

## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht



Selma Holländer, my mother's younger sister, was born in 1920 and so was five years younger than my mother. Her fate was quite different from that of my mother who emigrated to the U.S. with a visa in 1937. My aunt was saved only because in 1939, shortly before WWII broke out, she was able to go the U.K.. Artur Holländer, their younger brother, was not as fortunate and perished in a concentration camp.

Freddy Furcht, who was nine years older than my aunt, also escaped certain death in 1939 when he was able to flee to Shanghai, half-way around the world from where Selma Holländer would find refuge.

Because they never had children together I decided to devote a chapter to them. Their stories illustrate another aspect of the lives of German Jews. I depart from the layout of the previous chapters by first discussing their lives after marriage and then treating their pre-marriage lives separately.

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**Selma Edith Holländer** 1920.09.17, Hilchenbach -- 1982.07.02, New York

**Freddy Fritz Furcht** 1911.07.04, Frankfurt -- 1995.06.30, New York

His birth name was Fritz, but he was referred to by everyone as "Freddy".

marriage: 1955.09.04, New York.

Selma was thirty-five and Freddy forty-four at the time of their marriage. I vaguely recall my mother talking about placing an advertisement, seeking a marriage partner for my aunt, in the German-Jewish newspaper *Aufbau* and I presume that is how they met. The marriage took place in our apartment and it was officiated by Rabbi

## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht

Justin Schloss, the husband of Selma's cousin Senta Miller.

Selma and Freddy lived not far from us and sometimes, especially when I was in college, I ate supper at their house. Later on they lived in the same apartment building as my parents. Selma's rheumatism became increasingly worse over the years and she suffered from a deformation of the hands and the slightest bruise created severe problems. She had already suffered from this in the U.K. as shown by a doctor's note [LBI 211, p. 62]. Freddy took very good care of her and I believe that they were a truly loving couple. They travelled more than my parents, visiting Canada, the UK (London and also Wales to visit Selma's cousin Arthur Schaefer), France, Freddy's home town of Frankfurt (I do not know if they visited Selma's home town of Hilchenbach), Washington, D.C., and Florida where they visited Selma's cousins. The following photograph was probably taken on an excursion in Florida:



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### Selma Holländer

The parents and ancestors of my aunt are discussed in the chapter “The Hilchenbach Group” and she appears in several of the photographs of that chapter. More photographs appear on the DVD and [LBI 211, p. 69 ff.]

The picture below on the left shows Selma at about the age of three with my mother and the one on the right shows her at the age of thirteen.

## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht



Next is a school picture with Selma standing on the far right in the second row. On the back is a dedication to her paternal grandfather Levy Holländer on his eightieth birthday.<sup>DVD</sup> This occurred in 1931 when Selma was eleven years old so the photograph must date from either 1931 or 1930.



I also have a copy of a poem that she wrote in January 1931. It was sent to me by Frau Gertrud Menn of Hilchenbach, who was a classmate of Selma's brother Artur Holländer.

## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht

Gedankens Lustigheit heute,  
 Gedankens Lustigheit Ueber,  
 Es sind ja die schönsten Tage,  
 Die Anfang von neindem zinsend.

Memories of schooldays,  
 Memories of happy times in school,  
 These are the nicest of times,  
 They will never return

In tiefster Erinnerung  
 an  
 dich  
 Selma Holländer

With lasting thoughts  
 from your  
 schoolmate  
 Selma Holländer

Gilfamburg, am 28.1.1932.

Selma probably left school at the age of fourteen, as did my mother. This would have been in 1934 or 1935 when the Nazis were already in power. From a letter of recommendation written by her first employer in Great Britain [LBI 211, p.59] we learn, as I had expected, that she was unable to work before leaving Germany.

On March 20, 1939 she was required to register with the police. Notice the huge letter J which stands for *Jude*. Her name was changed by the Nazis from Selma Edith Holländer (which is how she signed her name) to Selma Edith Sara Holländer [LBI 211, p.131], Sara being the name added to the true names of all Jewish women.

