

“With all our love and kisses” Last Words Before Deportation



Between December 1938 and May 1942, Clara and Max Müller regularly wrote to their two sons, Meinhold in Sweden and Willi in Palestine. The eldest of the three sons, Herbert, was still in Germany; in July 1941, he too managed to escape with his wife, Flora, née Wolf, and left for the United States. Max and Clara, however, were unable to leave for, despite all the efforts of family to effect their escape, no country accepted them as refugees. On 8 May 1942, Clara and Max wrote the last card: “We leave tomorrow morning.” On 9 May 1942, they left Themar — forever — and were deported “to the East” to Bełżyce Ghetto near Lublin.

Meinhold and Willi Müller kept these precious letters and postcards and because of them, we have some insight into the world of the Jewish community in Themar during these terrible years. We hear the initial optimism, the increasing pessimism and the eventual despair as they realize that they will not be able to join their sons in a better world.

On 9 May 2012 — 70 years after the deportation of Max and Clara Müller to Bełżyce Ghetto — those who live in Themar today met with Sharon Meen and Dankward Sidow, who transcribed the old handwriting used by Max and Clara into modern German. The photographs and letter extracts presented here allowed us in some small measure to listen to the voices of Max and Clara Müller.



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Title photo: l/r: Clara Müller, née Nussbaum, Herbert, Meinhold,
Willi and Max Müller, c.1935.

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The Family of Salomon & Karoline Müller

For close to a century, members of the family of Salomon & Karoline Müller played important roles in the lives of Marisfeld and Themar. Salomon Müller, son of Meier Müller, was born 12 January 1802 in Bauerbach, Thüringen, about 20 km west of Marisfeld. In the late 1820s, his father, Meier, was posted to Marisfeld as the Lehrer/religious teacher. Salomon was in his 20s at that time and it is probably during this period that he met Karoline Friedmann. When Salomon and Karoline married is unknown but around the mid-1800s, they had four children: Dina, who married Meyer Walther and moved to Hildburghausen; Mayer, b. 1849, who moved to Themar in the 1860s; Nathan, b. 1851, who remained in Marisfeld all his life, and Simon, who, we believe, married Ricca Baer and moved to Meiningen.



Salomon Müller's grave, Marisfeld Jewish Cemetery. 2011

Dina MÜLLER
b. unknown
+ Meyer WALTHER
d. unknown

Mayer MÜLLER
b. 1849
+ Babette FRIEDMANN
d. 1907

Salomon MÜLLER
b. 1802
+ Karoline FRIEDMANN
d. 1890

Nathan MÜLLER
b. 1851
+ Bertha SCHWED
d. 1923

Simon MÜLLER
b. 1884
+ Ricca BAER
d. 1911

It was Salomon, Karoline, Mayer and Nathan who played the most significant roles in Marisfeld and Themar. Salomon Müller, age 64, was among those who left Marisfeld in the years after 1866, after fire had reduced much of the village to ashes. In Themar, Salomon became a successful businessmen: in 1872, the Warenhaus S.M. Müller (Department Store) opened; the initials, "S.M.," we believe, stand for his and his father's names — Salomon and Meier. The business flourished, growing along with the small city's population; in 1890 when Salomon died, two decades after his arrival, the population of Themar had grown from 1600 to 1800. The number of Jewish citizens had increased from 91 to 114 and Salomon was vice-president of the Jewish congregation. Salomon was buried in the Marisfeld Jewish cemetery. Karoline is buried next to him but time has erased the inscription on the stone.

At the time of Salomon's and Karoline's deaths, the next generation of Müllers was already making its mark on Marisfeld and Themar. Mayer Müller lived in Themar with his wife, Babette (née Friedmann); between 1873 and 1886, seven children were born to them, although only six lived beyond infancy. Likewise, between 1878 and 1892, Nathan and his wife, Bertha (née Schwed) were raising six children in Marisfeld. The lives of this generation would weave through the history of Marisfeld and Themar for another five decades — until 1942. Sadly, Müllers — cousins Max Müller I, son of Mayer, and Max Müller II, son of Nathan — were among the last Jews to leave Themar. After that, no member of the Solomon and Karoline Müller family lived in either community. Their descendants, however, flourish in other parts of the world.



Max Müller, born 1884 in Marisfeld



There are traces of a Jewish community in Marisfeld as early as 1679. The number of Jewish inhabitants reached its peak in 1865, when 200 Jews (around 30% of the total population) lived there. The Jewish community had a synagogue, a school, a ritual bath (Mikveh) and a cemetery. In 1866, a major fire in Marisfeld destroyed many residential and community buildings and led to the migration of many Jewish residents to Themar and Meiningen. But Nathan Müller, Max's father, remained in Marisfeld where he and his wife, Bertha Schwed, raised 6 children. Of them, Max, born in 1884, remained and continued the business. In 1912, Max married Clara Nussbaum and, in 1913, before WWI, their first son, Herbert, was born. Max was a front-line soldier in the first world war and wore his decoration with pride.



Max Müller c. 1935. His WWI decoration sits in his lapel.



Marisfeld: The house & business of Nathan & Bertha Müller c.1875-1923.



The Family of Nathan & Bertha Müller, c.1927

1. Bertha Müller, née Schwed
- 2&3: Karoline Goldmeier, née Müller & husband Louis Goldmeier
4. Bella Goldmeier, Daughter
5. Moritz Goldmeier, Bella's Fiancé
6. Max Müller
7. Else Nussbaum, née Müller

Hermann MÜLLER
b. 1878
+ Bella MEYBERG
d. 1942, aged 64

Karoline MÜLLER
b. 1880
+ Louis GOLDMEIER
d. 1942, aged 62

Max MÜLLER
b. 1884
+ Clara NUSSBAUM
d. 1942, aged 58

Nathan MÜLLER
b. 1851
+ Bertha SCHWED
d. 1923, aged 72

Else MÜLLER
b. 1886
+ Moritz NUSSBAUM
d. 1980, aged 94

Emil MÜLLER
b. 1889
d. 1915, aged 26

Sebald MÜLLER
b. 1892
+ Laura JÜNGSTER
d. 1942, aged 50

Clara Müller, née Nussbaum, born 1890 in Bad Hersfeld



Bad Hersfeld was much larger than Marisfeld: in 1890, Bad Hersfeld had more than 6,700 inhabitants, of whom 200 were Jewish. In contrast, Marisfeld had approximately 509 inhabitants of whom, in 1890, only a small number were Jews.

