

THE EFFORTS OF OTTO FRANK TO BRING HIS FAMILY TO THE UNITED STATES (OR OTHER COUNTRIES) DURING AND BEFORE WW2

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THE FRANK FAMILY

(left to right): Margot, Otto, Anne, and Edith Frank, Amsterdam, 1941

Otto Frank escaped Nazi Germany with his wife and two daughters soon after Hitler came to power in 1933. They lived a peaceful life in Amsterdam until May 1940, when Nazi Germany invaded the Netherlands. Otto, determined to leave Europe with his family, contacted an old college friend in the United States for help.

OTTO'S WORRIES

In April 1941, Otto Frank was desperate. A decade earlier, he and his wife Edith had been happily living in Frankfurt, Germany, with their two young daughters, Margot and Anne. After experiencing the first wave of antisemitic attacks instigated by the new Nazi government, Otto and Edith decided in 1933 to move to the Netherlands for safety. After arriving in Amsterdam, Otto opened a company called Opekta, which manufactured products used for making jellies and jams, and his daughters started attending Dutch schools.

As the years passed, Frank watched with concern as Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime grew more aggressive. He considered moving to Great Britain, but his efforts to establish a factory there failed. Frank added his family's names to the waiting list for American immigration visas in 1938, joining 200,000 other people born in Germany who also wanted to escape to the United States.

Two years later, Otto Frank was still awaiting his turn to be interviewed by the US consulate for an immigration visa. On May 10, 1940, Nazi Germany invaded Belgium, the Netherlands, and France. Within days of the invasion, Nazi aircraft bombed Rotterdam, destroying the US consulate building—and with it, the visa waiting list. US State Department officials attempted to reconstruct the list, asking everyone who had applied for immigration to contact the consulate. For some reason, Frank does not seem to have put his family's names back on the list.

On April 30, 1941, Otto Frank wrote to his old friend, Nathan Straus Jr. (whose friends called him "Charley"), the son of the founder of Macy's department stores. The two men had met more than 30 years earlier, while Frank was in college in Heidelberg, and had become fast friends.

"I am forced to look out for emigration and as far as I can see U.S.A. is the only country we could go to . . . You are the only person I know that I can ask: Would it be possible for you to give a deposit in my favor?"

April 30, 1941

COPY

Mr. Nathan Straus
New York, N.Y.

Dear Charley,

Time passes rapidly in spite of all difficulties one is having. I used to write to you for your birthday wishing you the best and this letter probably shall arrive about that time bringing over my best wishes this year. But to be honest, this is not the only reason I am writing for this time.

You know my "ups and downs" and you always showed understanding for the change of circumstances I was in. After I had sufficient difficulties at home I managed to come here and to make my life. Nevertheless I always tried to get away from here and shortly before the outbreak of the war I had an arrangement with a strong group to open a new factory oversea, where I had to be one of the directors. All these plans had to be given up by the war and I had to stay where I was.. I must not complain as I have been successful during the last year. I enlarged the business and got on allright. But - how long will it be that I may continue my work here? I am forced to look out for emigration and as far as I can see U.S.A. is the only country we could go to. Perhaps you remember that we have two girls. It is for the sake of the children mainly that we have to care for. Our own fate is of less importance. Two brothers of Efith emigrated last year and they work as ordinary workmen around Boston. Both of them earn money, but not enough to have us come. They would be able to give an affidavit for their mother, living with us here, and they saved enough as far as I can make out to pay the passage for my mother-in-law. Both are not married and they will always do their utmost for us and the children. But you know certainly, that their funds must be limited.

In 1938 I filed an application at Rotterdam to emigrate to U.S.A. but all the papers have been destroyed there. Never mind. The dates of application are of no importance any longer, as everyone who has an effective affidavit from a member of his family and who can pay his passage may leave. One says that no special difficulties shall be made from the part of the German Authorities. But in the case that an affidavit from family members is not available or not sufficient the consul asks a bank deposit. How much he would ask in my case I don't know. I am not allowed to go to Rotterdam and without an introduction the consul would not even accept me. As far as I hear from other people it might be about \$5000.- for us four. You are the only person I know that I can ask: Would it be possible for you to give a deposit in my favor?