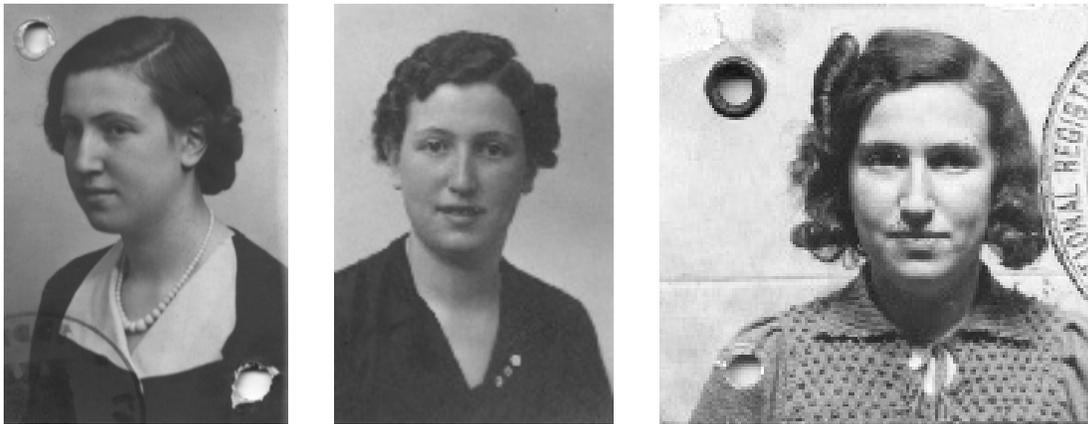
Name: <i>Gilfamburg</i>	
Geburtsdatum: <i>17.03.1922</i>	
Geburtsort: <i>Gilfamburg</i>	
Mutter: <i>Holländer</i>	
Vater: <i>Edith Sara</i>	
Geburtsdatum: <i>17.03.1922</i>	
Geburtsort: <i>Gilfamburg</i>	
Beruf: <i>Schülerin</i>	
Unterschrift: <i>Selma Holländer</i>	

	
	
Selma Edith Holländer (Geburtsdatum von Sara Edith Holländer)	
Stadt Gilfamburg, am 20. März 1939	
Der Bürgermeister <i>[Signature]</i>	

## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht

From her British alien registration booklet [LBI 211, p.34-45.], issued on July 11, 1939, we learn that my aunt had arrived in the U.K. on July 4 with a German passport issued on June 19. The picture on the left below is identical to the one on the German police registration form and because of the two holes I suspect that it was the one used on the passport. The centre photograph has the date June 6, 1939 written on the back and it is the same as the one in the British alien registration booklet. The one on the right has “[Na]tional Regist[ration]” stamped on the right and is also perforated and probably dates from 1940 or 1941.



The fact that she had a German passport suggests that she was not, contrary to what I had assumed, part of the *Kindertransport*, a reference to the saving of many children by organized groups.<sup>DVD</sup> It is interesting to note that the immigration officer copied the Nazi-added name of “Sara” from the passport to the alien registration book [LBI 211, p.134]. The booklet is filled with police stamps, first in Aberdeen and then in Glasgow. Selma had most likely gone to the Aberdeen region because her aunt Hedwig Holländer -- who had arrived in June of 1939 -- was employed as a house keeper by a school principal named James Morrison.



## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht

Selma started working as a mother's helper on July 14, just seven days after arriving. According to a letter of recommendation [LBI 211, p. 59] she could not speak a word of English and she and the mother communicated via a dictionary. From the details of the letter of recommendation the above picture dates from her first position:

At some point Selma made the following detailed list of the salient dates of her stay in the U.K.:

Arrived July 4. 1939 →

Worked July 11 1939 - May 30. 1940  
X Jack Everett. Middx.  
25 Kynaston Close, Harrow Weald

Interned May 30. 1940 - June 3. 1941

X Worked June 23. 1941 - Nov. 22. 1941  
Mrs. Lewack, 34 Carlton Place Aberdeen

Unemployed Nov. 22. 1941 - March 10. 1942

X Worked March 10. 1942 - May 31. 1943  
Mrs. Emely Sachs, 25 Dumbreck Road }  
11 Bonavie Road }  
248 Kenmore Street Glasgow

Unemployed May 31. 1943 - Sept. 27. 1945

Worked Sept 27. 1945 - Sept. 2. 1947  
Mrs. Finkler 265 Kingsacre Rd, Rutherglen  
X 39 Kingsbridge Drive "

Unemployed Sept 2. 1947 - Nov. 28. 1947 Left for U.S.A.

