

Collection #
M 1494

**ISADORE AND SYLVIA DICHNER WEISS
COLLECTION, 1932-1946, 2009**

Collection Information	1
Biographical Sketch	2
Scope and Content Note	3
Series Contents	4

Processed by

Maire Gurevitz
February 2022

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

*

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 5 manuscript boxes, 1 folder of photographs, 1 printed item

COLLECTION DATES: 1932-2009

PROVENANCE: Gift of Marci Meixler, East Windsor, NJ

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2021.0149

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sylvia Dichner Weiss (October 27, 1914-August 7, 2016) was born in New York City to Jacob Dichner and Lillian “Lilly” Gluckman Dichner. Her parents were immigrants from Russia and Czechoslovakia, and they were both from Yiddish speaking/writing communities. Sylvia was the oldest child of the family. Her siblings were Benny, Goldie, and Manuel. In 1918, the Dichner family moved to Indianapolis, Indiana. When they first came to the city, they lived at 954 Maple Street before settling in what is now the Old Southside neighborhood at 1409 Union Street. Jacob worked as a carpenter and Lilly operated a furniture store at 1417 Madison Avenue. Sylvia attended Emmerich Manual Training School and graduated in 1932. After her graduation, Sylvia held various sales clerk positions around the city, but she was eventually hired on for more permanent employment at Frankovitz Grocery at 28th and Capitol Avenue. She also spent the summer of 1933 and 1934 as a camp counselor at Camp Big Eagle in Zionsville, Indiana. Much of her free time in Indianapolis was spent as part of the Reus, a social organization for young Jews, as well as taking classes at the Communal building, located at 17 W. Morris Street, Indianapolis.

In the summer of 1932, while on a trip to visit friends and family in Pittsburgh, Sylvia was introduced to Isadore Weiss. The pair struck up a correspondence, which turned into a long distance romantic relationship, and they were married on October 27th, 1935. The couple had four children together. After their marriage in Indianapolis, Sylvia moved to Pittsburgh into Isadore’s family home. From there, the family moved around due to Isadore’s work with the U.S. Civil Service, until finally settling in New Jersey. Sylvia was active in the PTA, Girl and Boy Scouts, Hadassah, and the League of Women Voters. She also was also involved in her community and local government. She developed that East Windsor Senior Citizen Program in the 1970s and was later elected as a councilwoman.

Isadore Weiss (Itsik Vaisman) (June 25, 1908-February 27, 1991) was born in Minkovitz (Minkovsty), Ukraine, the son of Meyer Nissan Weissman (Vaisman, Weiss) and Mirrel Drotman Weissman (Mary Weiss). He had four brothers, Morris, Max, Harry, and Samuel, as well as a sister, Sylvia. Isadore’s father left Ukraine for the United States to make enough money to pay off the debts he had incurred as president of one of the synagogues in Minkovitz, where he had attempted to help people secure loans to purchase homes. However, the employment he found in the United States did not prove to be as lucrative as he’d believed, and he eventually sent for his son, Morris, to join him. Meanwhile, the remaining family in Minkovitz, including Isadore, were subject to the instability of the region during World War I and the Russian Revolution which included near starvation, occupation by different armies, a pogrom executed by the Russian army in 1917, a pogrom executed by the Ukrainian Army in 1919, and an outbreak of influenza. The remaining Weiss family attempted to leave Minkovitz by arranging with smugglers to get over the border into Romania. On their first attempt, they were discovered and arrested by the Bolshevik army. Their second attempt was successful, and the family arrived in Pittsburgh to join Meyer and Morris in 1922, when Isadore was twelve years old.

At the age of fourteen, Isadore enrolled in public school and was able to learn English along with the rest of his studies and complete both primary school and high school by the time he was eighteen. He then enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh on a scholarship, where he

earned a degree in accounting while also working in the family dry cleaning and tailor shop that his brother Sam ran out of their home at 503 Collins Avenue. Upon his graduation, Isadore continued to work for his brother while also sitting for many different U.S. Civil Service examinations to obtain employment with the federal government. He also took in bookkeeping work for a few clients on the side. Isadore obtained a federal job in 1936, and he remained in the U.S. Civil Service until his retirement in 1976. Isadore also served as President of his local East Windsor B'nai B'rith Lodge.

Sources:

Ancestry.com

Materials in the collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection is made up of the letters that Isadore Weiss and Sylvia Dichner sent to each other after they met in the summer of 1932 and as their relationship progressed to become a romantic one until their marriage in October 1935. There are also letters from early years of their marriage when Sylvia is back in Indianapolis visiting friends and family in 1936 and when Isadore is sporadically away from his family due to his work with the federal government from 1937-1945.

In their letters, the couple discuss their families and friends, their search for good, permanent jobs in Depression-era America, the rise of fascism in Europe, anti-Semitism, books they are reading, films they are watching, lectures and social gatherings they attend which are mostly centered around Jewish youth organizations such as the Reus in Indianapolis and the Mizrahi Youth in Pittsburgh.