Clara and Max met each other in 1909, when Clara's brother, Moritz, married Max Müller's sister, Else.

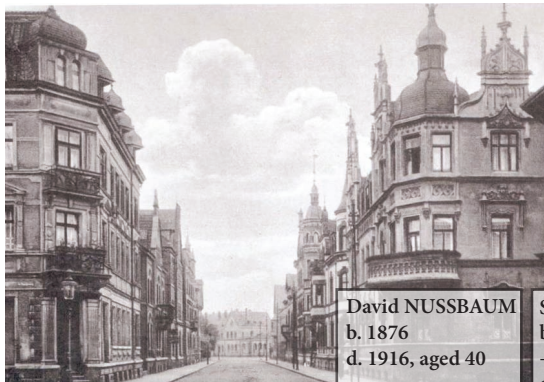


Clara's Mother, Bertha Nussbaum, née Stern, at her house. Hanfsack 2, Bad Hersfeld, c.1930



The Family of Meier & Bertha Nussbaum.

1. Else Nussbaum, née Müller
2. Sitta Amram, née Nussbaum
3. Karola Stern, née Nussbaum
4. Jakob Stern, Karola's Husband
5. Max Amram, Uncle of Manfred
6. Manfred Amram, Sitta's Son



David NUSSBAUM
b. 1876
d. 1916, aged 40

Salomon NUSSBAUM
b. 1879
+ Bertha OPPENHEIM
d. 1916, aged 35

Moritz NUSSBAUM
b. 1881
+ Else MÜLLER
d. 1923, aged 42

Leo NUSSBAUM
b. 1882
+ Mollie MARX
d. 1958, aged 76

Clara NUSSBAUM
b. 1890
+ Max MÜLLER
d. 1942, aged 52

Felix NUSSBAUM
b. 1893
+ Bella KATZ
d. 1931, aged 38

Meier NUSSBAUM
b. 1838
+ Bertha STERN
d. 1919, aged 81

Manfred AMRAM
b. 1933

Sitta NUSSBAUM
b. 1910
d. 2003, aged 93

Karola NUSSBAUM
b. 1911
d. 1945, aged 34

Käthe NUSSBAUM
b. 1913
d. 1943, aged 30

Aaltje WURMS
b. 1939 -d. 1943

The Family of Clara and Max Müller, from Marisfeld to Themar

After WWI ended, Max & Clara Müller continued to live in Marisfeld and two more sons were born, Meinhold in 1919 and Willi in 1922. Nathan Müller died in 1923 and six years later the family moved to Themar. They lived in Meininger Strasse 17, and Max and Clara continued the business.



l/r: Willi, Herbert & Meinhold Müller, Marisfeld



l/r: Willi, Clara, Meinhold & Max Müller



Meininger Strasse 17. In front, the family of Sebald Müller, who visited Themar frequently.



The Müller Families of Themar: Max Müller I & Max Müller II

When Max and Clara moved to Themar in 1929, they joined cousins already living in the small city. Mayer Müller, Nathan's older brother, had lived in Themar since the 1860s. Between 1873 and 1886, Mayer and his wife, Babette (née Friedmann) had seven children. The eldest son, Max Müller, and his wife, Frieda (née Freudenberger), lived in Bahnhofstrasse. Pauline Müller, née Steindler, the widow of Max's brother, Leopold Müller, lived with her children at Meininger Strasse 5, and Leo Häusler, the widower of Karoline, also lived in Themar. The S. M. Müller Department Store was run by Max Müller and his sister-in-law, Pauline Müller. After Max and Clara Müller moved from Marisfeld to Themar, the Themarens resolved the confusion between the two Maxes by calling the one born in Themar "Max Müller I", and the recent arrival from Marisfeld, "Max Müller II."

Mayer MÜLLER
b. 1849
+ Babette FRIEDMANN
d. 1907, aged 58



Max MÜLLER
b. 1873
+ Frieda FREUDENBERGER
d. 1943, aged 70

Siegmund MÜLLER
b. 1876
+ Rosa FREUDENBERGER
d. 1932, aged 56

Albert MÜLLER
b. 1878
+ Martha VOLLMANN
d. 1945, aged 67

Karolina MÜLLER b. 1880
+ Leo HAUESLER
d. 1910, aged 30

Leopold MÜLLER
b. 1882
+ Pauline STEINDLER
d. 1924, aged 42

Bertha MÜLLER
b. 1884
d. 1890, aged 6

Karl MÜLLER
b. 1886
+ Recha GRÜNBAUM
d. 1979, aged 93

Martha MÜLLER
b. 1910
d. 1942, aged 32

Semi MÜLLER
b. 1901
d. 1943, aged 42

Franziska MÜLLER
b. 1909
d. 1943, aged 34

Manfred MÜLLER
b. 1911
d. 1932, aged 19

Julius MÜLLER
b. 1919
d. 1990, aged 71

Martha, Pauline, Max, Frieda and Julius Müller



Two sons of Mayer & Babette Müller - Albert & Siegmund - moved to Arnstadt. This photograph captures family members in the early 1930s.



Franziska Neumann, née Müller; Nanny Steindler, Pauline Müller, née Steindler, Baby Neumann.



l/r: Manfred Müller, Julius Müller, Leopold Müller.

