



**State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives**

**Charles and Doris Gross Papers,
1940-2001**

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator:

Gross, Charles
Gross, Doris Moskovitz

Inclusive Dates:

1940-2001

Scope & Content:

Consists of photographs, clippings, notes, and certificates which document the lives of a young Jewish couple living and working in Nashville, Tennessee, during World War II. The collection contributes to our understanding of life on the wartime home front and captures Nashville's connection to the Jewish diaspora of the early 20th century.

Physical Description/Extent:

.5 cubic feet

Accession/Record Group Number:

2019-066

Language:

English

Permanent Location:

VIII-F-5

Repository:

Tennessee State Library and Archives, 403 Seventh Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243-0312

Administrative/Biographical History

From 1903 to 1906, another series of savage pogroms in the Pale of Russia* killed and mutilated thousands of Jews. In 1910, not long after his wife died in childbirth, 31-year-old Max Makofsky and his son fled Molchot, a shtetl in Belarus (Russian Poland), and arrived in America among the great waves of immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. In 1900-1915, some 15 million immigrants arrived in the United States, almost 2 million of them Jews from the Russian Empire.

U.S. immigration officers changed the name Makofsky to Moskovitz. The Moskovitz family, having escaped the anti-Semitic persecution so prevalent in their country at that time, settled in Nashville, Tennessee. A grandson described Max as “a humble shoemaker (who) lived for many years above his shop...on Cedar Street (now Charlotte Avenue).” (Email to processor, July 31, 2019)

At the opening of the Great War in August 1914 and according to family, young widow Leah Gelfand and her two boys left their shtetl of Lubonich in Belarus and followed her sister Ethel to Nashville. (Numerous Lubonich families settled here.) Leah and Max Moskovitz married, blending their families and begetting four girls of their own.

Max and Leah’s daughter Doris was born on August 12, 1922. According to family, Doris acquired the lifelong nickname “Dooley” when she was a child. In those days, an Irishman named Dooley delivered ice in a truck painted with his name. Doris often ran after it. To tease her for something that had angered them, her brothers started calling her “Dooley” after the ice truck. The moniker stuck, and everyone in Nashville knew Doris as Dooley. (The names are used interchangeably in this finding aid.) Dooley attended Hume-Fogg High School.

Abraham Gruszka and Sarah Bailey Turek emigrated from Poland (Russian Empire) to the United States at the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, he from Pultusk in 1914 and she from Maków Mazowiecki later. Immigration officials at Galveston, Texas, anglicized the Gruszka as Gross. After surviving the 1915 Galveston hurricane (similar to the Great Storm of 1900), Abe and his brothers relocated to Chicago where Abe opened a small shoe repair shop.

When Abe and Sarah married, she kept the Turek name. Their son Charles Gross was born in Chicago on August 2, 1921. With the Stock Market crash of 1929, Abe lost everything. Family lore has it that when he went to the bank to withdraw money for rent, groceries, and employee wages, the bank had closed. Some 9,000

banks failed during the Great Depression. The family moved to a slum (where they were ill-treated), but when Abe heard things were better in Tennessee, the family moved to Dickson and shortly after to Nashville.

Another world war exploded in Europe in 1939, though the United States did not officially join the fight until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in late 1941. According to the *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, Nashville mayor Thomas Cummings

induced Aviation Corporation of California in 1939 to build adjacent to the Berry Field airport a factory that would evolve with the needs and innovations in flight. The \$9 million plant, with its projection to employ seven thousand, began by manufacturing personal airplanes and military observation planes. Bought by Vultee Aircraft in 1940, the plant built P-38 Lightning fighters and became the region's first defense plant. Employing a good number of women as its aircraft workers during wartime, the Vultee Aircraft factory produced its Vultee Vengeance. This plane was used by U.S., British, and British colonial units and saw action in Burma and India, but the dive-bomber never lived up to its expected potential.

Charles Gross married "Dooley" Moskovitz on October 2, 1942, at the Gay Street Synagogue in Nashville. Both had graduated from Hume-Fogg High School (Charles in the same class as Dinah Shore) and soon went to work at the newly-opened Vultee Aircraft plant. Prescient decisions had led Charles to undertake training in work related to war industry. Even before Pearl Harbor, he had completed courses in aircraft sheet metal work at the Nashville Aircraft School and engineering drawing and elementary machine design at the Vanderbilt University School of Engineering.

Because of Charles's education and knowledge, he quickly earned promotions at Vultee. From the welding department he went to the engineering department and made director of plant layout. (As shown by the certificates in folders 1-4, Charles continued his education throughout the war.) At about 21 years of age, he was in charge of the production process design. Several of the 8x10 glossy photographs show Charles demonstrating production using a miniature plant layout and balsawood model P-38 fighters and Vengeance dive bombers. According to his grandson Randall Gross, Charles traveled to Los Angeles to study production methods and processes at Lockheed and applied his understanding at Vultee. He also visited New Orleans to set up aircraft production and made a lengthy stay in Allentown, Pennsylvania, as an advisor. Dooley accompanied him on both occasions.