There are two intervals of particular interest. The first is the period from May 30, 1940 to June 3, 1941 when she was interned, along with many other Jewish refugees, on the Isle of Man, which is located in the Irish Sea.<sup>DVD</sup> The second interval of time goes from May 31, 1943 to September 27, 1945. The latter period of sixteen months may correspond to what one of her Schaefer cousins (I believe that it was Charlotte; see "The Hilchenbach Group") told me during a phone call I had made after the death of Freddy. She said that Selma had had a child with a Canadian -- as I recall -- soldier and that the baby was given up for adoption. At first I was going to try to locate this first cousin (which would make a grand total two for me), but at this late date I thought that it might not be for the best.

## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht



**Selma: 1942, between her cousins Charlotte and Erna Schaefer, and 1946**

In December 1947 Selma was able to come to the U.S.. I was seven years old, but I remember that day as my mother told me to go to my friend Irene's house when I came home from school. I had never known that I had an aunt, just as I was never told about grandparents.

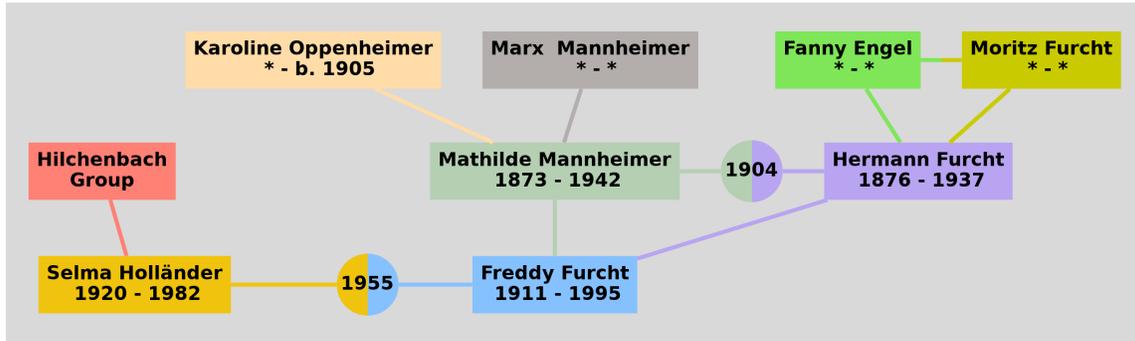
The following formal photograph dates from 1948 and thus not long after her arrival in the States.



## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht

### Freddy Furcht

The following chart shows the ancestors of Freddy Furcht through his grandparents, who were the only ancestors that I could identify.



I knew Freddy from about the age of fifteen when he became engaged to my aunt Selma. I always thought of him as a nice, friendly person who took care of my aunt, with her serious problems of arthritis. At some point I learned from him that he had been in Shanghai and that he had a deceased brother, but little else. As was the case with my parents and Selma he kept many documents and in perusing them I was able to reconstruct part of his earlier life. Perhaps the most interesting document was his German passport which he, contrary to my parents and Selma, had kept. Then after he had passed away I learned that his mother had been part owner of a building in Dresden, Germany and as part of the process of dealing with Freddy's estate I learned more about his ancestors.