The Müller Family Story: 30 January 1933 to 9 November 1938



Last photos before leaving:
ca.1935. l/r: Willi Müller,
Norbert Sander,
Meinhold Müller,
Manfred Rosengarten.
Front: Walter Rosenbaum
u. Erich Rosengarten.

Wedding: Herbert
Müller & Flora Wolf

Oct: Willi goes to
Palestine

Oct: Meinhold
goes to Sweden

Meinhold goes to Italy,
on the way to Palestine

30 Jan 1933: The Third Reich begins

1933

1934

1935

1936

1937

1938



c.1935. l/r: Clara Müller, née Nussbaum, Herbert, Meinhold, Willi and Max Müller

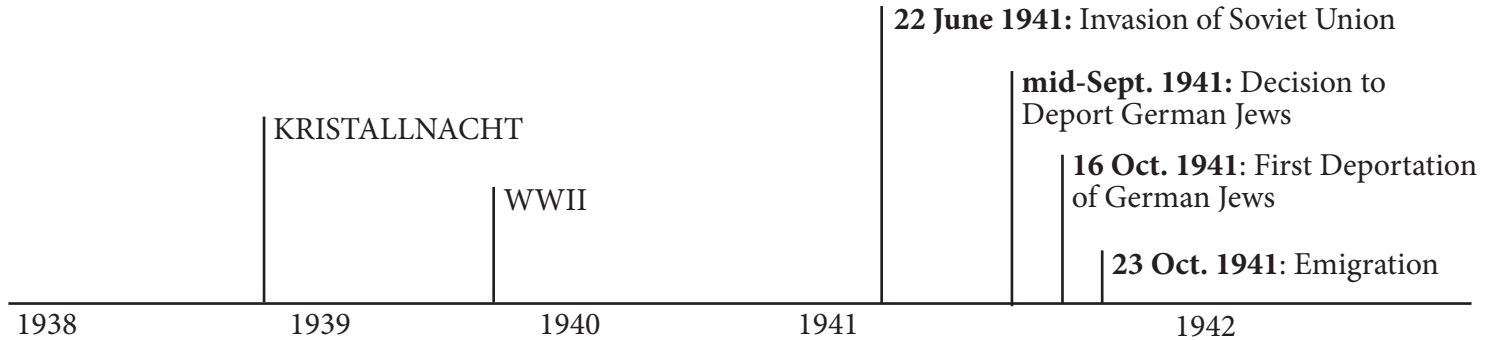


Flora Wolf &
Herbert Müller

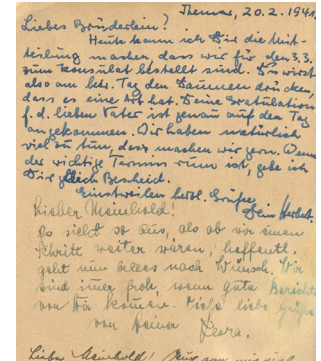
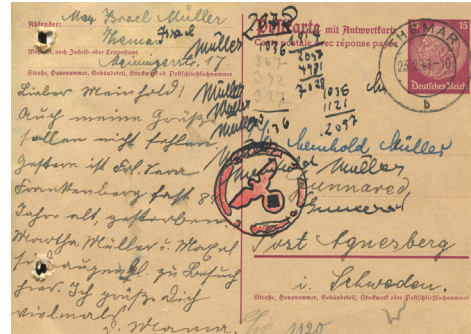
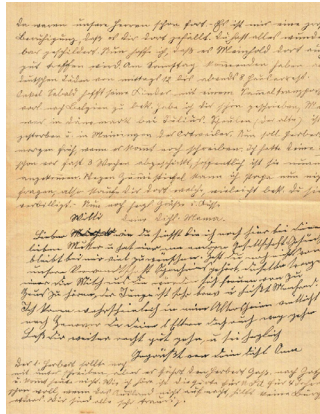
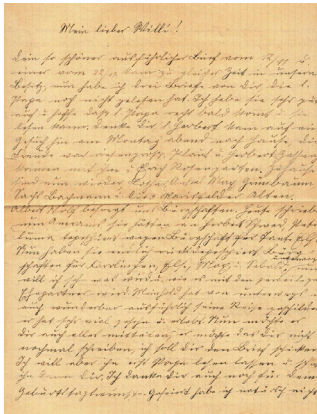


July 1938. l/r: Willi & Clara Müller, Flora & Herbert Müller, Frieda Wolf (née Mayer) & Max Müller

November 1938-May 1942: An Overview



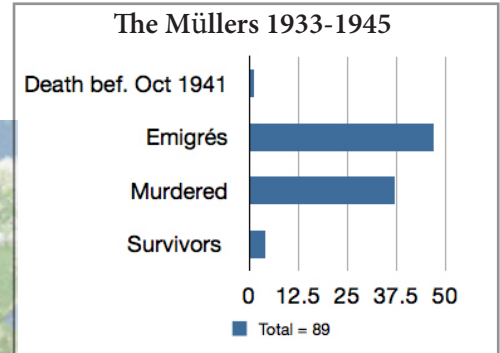
Between November 1938 and May 8, 1942, Clara and Max Müller wrote regularly to their sons, Meinhold and Willi. Forty-four of these letters and postcards survive. They provide us with insight into their lives, into the lives of the other Jews in Themar, and the lives of their relatives throughout occupied Europe. They tell a story of courageous struggle to escape the ever-tightening noose of Nazi policy.



