in a binder. These letters, exchanged between Ignatz and Rosine Auerbach in Vienna and Kurt and Frieda Wellisch in Zurich, New York, and Miami as well as with Sam Wellisch in Zurich and Miami document the family's efforts to bring Ignatz and Rosine to the United States. Some of Kurt and Frieda's letters to her parents are also addressed to Kurt's mother, Laura, who lived in Vienna and then Budapest before immigrating to the United States. There are occasional additions to letters by other relatives including Sam's sisters Hedy and Gisi Wellisch and Frieda's uncle Sandor Loewy. Sandor was actively involved with, and possibly part owner of, the hat factory owned by Ignatz at 28 Neubaugasse that was appropriated by the Nazis. Hedy, Gisi, and Sandor were able to immigrate to the United States. These folders also include a few official documents such as visa denials. Most of the letters are originals, but three are photocopies. The Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence is followed by eleven private letters from Rosine Auerbach to Frieda Wellisch that Frieda separated and labeled "Privat von meinem liebsten Mutter" (private from my beloved mother).

Jail correspondence and receipts pre-date the Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence and document the arrest of Kurt Wellisch following the German annexation of Austria. Kurt was an attorney in Vienna and was swept up in the purge of Jewish professionals. He was incarcerated in various Viennese jails from May 4th through June 14, 1938, but he was able to correspond with Frieda. Occasionally other family members added comments and well wishes to Frieda's postcards. These folders also contain receipts from money she brought him so that he could buy supplies while in jail.

Mela Netti (Melanie Hausman, 1908-1943) was a relative of Sam Wellisch's, perhaps his niece. She wrote to Kurt, Frieda, Heinz, and Sam Wellisch from Vienna and Amsterdam. Her letters are often humorous in style, provide a picture of life as a Jewish émigré in Amsterdam, list various cultural events she attended, document her marriage to Paul Hausman, and ask questions about life in America, but they also lament her status. Her November 14, 1941 letter appears to reference Regine and Ignatz's deportation from Vienna. She was sent to the Herzogenbusch concentration camp in Vught in March 1943. The last piece of correspondence is a September 20, 1943 postcard she wrote from Vught to Sam. She was transferred to Westerbork transit camp the same day, deported to Auschwitz the following day, and killed. This folder also includes one letter from Kurt Wellisch to Mela from aboard the *Rex* while he was on his way to the United States.

Family correspondence includes prewar and wartime correspondence from aunts Amalie and Berta Auerbach and aunt and uncle Rosa and Josef (Weiss?) in Vienna and postwar correspondence from Nina Heller in Montevideo, Uruguay and from aunt Henny (Giovanna Traubner?) in Gorizia, Italy.

Photocopies of pages from Kurt's 1938 law diary (day planner) document the dates of his meetings with the Gestapo, his incarceration and transfer to various Viennese jails, his release six weeks later, and his flight from Vienna through various places in Italy until his arrival in Zurich.

Photographs include depictions of the Auerbach and Lowy hat factory and showroom at Neubaugasse 28, Vienna before the war; a wedding portrait of Kurt and Frieda; Ignatz and Rosine on their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary; Heinz Wellisch and his girlfriend Jetty Sontag; and relative Mela Nettel Hausman.

### **System of arrangement**

The Wellisch and Auerbach families papers are arranged in four series:

- Series 1: Biographical material, 1925-1961
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1938-1956 (bulk 1938-1943)
- Series 3: Diary, 1938
- Series 4: Photographs, approximately 1937-1941

### **Indexing terms**

#### **Personal Names**

Wellisch, Kurt, 1910-1982.  
Wellisch, Frieda, 1912-1990.  
Auerbach, Ignatz, 1873-1942.  
Auerbach, Rosine, 1875-1942.

#### **Topical Terms**

Jewish families--Austria--Vienna.  
Jewish refugees--Switzerland.  
Jewish refugees--United States.  
Jails--Austria--Vienna.  
World War, 1939-1945--Deportations from Austria.

#### **Geographic Names**

Amsterdam (Netherlands)  
Gorizia (Italy)  
Montevideo (Uruguay)  
Vienna (Austria)  
Zurich (Switzerland)  
United States--Emigration and immigration--History.

#### **Genre**

Correspondence.  
Diaries.  
Photographs.

## CONTAINER LIST

### Series 1: Biographical material, 1925-1961

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Auerbach, Ignatz and Rosine, 1925, 1939-1942 (some photocopies)
1.2	Wellisch, Kurt and Frieda, 1926, 1938-1940, 1961 (some photocopies)

### Series 2: Correspondence, 1938-1956 (bulk 1938-1943)

Box/Folder	Title
1.3	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, August 1938
1.4	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, September 1938
1.5	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, October 1938
1.6	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, November 1938
1.7	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, December 1938
1.8	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, January 1939
1.9	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, February 1939
1.10	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, March 1939
1.11	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, April 1939
1.12	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, May 1939
1.13	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, June 1939
1.14	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, July 1939
1.15	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, August 1939
1.16	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, September 1939
1.17	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, October 1939
1.18	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, November 1939
1.19	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, December 1939
2.1	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, January 1940
2.2	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, February 1940
2.3	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, March 1940
2.4	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, April 1940
2.5	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, May-June 1940
2.6	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, July-August 1940
2.7	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, September-October 1940
2.8	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, November-December 1940
2.9	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, January-February 1941
2.10	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, March 1941
2.11	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, April-May 1941
2.12	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, June-July 1941
2.13	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, August-September 1941
Box 3	Auerbach-Wellisch correspondence, empty binder
2.14	Auerbach, Rosine to Frieda Wellisch, "Private from my beloved mother," 1938-1939
2.15	Wellisch, Kurt, outgoing from jail, 1938
2.16	Wellisch, Kurt, incoming to jail, 1938

2.17	Jail correspondence and commissary receipts, 1938
2.18-2.19	Nettl, Mela, 1938-1943 (2 folders)
2.20	Family correspondence, 1938-1939
2.21	Family correspondence, 1940
2.22	Family correspondence, 1941
2.23	Family correspondence, 1956

### Series 3: Diary, 1938

Box/Folder	
2.24	Pages from Kurt Wellisch's law diary showing the dates of his meetings with the Gestapo, his dates of incarceration and transfer to various Viennese jails, and his release six weeks later, 1938 (photocopies)
2.25	Pages from Kurt Wellisch's law diary showing the dates of his flight from Vienna through various places in Italy until his arrival in Zurich, 1938 (photocopies)

### Series 4: Photographs, approximately 1937-1941

Box/Folder	
2.26	Auerbach and Lowy hat factory and showroom, approximately 1930s
2.27	Family photographs, 1937-1941