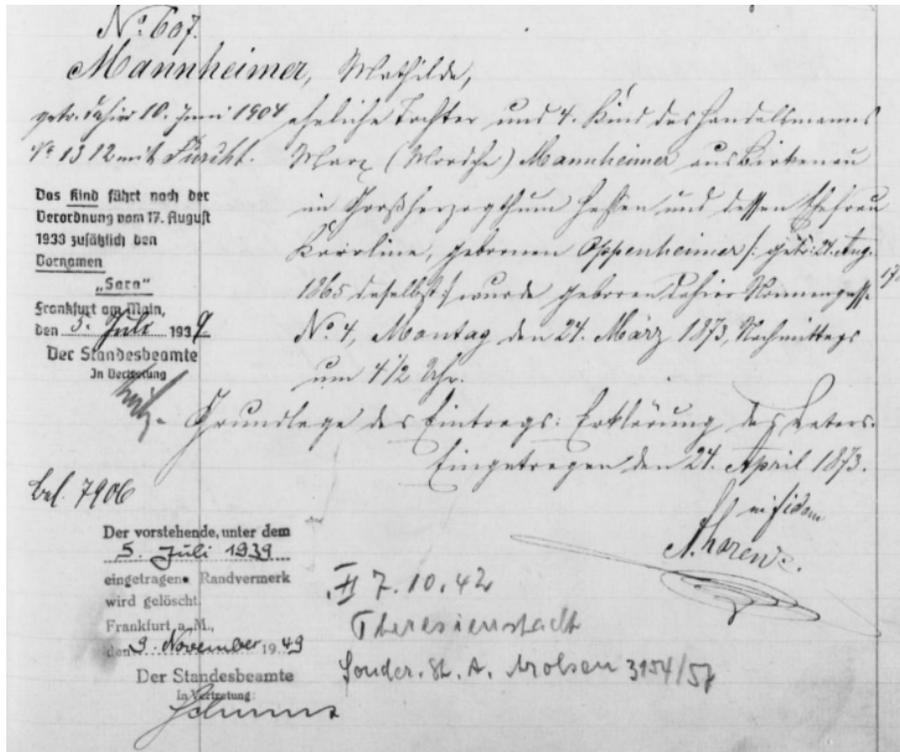
Just as was the case with my mother and Selma, Freddy's life can be divided into two completely distinct periods:

### Family and Life in Germany

Since I do not have any documentary knowledge of Freddy's life before his sojourn in Shanghai I shall start by discussing his immediate family:

The following is the BD of Mathilde Mannheimer, Freddy's mother, and is of special interest as it provides us with a great deal of information, to an extent that I have not previously seen. In the text we have, as usual, her date of birth and the name of her parents. In addition, in the upper left corner we learn the date of her marriage. Just below we learn that on July 5, 1939 "Sara" was added to her given name (according to the stamp the law decreeing this addition dates from August 1933, some five months after the Nazis took control of Germany). In turn this change of name was revoked (bottom left) on November 3, 1949. Finally, at the very bottom is the mention that Mathilde Mannheimer had perished in the Theresienstadt (Czechoslovakia) camp.<sup>DVD</sup>

## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht



**Mathilde Mannheimer** 1873.03.24, Frankfurt -- 1942.10.07, Theresienstadt [BD, MD, DD]

**Hermann Furcht** 1876.03.20, Wassertrüdigen -- 1937.09.23, Frankfurt [BD, MD, DD]

Wassertrüdigen is in Bavaria so Hermann Furcht had moved quite a distance from his birthplace.

marriage: 1904.06.10, Frankfurt [AM].

From his DD we learn that Hermann Frucht was a merchant, as well as an officer of a synagogue. From the following photograph it appears that he was the proprietor of a feather store, the feathers being used in pillows and mattresses.



## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht

Here is a photograph of the family taken at some point in the mid 1920s.



A post-July 1927 document from the Frankfurt archives is some sort of administrative file on the family and of particular interest are the names, and related dates, of the three boys born to the couple:

Kind			
F. Emil Moritz	4.5.05	↳	Aug 15/1908 geb. in
K. Karl Elias	7.1.09	↳	Pct. 25.5.35.7.26 ca 21.11.26
O. Fritz	4.7.11	↳	7.18.31.0.28
K. Karl am 4.1.27 New York City, New York			

children:

1. **Emil Moritz Furcht** 1905.05.04, Frankfurt -- 1908.07.15, Frankfurt.
2. **Karl Elias Furcht** 1909.01.07 Frankfurt -- official date: 1943.12.31, [U.S.A.].

The above document states that Karl Furcht left for New York City on January 4, 1927, just before his eighteenth birthday. In a notarized statement dated April 4, 1958 Freddy wrote he had not had any sign of life from Karl since 1932. A document from the civil registry office in Berlin dated July 23, 196[?] states that following a decision of the Frankfurt municipal court dated April 25, 1959 Karl Furcht was declared deceased and that the date of death is declared to be December 31, 1943. We further learn that his last known place of residence

## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht

was Chicago.