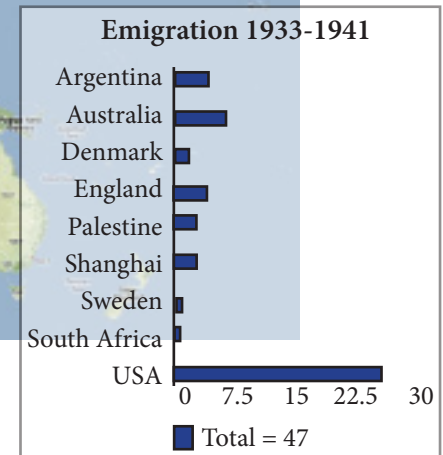
The Letters/The Postcards & Their Stories: The Family of Salomon & Karoline Müller 1933-1945

The letters of Clara & Max Müller trace the stories of 89 people connected to Salomon and Karoline Müller's family who were alive in 1933. We learn who was able to find refuge elsewhere, who tried desperately to find refuge and failed, and the fate of those who were still in Germany when emigration was forbidden in October 1941.

Bertha Nussbaum died before the deportations began in October 1941.



47 Müllers were able to emigrate from Germany before the ban of October 1941.





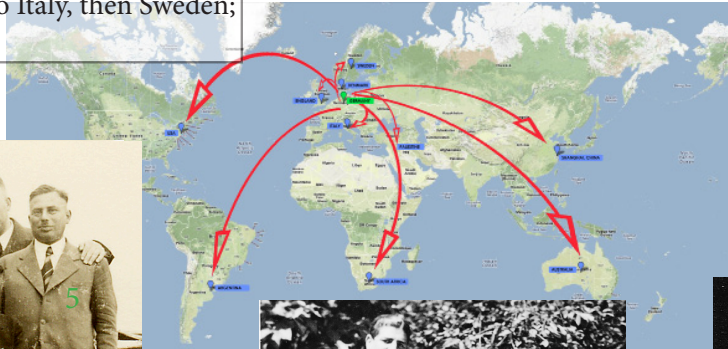
The sons of Clara & Max Müller were able to flee: Herbert to the USA, Meinhold to Italy, then Sweden; Willi to Palestine.



Norbert Müller, the son of Sebald & Laura Müller, left Germany with a Kindertransport for England.



Julius Müller escaped first to Denmark, then to Sweden. He returned to Denmark after the war.



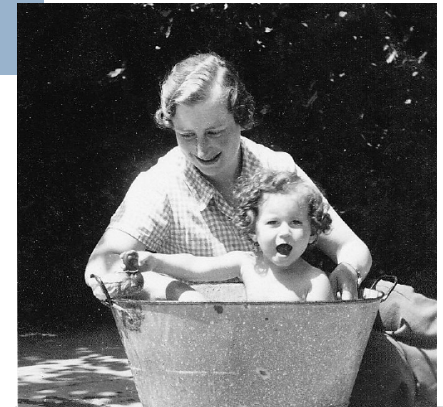
Karl & Recha Müller fled to Shanghai in 1939 and immigrated into the USA in 1947.



Max Muller's sister, Else (#1), was able to emigrate as was her daughter's family: Sitta (#2), Meinhardt (not in photo) and Manfred (#6) Amram.



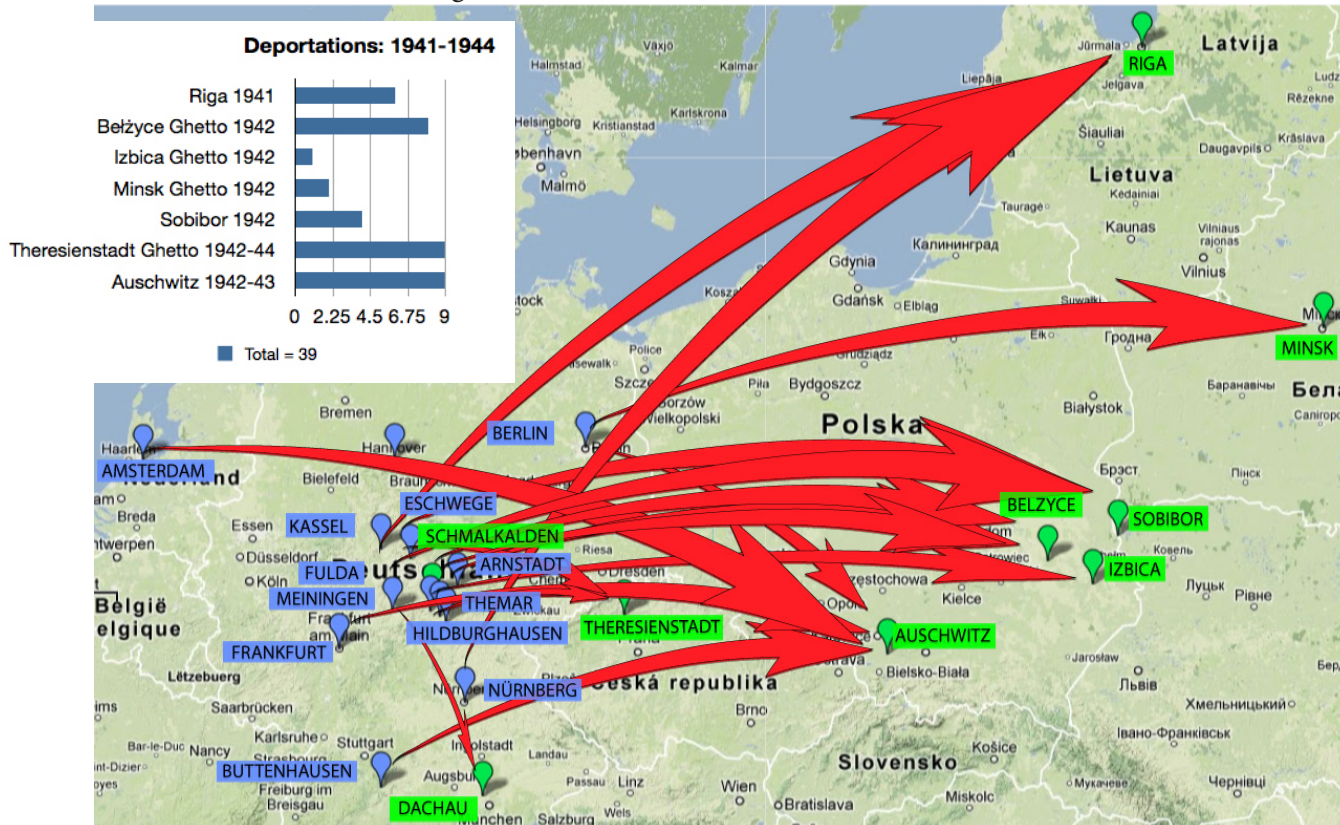
Siegmund Müller's family, c.1935: Martin Müller went to America, Grete to England, and Karola to Australia. Rosa, Siegmund's widow, was unable to leave.