Lockheed Martin claimed that the P-38 Lightning proved its worth in North Africa. There, according to the company, a hysterical German pilot surrendered to Allied forces in Tunisia, pointing up to the sky and repeating *der Gableschwanz*

Teufl over and over. Once it was translated, U.S. officials realized the focus of the pilot's madness, and the P-38 had a new nickname: "Fork-tailed Devil."

The snapshots (folders 8-16) in the collection mostly depict an early social aspect of Charles and Dooley's lives: there are a few of Charles at Vultee and Dooley with her Vultee coworker-girlfriends. Other photo prints show the couple sightseeing in New Orleans and Allentown; a wedding party outside the Vine Street Temple; Dooley sitting in a "V" flower garden in Allentown; servicemen; Dooley in New York City with the Zuckerman family. A photo of special significance bears the label, "Going to the VJ parade, Aug. '45."

Numerous Rosie the Riveters assembled aircraft at Vultee during its war production phase. According to his grandson Randall, Charles Gross noticed that many women developed serious back and leg pain due to standing all day welding metal and riveting, so he set himself to figuring out a solution. He decided to recycle some old rubber tires discarded by the plant and make mats on which the Rosies could stand. After the war, Charles and his business partner Max Greenberg started Tennessee Mat Company in Nashville. The company, still in existence with headquarters in Smyrna, is a world leader in industrial ergonomics.

For more personal narrative of the Charles and Dooley Gross wartime story, see the notes in folder 7.

*By the 19th century, the Pale of Settlement comprised all of Russian Poland, Lithuania, Belarus (Belorussia), most of Ukraine, the Crimean Peninsula, and Bessarabia.

Organization/Arrangement of Materials

Papers are arranged alphabetically by document type.

Conditions of Access and Use

Restrictions on Access:

None

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:

While TSLA houses an item, it does not necessarily hold the copyright on the item, nor may it be able to determine if the item is still protected under current copyright law. Users are solely responsible for determining the existence of such instances and for obtaining any other permissions and paying associated fees that may be necessary for the intended use.

Index Terms

Personal Names:

Clark, Ed, 1911-2000
Greenberg, Max
Gross, Charles
Gross, Doris Moskovitz
Gruszka, Abraham
Gruszka, Sara
Jackson, Andrew, 1767-1845
Knudsen, William S., 1879-1948
Moskovitz, Leah
Moskovitz, Max
Silverman, Alvin Julius

Corporate Names/Organizations/Government Bodies:

Congregation Ohabai Sholom (Nashville, Tenn.)
Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation. Nashville Division
Gay Street Temple (Nashville, Tenn.)
Tennessean (Nashville, Tenn.: 1972)
Tennessee Mat Company (Nashville, Tenn.)
Vultee Aircraft, Inc., Nashville Division

Subjects:

Aircraft industry -- Employees
Aircraft industry -- Tennessee -- History
Aircraft industry -- United States -- Management
Airframes -- Design and construction
Airplane factories -- United States -- History -- 20th century
Airplanes -- Motors -- 20th century
Antisemitism -- Russia -- History -- 19th century
Antisemitism -- Russia -- History -- 20th century
Antisemitism -- United States -- History -- 20th century
Bowlers
Defense industries -- Tennessee
Emigration and immigration -- Social aspects
Jewish diaspora
Jews -- Migrations
Jews -- Tennessee
Lightning (Fighter plane) -- History -- Sources
Pogroms -- Russia
Rivets and riveting, Aircraft
Vengeance (Dive bomber) -- History -- Sources
Vultee airplanes
World War, 1939-1945 -- Jews -- United States

World War, 1939-1945 -- Social aspects -- United States
World War, 1939-1945 -- Tennessee -- Nashville -- Participation, Female
World War, 1939-1945 -- War work -- Tennessee -- Nashville

Geographic Names:

Allentown (Pa.) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources
Belarus -- History -- 20th century -- Sources
Europe -- Emigration and immigration
Los Angeles (Calif.) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources
Maków Mazowiecki (Poland) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources
Nashville (Tenn.) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources
New Orleans (La.) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources.
Pułtusk (Poland) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources
Russia -- History -- 20th century -- Sources
United States -- Emigration and immigration

Document Types:

Black-and-white photographs
Certificates
Clippings (information artifacts)
Notes (documents)
Xerographic copies

Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition:

The Charles and Doris Gross Papers were donated to the Tennessee State Library and Archives by Randall Gross, August 10, 2018.

Processing and Administrative Information

Preferred Citation:

Charles and Doris Gross Papers, 1940-2001, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee

Processing Information:

The papers were processed by Susan Gordon, July 2019.