3. **Freddy Furcht** 1911.07.04, Frankfurt -- 1995.06.30, New York; see above.



Freddy must have been greatly affected by the disappearance of Karl because he carried with him, to Shanghai and then New York, three photographs of Karl. Two of them were made in Stuttgart, but the one below, on the left, has “Wellington” printed on the back. This does not sound like a name that a German firm or city would adopt. In fact I did not think that there would be such a historic English name in the U.S., but it turns out that there is a Wellington, Ohio, which is not that far from Chicago. It is also possible that Wellington was the name of the photographer and not of a town. The formal photograph of Freddy in the middle is the same as his passport picture, so it was probably taken in late 1938 or early January 1939. I am at a loss to explain the photograph on the right. In Freddy's album the date is given as “1940” which was when he was in Shanghai. Is this a server's uniform? Perhaps the date is wrong and it was taken in Frankfurt.

Freddy left Germany when he was twenty-seven years old. On his 1939 passport his occupation is listed as *Kaufmann*, i.e. a salesperson, so perhaps he worked with his father in the feather shop. The only other indications of his pre-departure life are the following photographs of two women, or perhaps they are of the same woman. The photograph on the left has “Edith Gander 1936” written on the back, whereas nothing is written on the back of the photograph on the right. That Freddy kept these two photographs, together with the formal nature of the photograph on the right, suggests a fairly serious relationship, but I have no way of knowing.



## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht

as “Fritz Israel Furcht” underneath the photograph. On page 4 it is stated that the passport would no longer be valid after January 19, 1940. Further, to make sure that Freddy would not return, a stamp on page 9 says that by leaving Germany he would no longer be a citizen as of January 27, 1939. Page 7 has three entries: permission from the police in Frankfurt, dated January 20, to go to Shanghai; a bank stamp, dated January 21, concerning “departure” (*freigrenze*) money to the sum of \$4; and the stamp of the border police from January 24.

The very last page of the passport was stamped on January 26 in Genoa by, as suggested by the stamp “*Marittimo* [?]”, the harbour police as he left Italy. The first stop indicated in the passport, on February 9, was in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). I imagine that the steamship went east in the Mediterranean, down through the Suez Canal and then south around India. The next stop shown is in Hong Kong on February 20 and there is a stamp giving permission to go ashore. Finally, on page 13, we find two Chinese stamps one of which has “Fritz Furcht / Shanghai” in English. The date “36” was a puzzle, but it was explained to me that these are exit permit stamps and that 36 was the year counting from the foundation of the Republic of China in 1911. So “36” corresponds to 1947 and the 36-8-10 probably corresponds to August 10, 1947.



### Freddy Furcht: Shanghai, U.S. China Service?, U.S. travel document

Shanghai was one of the few places on earth before WWII where one could go without a visa. This was one of the treaty ports in which the British and French governments, starting in the nineteenth century, obtained concession rights from the Chinese government. There were about 30,000 Jewish refugees, along with other refugees, in Shanghai and some other cities, so Freddy was certainly not alone. There are several books and films about these Jews; see the references on the DVD. There are also several organizations and websites which are, totally or in part, devoted to these refugees. On one site ([www.chinafamilies.net](http://www.chinafamilies.net), record 7599) I found Freddy's address in 1944. The record indicates that he was not employed at the time. A letter of recommendation from the US China Service Command informs us that Freddy worked in the quartermaster department from mid-February to mid-June 1946.

## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht



Among the items that Freddy left was mail from his mother Mathilde Mannheimer. These include two cards, with writing on both sides, dated June 10, 1941 and August 8, 1941 respectively. These cards, which have the dimensions of a post card, do not have addresses so they must have been seen in envelopes. In addition there are two postcards, with writing only on the address side, which have postmark dates of October 10, 1941 and November 13, 1941.

This last postcard -- shown above -- consists of only four lines. I found the handwriting difficult to decipher, but as far as I can tell it reads: ...Bleiben Gesund/ ... / Grüßen u[nd] Küsse / Dein[?] ..., i.e. ... / stay well/ ... / love and kisses / Your ...