Karola Meyer, née Müller, emigrated with daughter Ruth (with her in photo) and husband Gerhard to Australia.

The Fate of the Müllers 1941-1945

The letters and postcards contribute to our knowledge of the fate of forty-two (42) members/relatives of the Müller family who were trapped in occupied Europe as of October 1941. One person, Bertha Nussbaum, née Stern, died in Hannover before the deportations began. Two men were murdered in Germany; thirty-nine (39) men, women & children were deported outside of the borders of Germany. Of these, four survived: members of the family of Dina Müller, Salomon and Karoline's daughter.



The map identifies the places where Müllers were living in October 1941 (blue) and the places to which they were deported (in green). Most of the green sites are “in the East,” that is, outside of Germany. But two of the sites — Dachau and Schmalkalden — are inside Germany’s borders. In 1943 Semi Müller was a victim of the Euthanasia program, murdered in the care facility in Schmalkalden where he had been living since long before the Nazis came to power.

The Müllers: Deportations 1941-1944



Aaltje Wurms was deported with her parents, Käthe and Isaak, in 1943 to Auschwitz.



Karola Stern, née Nussbaum and Jacob Stern/1941 Riga



Franziska Neumann, née Müller, and son/1943 Auschwitz; Nanny Steindler/1942 Theresienstadt; Pauline Müller, née Steindler/1942 Auschwitz.



Louis u. Karoline Goldmeier, née Müller/1942 Sobibor



Rosa Müller, née Freudenberg/1942 Bełżyce Ghetto



Franziska Neumann, née Müller, Ludwig & Wolfgang Neumann/1943 Auschwitz



Berta Nussbaum/1942 [Auschwitz]

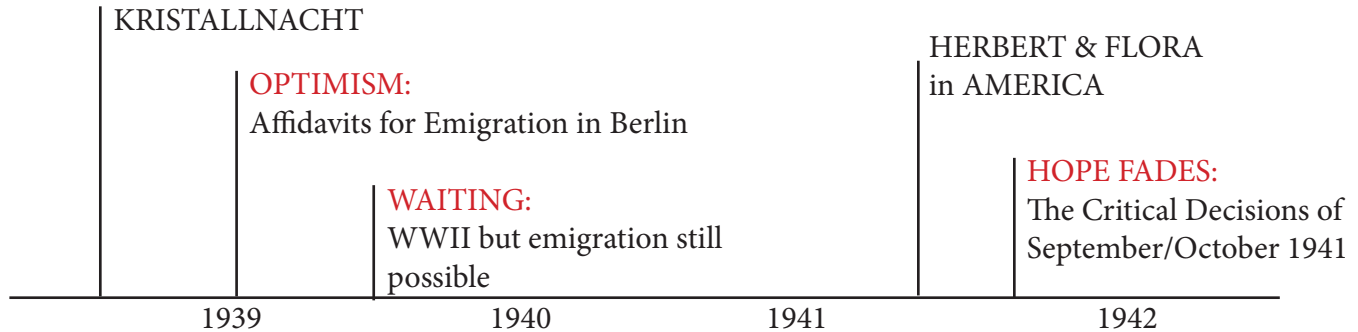


Norbert Müller/1939 to England. Laura, Sebald and Susanne Müller/1941 Riga, with Laura's mother, Clara Jüngster.

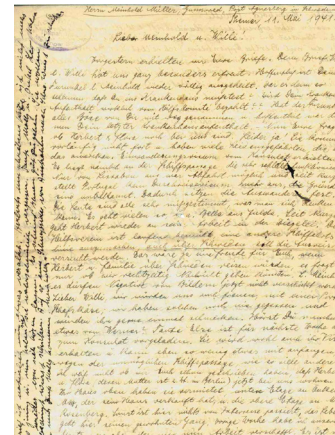
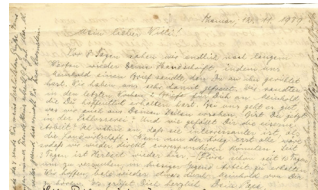
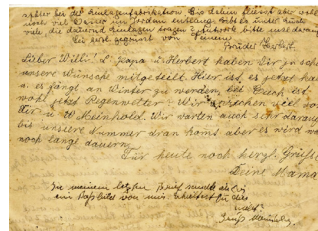
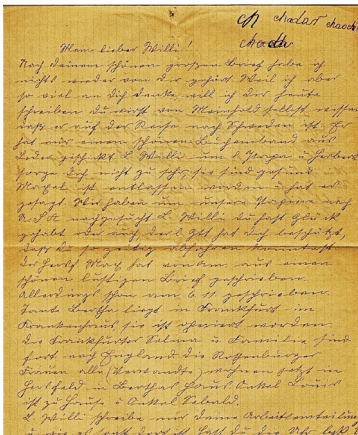


Martha Steindler, née Müller/1942 Minsk; Max Müller & Frieda Müller, née Freudenberg /1942 Theresienstadt

Clara and Max Müller: Their Letters from November 1938 to 8 May 1942



The extracts included here provide us with a glimpse into the world of Clara and Max in these years of acute crisis for German Jews. The initial letters and postcards immediately after Kristallnacht are full of optimism as Clara and Max learn of the efforts of their relatives in America to secure their immigration into the States. Affidavits arrive at the American Consulate in Berlin and other documents are secured. In mid-1939, when they learn how long the actual wait may be before the American quota allows them to enter the States, they settle in for a long wait — at least two years — and look for other opportunities. But, as more and more countries close their doors on Jewish refugees, America is the only hope and pessimism creeps into every letter they write. Herbert and Flora's departure in summer 1941 — more than two years after they had hoped to leave — is the last bright spot; the Nazis' devastating decisions in September/October 1941 quash any remaining hope.