I would not ask if conditions here would not force me to do all I can in time to be able to avoid worse. I may assure you that in case you should be able to help me I would not touch the money as I feel still young enough to work and I trust that I shall find means to get along. Be sure that I know quite well how many people depend on you and that requests of all kind arrive daily. It is my duty to ask you. An amount of \$5000.- even if as a deposit is not a bargain and I cannot possibly know how are you are engaged already. So you may be convinced that my feelings towards you would not at least be changed in case you have to say: no. I know that that it is impossible. Besides there is the question of passage. As to that the situation is still more difficult for me. That's money really spent and I do not know if and when I shall be able to restore it. Maybe Mrs. Moschkowitz would do something to that respect. Perhaps you remember that I used to be there quite frequently. It is said that discussions were pending with the "joint" in order to be able to pay them in Florins. I do not know if that is true. Should it be the case than I could manage

to pay the amount myself. Perhaps you or your sister know more about that question as we do here. As you see the first necessity is an affidavit or deposit, whereas the passage is the second question.

Would you be so kind to take the matter up with one of my brothers-inlaw? Address

X
Mr. Julius Hollander
c/o Swardbik
138 High Street
Canton, Mass

I do not give him your address, as I do not want him to write to you. If you write to him its alright. Nor do I inform any of the family members about the fact that I wrote to you, as I do not know your ideas about that.

It is needless to add much as I suppose that you know more about the situation as I do. Who can tell if there is still a chance to leave Europe by the time this letter is going to arrive? I am still indebted to you and I shall always be. As you do not like sentimentalities I dont want to talk much about how I feel about all that. I did not change in character, so you know mw still enough to judge my feelings.

Edith is much more depressed as I am. She does not mind to work the way others do and our eldest daughter being 15 is able to help. How are the boys and Helen. My best regards to all of them.

As ever

Yours,
Otto.

Otto Frank wrote this letter to his old friend, Nathan Straus Jr., to ask for assistance immigrating to the United States with his family, on April 30, 1941. YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York. Courtesy of the Anne Frank Fonds, Basel, Switzerland.

Nathan Straus Jr. worked for President Franklin Roosevelt's administration. He had plenty of political contacts and enough wealth to sponsor the Frank family and immediately told Otto that he would help.

Edith Frank's two brothers, Julius and Walter Holländer, both of whom had been arrested by the Nazis during Kristallnacht, had already managed to immigrate from Germany to Boston, Massachusetts. Neither of them had enough money to assist the Franks directly, but they were eager to help Straus.

The three men corresponded with each other, working through the National Refugee Service, a US organization that helped Jewish refugees coordinate their immigration paperwork.

On June 11, 1941, only six weeks after Frank first asked him, Straus signed five copies of an affidavit for the Frank family, agreeing to sponsor their immigration.

Five days later, the National Refugee Service informed Straus that the US State Department was implementing new rules, mandating that all immigration applications had to be approved in Washington, DC. This would delay the Frank family's immigration for at least several months.

Newspapers announced worse news that same day: Germany had ordered US consulates in Nazi-occupied territory to close. On July 10, State Department officials in Rotterdam reported to Washington that they had destroyed their visa stamps and closed the consulate. Frank had not finished collecting the necessary paperwork before the consulate closed. Even if he managed to gather everything, the Franks would have had to travel through multiple Nazi-occupied countries to reach a US consulate for an interview. During World War II, this travel was almost impossible.

When Frank realized that his family would not be able to reach the United States, he responded stoically to Straus: "It is a pity that for the present all efforts will be useless as the American Consulate at Rotterdam is leaving . . . So we have to wait. Bad luck, but cannot be helped. Let us hope that conditions will get more normal again.

After learning that Nazi Germany had ordered US consulates in the Netherlands to close, *the Frank family's hopes of immigrating to the United States ended.*

CUBA?

On September 8, 1941, Otto Frank wrote to Nathan Straus again, this time raising the possibility of obtaining a tourist visa to Cuba. The chances of escape were slim: the Cuban consulate had also closed in the Netherlands. Frank heard rumors that he might obtain a Cuban visa in Spain or Germany if he could get there. He also needed at least \$2,825 (approximately \$50,000 in 2018) for the visa fees and the bank deposit the Cuban government required. "I know that it will be impossible for us all to leave, even if most of the money is refundable, but Edith urges me to leave alone or with the children," Frank wrote.

Straus agreed to provide the deposit for the Cuban visa, and Julius Holländer added, "My brother and I will pay for the boat ticket and Cuban visa for Mr. Frank. If you give the necessary deposit . . . I promise you that it will be returned to you untouched, as we will support my brother-in-law while he remains in Cuba." By December, the Holländers and Straus had prepared the money for Otto Frank's visa. Frank planned to see whether the Nazi authorities would permit him to leave the Netherlands if he had a Cuban visa. If Otto could emigrate safely, Straus would then try to obtain Cuban visas for Edith, Margot, and Anne Frank.