After the war Freddy, who was still in Shanghai, made inquiries about the fate of his mother. In a letter from April 8, 1947 from the tracing office of the World Jewish Congress he learned that Mathilde Mannheimer had been deported from Frankfurt on September 15, 1942 and had perished in Theresienstadt on October 7, 1942.

Among Freddy's documents was a guarantee affidavit, dated April 4, 1947, from a Henry Borris. This Henry Borris, who had himself been a refugee in Cuba, states that he was a cousin of Freddy [See below with the parents of Freddy's mother for the relationship]. With the help of this affidavit he received, on June 25, 1947, a travel document from the U.S. consulat in Shanghai. Freddy needed this document because he was considered to be a stateless person and was thus without a passport.

## Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht

Interestingly a stamp on the back of the affidavit indicates that he was admitted as part of the German quota. Then on August 25, 1947 Freddy arrived in San Francisco. From some photographs I learned that he was in Florida for a while, but I do not have any details. Nor do I know when he came to New York.

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## The Grandparents of Freddy Furcht

### The Parents of Mathilde Mannheimer

The names of her parents are given on both her BD and her MD:

**Karoline Oppenheimer** \* -- b. 1904.06.10, Frankfurt.

She was not alive at the time of the marriage of her daughter Mathilde Mannheimer.

One of the documents that I found was an announcement from the *Aufbau*, dated February 17, 1967, announcing the death of a Mathilde Oppenheimer, whose married name was Borris, and who had been born in Frankfurt around 1880. One of the signatories was a Henry Borris. As stated above a Henry Borris had acted as a guarantor for Freddy when he was applying for entry to the U.S. Further this Henry Borris said that he was a cousin of Freddy. From her birth date Mathilde Oppenheimer could not have been the sister of Karoline Oppenheimer, so she was probably the daughter of a brother of Karoline Oppenheimer. This would make Mathilde Oppenheimer a first cousin of Mathilde Mannheimer, which in turn says that Freddy and Henry Borris were second cousins,

**Marx Mosche Mannheimer** \*, Birkenau -- \*, Frankfurt?

marriage: 1867.08.24, Frankfurt? [the date is given on the BD of Mathilde Mannheimer].

children:

After Freddy passed away I learned that his mother had inherited, in March 1933, part of a building in Dresden. On the list of the new owners there were two other people named Mannheimer and I assume they were siblings of Mathilde Mannheimer.

**Jakob Mannheimer** 1870.04.08, Birkenau ? -- \* [DOC].

He was salesman and lived in Stuttgart in 1933.

A document from the Frankfurt archives lists a Jakob Mannheimer with the above information. Given that his father was from Birkenau and Mathilde Mannheimer was born in 1870, the document most likely refers to the present Jakob Mannheimer.

**Erna Mannheimer** Her married name was Erna Abraham.

## **Selma Holländer and Freddy Furcht**

**Mathilde Mannheimer** 1873.03.24, Frankfurt -- 1942.10.07, Theresienstadt; see above.

As executor of Freddy's estate I became involved in the process of redistributing the various partial titles to the Dresden property. As is typical for me I was interested in learning about the history of the building and the people who had been the owners.

The city of Dresden had been fire-bombed by the British air force over three nights in February of 1945. The human casualties were mainly among the civilian population and it was the historic centre, rather than the nearby military installations, that were destroyed.<sup>DVD</sup> The inherited property was located in this centre and the Nazis had not gotten around to confiscating it from the Jewish owners.

The three siblings had inherited their portion from a Hedwig Levi (1869-1931) the wife of Zacharias Mannheimer (1866-1924) who in turn was the brother of Marx Mannheimer, the father of the children. Thus they had inherited the property, not from their parents, but rather from their father's sister-in-law.

As to the monetary value of the property we eventually received about \$ 1,200, after the city has expropriated it, but I learned a lot and found it intellectually stimulating to do the research.<sup>DVD</sup>

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## **The Parents of Hermann Furcht**

The names of his parents are given on his MD:

**Fanny Engel** lived in Wassertrüdigen.

**Moritz Furcht** lived in Wassertrüdigen.

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