1938 -Spring 1939: Optimism

November/December 1938

Dear Willi,

Don't worry too much about dear Papa or Herbert, they are fine. Maxel [Max Müller I] has been released and told me so. We have started to apply for the papers required to immigrate into the States. . . Many greetings and much love from your Mama.

Dear Meinhold and Willi, As you can see, I am still here with your dear mother and offer her some company. My health could be much better. . . I will probably go to an old people's home in Hannover, so that your dear parents can leave. Be good and much love from your Grandma. [Berta Nussbaum]

My dear Willi, Albert Wolf is providing us with Affidavits [financial guarantees]. Today the Amrams wrote to say that they had contacted Herbert Schwed in Petaluma [in California]. . . they have replied at last saying that they are taking care of Affidavits for Karoline, Else, Max, and Sebald.

Much love, Mama.

29 January 1939

. . . a letter has arrived from my cousin Herbert Sweed¹ with the news that he has sent an affidavit to the American Consul in Berlin for Mama and me. . . Herbert has received the news from the Jewish Aid Company in London that an uncle of Flora's in the States will pay the costs for Herbert's time in a transition camp in England. As well, a cousin of Flora's, a dentist in Cologne, has written to say that he has had to give up his practice and that he has learned the trade of making orthopedic shoes and is willing to let Herbert use his apartment to also learn this trade. Herbert will possibly do this since a move to England will take months. . . Greetings from your father, Papa.

¹The Schweds changed their name after immigrating into the United States.

2 February 1939

In three weeks we will take Oma to Hannover and the old people's home. Mama.

Affidavits for Mama and me are in Berlin but it could be 2 years until our numbers come up. Much love from your Papa.

Spring -September 1939: Waiting

20 March 1939

Do you know that we Jews have to give up our gold, silver and any jewelry by the end of March? Each person can only keep a wedding ring and two sets of cutlery. Otherwise, the emigration process goes extremely slowly — one hears from everyone that nothing seems to move forward at all. . . Papa

9 April 1939

Aunt Bertha [Clara's sister-in-law] from Hersfeld will move this month to Frankfurt and stay there until her number comes up. Siegfried Nussbaum and his wife [Ida Liebster] will probably leave this summer for the States. We have a very high number and must wait a very long time. Love, Mama.

19 April 1939

Herbert left yesterday for Cologne. He hopes to write his exam in about 4 weeks. They hope to have their visas in about 2 months. Many greetings, Your Papa.

. . . the whole process seems to be grinding to a halt, it all goes so slowly and everyone wants to be gone as quickly as possible... Oma does not like it in the old people's home, [she finds] it is all so strange. Mama.

15 June 1939

My dear Willi. There is nothing new here. Nobody comes to see us, nobody speaks to us in the street, we are alone. We are always alone and speak of you. Much love, Your Mama.

30 June 1939

We will start to learn English on Monday, a teacher will come from Coburg. Three people take the tutorial and Martha Müller [the daughter of Max Müller I] will take lessons with Papa and me. Much love, Mama

20 July 1939

We are diligently learning English, although Papa is having an easier time than I am, probably because he works much harder than I do. We have plenty of time to study because we hear so often that our numbers will only come up in two years. Love, Mama.

30 July 1939

Dear Willi,

You write that, although it is better for you now than at first, you still have the feeling that the world is held together with pieces of wood and nails. That is how we feel too — since December, theatres, cinemas and any form of entertainment are closed to Jews. Even though pubs and restaurants are not legally forced to ban us, a Jew dare not step into such a place in the evening. The German government is said to be strongly encouraging the emigration of Jews. Who knows where we will all end up! Please keep a place free for us with you. We are content with tomatoes and Mama is even very fond them, more than I. Much love, Papa.

Fall 1939 - Fall 1941: Pessimism

18 September 1939

It would be wonderful if the war were to end soon. May people come to their senses quickly and make an end to the bloodletting! Herbert is in Cologne at a cousin of Flora's [Ernst Mayer], and she left to join him last week. Herbert had bad luck with his visa — two days earlier and it would have worked. He is fine in Cologne and we'll see how it proceeds. With love and kisses, Papa.

10 June 1940

... here in Themar nothing has changed. We are still 23 souls in Themar. Twelve of these, who are still considered to be Themar residents, are elsewhere, most of them in Berlin in the hopes of emigration. In Marisfeld are the families of Max and Jakob Kahn, each with 3 people, so 6 souls in total in Marisfeld. I am busy in our garden, have 25 beds to take care of, which require daily weeding and care, but the garden is also quite lovely when it is in order. Much love, your Papa.

25 January 1940

We sleep in late in the morning, often until 8 or 8.30. Then there are always things to do, in the house and backyard. In the afternoon I often go for a walk with either Herbert or Mama. Last week Herbert and I took the train to Schleusingen and then walked home — it took about 2½ hours. In the evening, we either read or play cards. Herbert and Flora hope to leave in the middle of this year. Herbert is trying hard to get work but can't find anything. . . Much love, your Papa.