NO ESCAPE

On December 11, 1941, Julius Holländer telephoned the National Refugee Service to thank them for their assistance, but the efforts to help the Frank family immigrate had failed. After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and Germany's declaration of war against the United States, the Cuban government canceled Otto Frank's visa application. Cuban officials likely feared that German refugees would become stuck in Cuba indefinitely if the United States instituted even more national security screenings for new immigrants, or stopped accepting immigrants entirely.



Anne Frank's first diary, which she kept while in hiding. Anne Frank Stichting, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

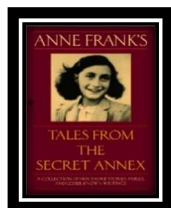
On July 6, 1942, the Frank family went into hiding in the attic annex above the Opekta offices. They were joined by Herman and Auguste Van Pels and their son Peter, and later by dentist Fritz Pfeffer, all of whom were Jewish. Anne Frank, who had received a diary for her 13th birthday several weeks earlier, spent the next two years documenting her experiences in hiding. On August 4, 1944, Dutch police discovered and arrested the residents hiding in the annex. The Franks, Van Pels, and Pfeffer were sent first to the Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands, and then placed on the final train sent from Westerbork to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center. Otto Frank was the only annex resident to survive the Holocaust. His wife Edith was murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau, and daughters Margot and Anne died of typhus in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in the early spring of 1945.

When Frank returned to Amsterdam after the war, one of his former employees, Miep Gies, who had helped the annex residents while they were in hiding, *gave him his daughter Anne's diary.*

Frank decided to publish it as The Secret Annex in 1947. Anne Frank's diary has since been published in at least 70 languages and has become the most famous testimony of the Holocaust.



On 25 June 1947, Anne Frank's Het Achterhuis (The Secret Annex) *was published in Dutch in a small edition of 3,036 copies.*

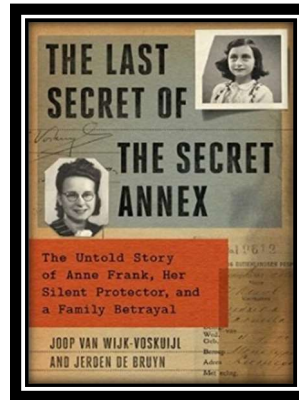
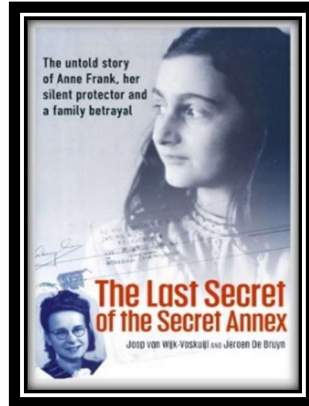


Otto had a hard time finding a publisher in the United States. *After the manuscript had been turned down by 10 publishers,* Doubleday publishers decided to acquire the rights. The publication of *Anne's Diary in America in 1952 had a cautious start.*

Anne Frank's entire original diary is in Dutch.

THE LAST SECRET OF THE SECRET ANNEX

The extraordinary, never-before-told story of Bep Voskuijl, Anne Frank's closest friend during the 761



THE UNTOLD STORY OF ANNE FRANK, HER SILENT PROTECTOR AND A FAMILY BETRAYAL

Bep was just twenty-three when the Franks went into hiding and she risked her life to protect them, plunging into Amsterdam's black market under the noses of German soldiers and Dutch spies to source food and medicine for the Annex. In those cramped quarters, Bep and Anne's friendship blossomed. As this book reveals, while she was sharing meals with Anne Frank, Bep's sister Nelly - whose name was scrubbed from Anne's published diary - was collaborating with the Nazis.

Written by Bep's son, *The Last Secret of the Secret Annex* interweaves her story with Anne Frank's and Nelly's to show us the Secret Annex as we've never seen it before. We follow Bep after the war as she struggles to build a life in the shadow of her past, unable to get over losing Anne nor put to rest the horrifying suspicion that she had been betrayed by her flesh and blood.

Captivating and unsettlingly suspenseful, *The Last Secret of the Secret Annex* is a portrait of ordinary families caught between the victims and persecutors, in which collaborators and resisters often lived under the same roof. With a moving mother-son relationship at its heart, it explores how historical trauma is inherited from one generation to the next, and how sometimes keeping a secret hurts far more than revealing a shameful truth.