Related Archival Materials:

Randall Gross gifted portraits of his paternal great-grandparents to the Tennessee State Museum in Nashville. He donated Gross family photographs, films, and other memorabilia to the Annette Levy Ratkin Jewish Community Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

CONTAINER LIST

Contents/Item Title	Date	Box	Folder
Certificates -- Gross, Charles -- Nashville Aircraft School	1941	1	1
Certificates -- Gross, Charles -- Society of Applied Industrial Engineering	1945	1	2
Certificates -- Gross, Charles -- Vanderbilt University, School of Engineering	1941-1944	1	3
Certificates -- Gross, Charles -- Vultee Aircraft; Consolidated Vultee, Inc.	1942, 1944	1	4
Clippings -- Vultee (7) -- Convair bowling team; Crowd of workers (Ed Clark photo); Dept. 22-Tool Planning, Dept. 51; New PA System; "Not Doll Furniture"; Tooling Dept. Girls, Christmas; Vultee Vulcans basketball team	undated	1	5
Clippings -- "On the Home Front...."	Aug. 16, 2001	1	6
Notes -- Gross, Randall	undated	1	7
Photographs -- 1940 -- Identified as Dooley with Ida Bell Demonbreun and other Vultee women on a front porch; Dooley, crouching, outdoors in a front yard with friends	1940	1	8
Photographs -- Gross, Charles and Dooley with a girlfriend friend at The Parthenon; Dooley and a girlfriend with an unidentified soldier at The Parthenon	1941	1	9
Photographs -- Gross, Charles at Vultee Aircraft office; Charles pointing at plant layout board; Vultee employees working on plant layout; Moskovitz, Dooley and co-workers posing outdoors at Vultee Aircraft (2)	1942	1	10
Photographs -- Sergeant First Class Morris Levine (Dooley's first cousin) sitting on steps with a "buck" sergeant and a private first class. Photo bears a censor's stamp on backside.	Oct. 24, 1943	1	11
Photographs -- Moss, Harry (in uniform), and son Sidney in Detroit	May 1944	1	12

Photographs -- New Orleans, Louisiana -- Gross, Charles -- "Down by the River"; Charles at Lake Ponchartrain; Charles posing next to Louisiana Purchase plaque; Charles in the French Quarter; Charles perched in a clown's mouth; Charles looking into the barrel of a canon; Charles standing in front of the Clark Mills equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson	Feb. 1945	1	13
Photographs -- Allentown, Pennsylvania -- Gross, Charles and Doris (Dooley) Gross -- Charles inspecting a plaque recognizing the founding of Allentown; Dooley standing on outdoor steps; "Dooley and the Lion"; Dooley standing on a suburban sidewalk (picture printed as a double image of a chain link fence); Charles and Dooley standing on the steps of their home; Dooley, "No, not Niagara just a park scene in Allentown, Pa."; Dooley sitting in a "V" flower garden	1945		14
Photographs -- Nashville and New York -- Dooley and friends "Going to the 'VJ' parade, Aug. '45," 7 th Ave. N., Nashville; Zuckerman, Milt and Lil Zuckerman, New York City (?); Lil and Milt Zuckerman (in uniform); Dooley Gross, Milt Zuckerman (in uniform), and Lil Zuckerman, New York City	1945		15
Photographs -- Undated -- Gross, Doris and a female friend; Willie Levine (Doris's first cousin) and Syd Stewart; Alvin and Sonia Silverman wedding party at Vine Street Temple (4); Uncle Morris Kornman, in Navy uniform, aboard ship with a buddy; Sylvia (Doris's cousin) and David Manas wedding; Milt and Lil Zuckerman in New York; Milt and Lil outside the Rainbow Room, New York; Corporal Milt Zuckerman, 8 th Air Force; Alvin and Sonia Silverman with Dooley; Harry Moss (Doris's brother), U.S. Army Examiner stamp on photo backside; Harry Moss in uniform (real picture postcard)	undated		16

Photographs (8x10) -- Vultee -- Gross, Charles explaining plant layout to an unidentified woman, 1942; Charles pointing out some aspect of his plant design to three men, 1944; Charles and three foremen examine a model of the plant, 1944; Charles and his team with a 3-D model of the plant layout, with the woman at right wearing a Squad Leader badge, 1944; Lt. General William S. Knudsen watches as Charles points out some aspect of P-38L manufacture. (The unnamed man using crutches carved the model bombers from balsawood), 1944; Charles and the man with crutches looking at some aspect of the plant layout model, 1944; Going-away party of Dooley Gross (center left), 1945; Charles and a group of onlookers gathered around a Greyhound bus, 1945. (Vultee experimented with bus manufacture after the war.); Convair keglers, "The 8-Balls," left to right, George Albright, Aubrey Gregory, Charlie Gross, John Jenkins, and Jim Hestle, 1945	1942-1945		17
Xerographic copies -- "Based on Tired Feet," Tennessee Mat	1951	1	18