11 May 1941

Dear Meinhold and Willi,

... Now to your question as to whether Herbert and Flora are still with us. Unfortunately, yes! They cannot leave at the moment and have many unhappy companions, all of whom have received their immigration visa from the [American] Consul. But departure from Lisbon is impossible at the moment, because Portugal is no longer granting transit visas, for some unknown reason. The travellers are therefore sitting waiting and in a very bad mood as you can well imagine. We know some of them: for example, Bella Goldmeier [the daughter of Karoline Müller, Max's sister] from Fulda. Herbert therefore went back to work at the tile works again. The Jewish Aid organization is trying to find a shipping company that might take refugees via Sweden. That would be a joy, wouldn't it, if Herbert and family were to travel by Sweden? The only unknown is whether or not we could give you enough notice. Much love, Papa

Autumn 1941 — Hope Fades



The Sebalds were Susanne, Sebald, and Laura Müller. Norbert Müller, at the right in this early photo, was able to leave Germany for England on a Kindertransport.

22 March 1942

We have heard nothing from *the Sebalds* or *the Karolas*. It's possible that we will soon come to them.
Love from your Papa



The Karolas were Karola Stern, née Nussbaum, and Jacob Stern. This wedding photo was taken 10 June 1934.

October 1941: DEPORTATION BEGINS AND EMIGRATION PROHIBITED

November 29, 1941: The Family of Sebald Müller is deported from Nürnberg to Riga

December 9, 1941: Karola & Jacob Stern are deported from Kassel to Riga

May 9, 1942: Clara & Max leave Themar for Weimar

May 12, 1942: Clara & Max are deported from Weimar to Bełżyce Ghetto

March 27th, 1942

Now we have some important news to report. [Max] Bachmann and his wife [Alma], who lived in Frankenbergs' house, have died. Their apartment (only 2 rooms) is now free and a police officer was just here to look at our apartment and inform us that we will probably have to move into Bachmanns' apartment; that is, we will have to move into Frankenbergs' house. This means that we must leave our own house, as has been happening in all places. We'll let you know as soon as we know about our move. Probably we won't be staying there long as we will probably move further to where Uncle Sebald and Karola are. Uncle Max and the Rosenbergs, who are living in Herbert's house, have also been informed that they too must move into Frankenbergs' house. I have planted the garden but that of course doesn't really matter any more with the move. Five families would be living in the one house.

. . . much love from your Papa.

. . . *Your detailed letter made us very happy. But that is the only happiness that we have. Much love from your loving Mama.*

April 15th, 1942

Otherwise we are still ok, and the same goes for you as we read from your letter. May it always be so, that your boss is satisfied with you. Every man is the creator of his own luck and you will be treated and paid according to your achievement. And always make sure that you save money. Perhaps we will need your help if you have a small sum left over. You will see how saving is fun and happiness. Where the Sebalds are we do not know. With much love, your Papa.

May 3rd, 1942

Dear Meinhold, Meier Meyberg [the brother of Hermann Müller's wife, Bella in Fulda] has offered to write you when we can no longer write. We had a letter from the Kahns today to tell us that Marianne and Max [Kahn from Marisfeld] have died. Please write again soon. You will probably spend the holidays again in Göteborg. Always keep the connection strong among you and Herbert and Willi. I beg this of you and if it is possible to live in the same area, that would be wonderful.

Now do write again soon. Love, Mama.

Ein letzter Gruß — a last farewell!

8 May 1942

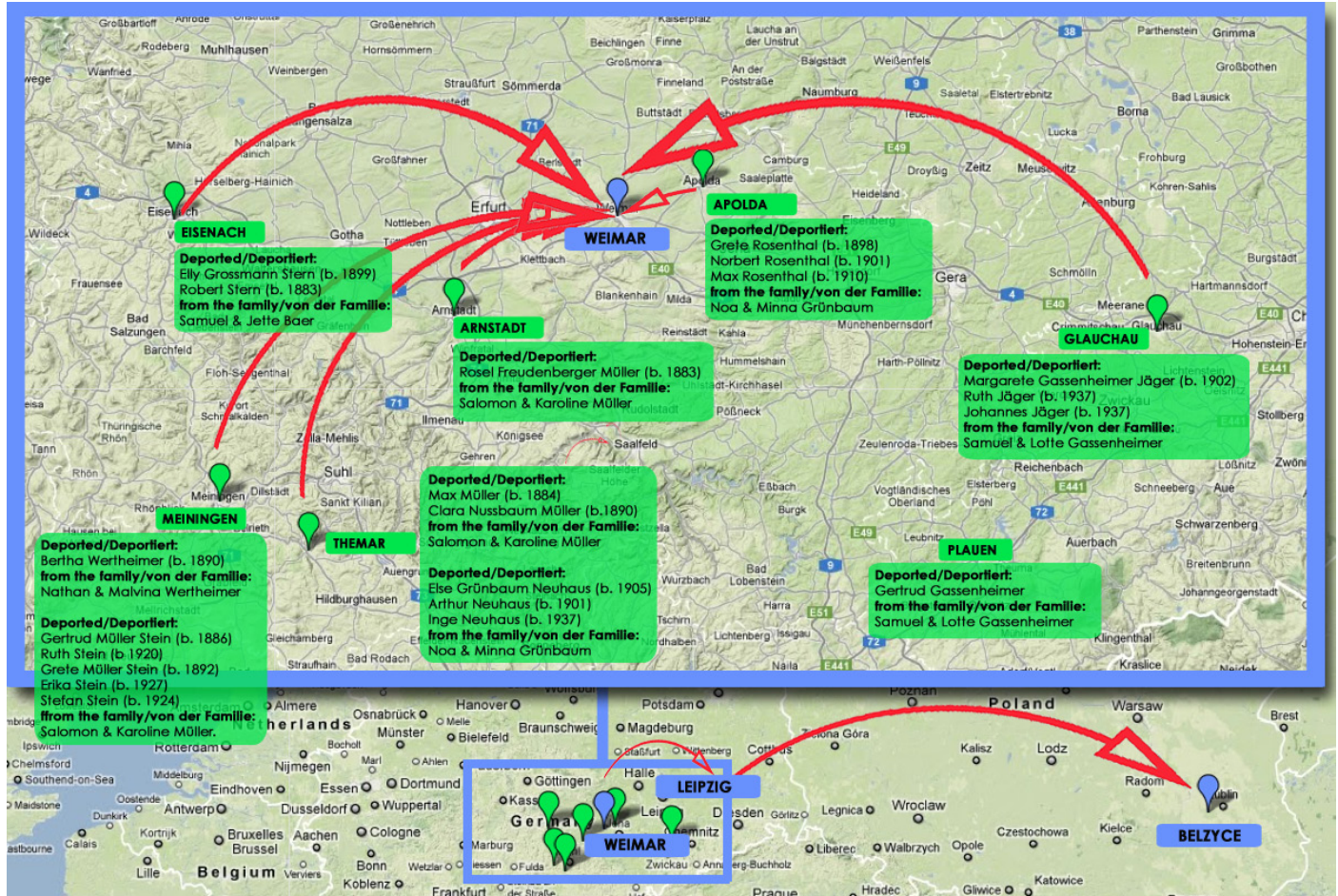
Dear Meinhold!