There are also nine photographs that were removed from the letters- three photo booth portraits of Sylvia, two from Camp Big Eagle, and four unidentified images of friends and family. A book, *Looking Back: The Russian Revolution Through the Eyes of a Jewish Child* was produced by Isadore Weiss's family and includes the text of a manuscript Isadore wrote in 1928 called "Looking Back", which details the deprived and often traumatic events he experienced as a Jewish child in Ukraine. The book also contains supplemental biographical material about Isadore and Sylvia, Weiss family photos and documents, and social and geographical information to provide context to understanding Jewish life in Ukraine during the Russian Revolution.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Isadore Weiss

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Correspondence, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 1
Correspondence, 1932	Box 1, Folder 2
Correspondence, January-July 1933	Box 1, Folder 3
Correspondence, August-December 1933	Box 1, Folder 4
[Notebook with addresses and memos] ca. 1934	Box 1, Folder 5
Correspondence, January 1934	Box 1, Folder 6
Correspondence, February 1934 (1 of 2)	Box 1, Folder 7
Correspondence, February 1934 (2 of 2)	Box 1, Folder 8
Correspondence, March 1934 (1 of 2)	Box 1, Folder 9
Correspondence, March 1934 (2 of 2)	Box 1, Folder 10
Correspondence, April 1934	Box 1, Folder 11
Correspondence, May 1934	Box 1, Folder 12
Correspondence, June 1934	Box 2, Folder 1
Correspondence, July 1934 (1 of 2)	Box 2, Folder 2
Correspondence, July 1934 (2 of 2)	Box 2, Folder 3
Correspondence, August 1934	Box 2, Folder 4
Correspondence, September 1934	Box 2, Folder 5
Correspondence, October 1934 (1 of 2)	Box 2, Folder 6
Correspondence, October 1934 (2 of 2)	Box 2, Folder 7
Correspondence, November 1934	Box 2, Folder 8
Correspondence, December 1934	Box 2, Folder 9
Correspondence, January 1935	Box 2, Folder 10

Correspondence, February 1935	Box 2, Folder 11
Correspondence, March 1935	Box 3, Folder 1
Correspondence, April 1935	Box 3, Folder 2
Correspondence, May 1935	Box 3, Folder 3
Correspondence, June 1935	Box 3, Folder 4
Correspondence, July 1935	Box 3, Folder 5
Correspondence, August 1935	Box 3, Folder 6
Correspondence, September 1935	Box 3, Folder 7
Correspondence, October 1935	Box 3, Folder 8
Correspondence, 1936-1937	Box 3, Folder 9
Correspondence, 1939; 1941	Box 3, Folder 10
Correspondence, July 1944 (1 of 2)	Box 3, Folder 11
Correspondence, July 1944 (2 of 2)	Box 3, Folder 12
Correspondence, August-October 1944	Box 3, Folder 13
Correspondence, May 1945	Box 4, Folder 1
<i>Looking Back: The Russian Revolution Through the Eyes of a Jewish Child</i> by Isadore Weiss, 2009	General Collection:

Series 2: Sylvia Dichner Weiss

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Correspondence, August-December 1932	Box 4, Folder 2
Correspondence, January-June 1933	Box 4, Folder 3
Correspondence, July-December 1933	Box 4, Folder 4
“Anti-Semitism—It’s Solution” by Sylvia Dichner, 1934	Box 4, Folder 5
Correspondence, January-June 1934	Box 4, Folder 6

Programs, Emmerich Manual Training High School Senior Class Play, <i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</i> , 23 March 1934	Box 4, Folder 7
Correspondence, August-September 1934	Box 4, Folder 8
Correspondence, October 1934	Box 4, Folder 9
Correspondence, November 1934	Box 4, Folder 10
Correspondence, December 1934	Box 4, Folder 11
Photos Removed from Correspondence, 1934-1935	Photographs, Folder 1 of 1
Correspondence, January 1935	Box 4, Folder 12
Correspondence, February 1935	Box 4, Folder 13
Correspondence, March 1935	Box 4, Folder 14
Correspondence, April 1935	Box 5, Folder 1
Correspondence, May 1935	Box 5, Folder 2
Correspondence, June 1935	Box 5, Folder 3
Correspondence, July 1935	Box 5, Folder 4
Correspondence, August 1935	Box 5, Folder 5
Correspondence, September 1935	Box 5, Folder 6
Correspondence, October 1935	Box 5, Folder 7
Congratulatory Wedding Telegrams, 27 October 1935	Box 5, Folder 8
Correspondence, March 1936	Box 5, Folder 9
Correspondence, September 1937	Box 5, Folder 10
Correspondence, October 1937	Box 5, Folder 11
Weiss Family War Ration Books, 1943	Box 5, Folder 12
Correspondence, May-July 1944	Box 5, Folder 13
Correspondence, August 1944	Box 5, Folder 14

Correspondence, n.d.; 1946

Box 5, Folder 15