As we have already written, we travel tomorrow morning with the Neuhaus family. We cannot give you a specific address now, but will send you our new address as soon as possible. In the meantime, write to Uncle Max. As we are in great hurry, I only write this short note today. All the best Papa.
With all our love and kisses, Mama

Meinhold! 8. 5. 1942.
Da wir Dir bereits geschrieben
haben wie morgen früh mit
Familie Neuhaus. Für Adress
können wir Dir nicht angeben,
so bald es auch möglich ist,
geben wir Dir unser neue
Adress an. Inzwischen schreibe an
Onkel Max. Da es sehr eilig
ist, mache ich es jetzt fertig. Viele
Grüße Dein Papa.
Innigst
Mama

Deportation to Bełżyce Ghetto

On 9 May 1942, 342 Jews from over 40 Thüringen cities and towns were brought to Weimar. The Neuhaus family — Arthur, age 40, & Else Neuhaus (née Grünbaum), age 36, and their 5-year-old daughter, Inge — left Themar with Max and Clara Müller. They spent the night in the cattle auction hall near the train station. The following day, they were transported to Leipzig where close to 800 Jews from Leipzig and other towns and villages of Saxony were herded onto the train. The transport then travelled the 1100 km to Bełżyce, arriving on 12 May 1942.



The deportation to Bełżyce Ghetto included eight (8) members of the Salomon & Karoline Müller family and a total of twenty-one (21) people with a link to the Jewish families of Themar.

Verschollen —

“Verschollen” is the German word used when nothing is known — no trace — of the fate of victims of the Holocaust. This term is used for most of those deported to Belżyce Ghetto on 9 May 1942.



On 5 June 1942, Max Müller I wrote to Meinhold in Sweden:

“I have your card of 21 May and hope that you have mine containing the address of your parents. I hope you have written directly.. . The Steins of Meiningen and many friends and relatives are together with your dear parents. Please write again soon, Best wishes, your Uncle Max.”

Max Müller I and his wife, Frieda, were deported from Therman to on 14 September 1942 to Theresienstadt Ghetto. We know the dates of their deaths in November 1943.

Herbert Müller also learned the name of the place to which Max and Clara had been deported and in August 1942, he wrote Meinhold:

. . . You know that our dear parents were deported to Poland? By chance we learned the address, which is Belżyce near Lublin, Poland, but no number or street. Please try, Meinhold, to ask the Red Cross as quickly as possible if you can send food or money. They will need both.

Meinhold did send packages and money, but the sons received no response from their parents. We now know that in September 1942, approximately 3000 younger Jews were sent from Belżyce Ghetto to Majdanek as workers; in October, Belżyce Ghetto itself became a labour camp and those unable to work were either murdered in the Ghetto or sent to one of the killing centres (Sobibor, Belzec or Majdanek). In May 1943, those still in the Belżyce Ghetto were transferred to either Krasnik or Budzyn labour camps.

In 2011, Dankward Sidow agreed to transcribe the letters sent by Clara and Max Müller to their sons; here is his brief description of how this occurred:

“A curious event — a Hamburg resident transcribes the letters and postcards of the Müllers, a Jewish couple from the small city of Themar, letters written in the 1930s in German script and sent to Palestine and Sweden. How this came about is a tale of coincidence and complexity, too long to tell completely here. But in brief: Max and Clara Müller wrote to their sons, Meinhold and Willi, in what is now an unusual and unused German font — a font once used by the great poets, including Heine — called ‘Kanzleischrift’ and now often referred to as ‘Sütterlinschrift’. But, to make these letters, so valuable to understanding the history of Jewish community of Themar, accessible to the children and grandchildren of Clara and Max as well as to others, the handwriting needed to be transcribed into a Latin script. *But who can still do this?*”



Credit: W. Swietek, Freies Wort

Rebecka Müller, one of the Müllers’ daughters-in-law knew that I could. [I met Rebecka 15 years ago through one of the coincidences mentioned above and we have developed a warm friendship.] “Yes,” I replied to Rebecka, “I will and I’m ready to begin.” The first cards were to Meinhold, the first of the sons to leave Germany in 1936. They show how concerned the parents — who were much more vulnerable — were for their son in his new and strange, but safe, place. And then came the many post-Kristallnacht letters that flowed to Palestine, where the youngest son, Willi, had emigrated in August 1938. After July 1941, Meinhold and Wili forwarded their parents’ letters on to Herbert and Flora, who had finally been able to leave Germany and were living in New York City.”

On 9 May 2012, 70 years after Clara & Max Müller left Themar, Dankward and Sharon met with the students at the Anne Frank school in Themar in the morning and with some of their parents and others at a public event in the evening.



Kredit: Joachim Hanf



Themar Treffen 2011

