

# The Jewish Community of Laupheim and its Annihilation

Book Pages 521 - 531

## TREITEL, Rabbiner- Familie,

1 Synagogenweg

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*ROLF EMMERICH*

**Dr. Leopold Treitel**, rabbi, born January 7, 1845 in Breslau, died March 4, 1931 in Laupheim, married **Rebecca Treitel neé Brann**, born October 10, 1856 in Schneidemuehl, died October 5, 1936 in Laupheim

- **Dr. Otto Treitel**, born May 16, 1887 in Karlsruhe, died October 8, 1949 in Philadelphia/PA-USA
- **Dr. Emil Treitel**, born August 8, 1889 in Karlsruhe, died November 23, 1963 in Maspeth/NY-USA
- **Erich Treitel**, born January 21, 1897 in Laupheim, died August 28, 1982 in Buenos Aires/Argentina

After Rebecca Treitel's death in October 1936 Erich Treitel wrote in his diary: "With the death of our beloved mother my homeland is now completely lost". At that time he had been an immigrant for three years.

A further note says: „Back then I lost my fatherland and today I lost my home as well, now there's nothing left". Soon after this, there were no longer any members of this family left in Germany.

Leopold Treitel first studied philosophy and history in his hometown Breslau. In 1869 he completed his doctoral thesis on the ancient Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria. In addition to his studies at the university, he attended the Institute of Jewish Studies in Breslau, where he graduated in 1876 and then became a rabbi.

In 1872 the rabbi's future wife Rebecca, neé Brann, came to Breslau at the age of 16 from Schneidemuehl in West Prussia for training at the female teacher's seminary. Two years later she graduated with straight A's. At her Bat Mitzvah her father, the Rabbi Salomon Brann, gave her the blessing: "For wisdom always strive, my daughter; but know: Only piety can bless your life". Her way of life seems to have been embodied in this blessing.

During this time Rebecca's brother, Marcus Brann, studied alongside Leopold Treitel at the Institute of Jewish Studies. Clearly, this was when Rebecca first met her future husband. Leopold Treitel and Rebecca Brann got married in Schneidemuehl on May 30, 1882. The young rabbi held office in Briesen, West Prussia. Afterwards, from 1884-1894 he worked as a deputy for the rabbi in Karlsruhe, capital of Baden-Wuerttemberg. Their sons, Otto and Emil were born there in 1887 and 1889.

In addition to his responsibilities as a rabbi, Dr. Treitel taught religion at several schools in Karlsruhe. He wrote many books on biblical themes for educational purposes, such as „Rahab, die Seherin von Jericho". A copy can be found at the museum of Laupheim.

The Treitel's concern for the positive development of youth led to their working together for this cause. They founded a boarding school in Karlsruhe in order to provide secondary education for Jewish students coming from the areas outside of town. During this time young girls, including Jewish girls were admitted to secondary schools in Karlsruhe for the first time. This was noteworthy because up until this point women were not allowed to study at universities in Germany.

*Leopold and Rebecca Treitel.*

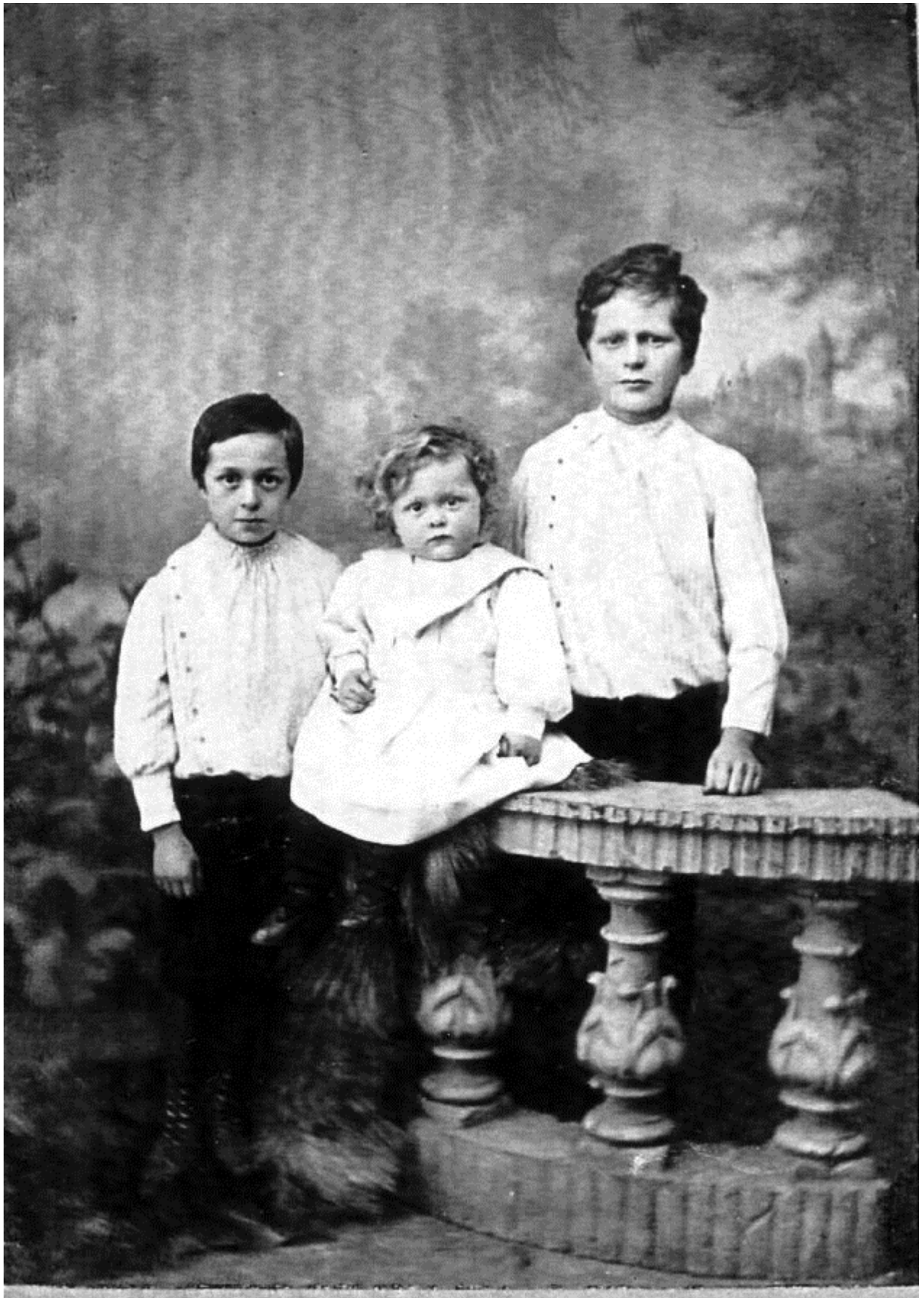
The boarding school, which was right next to the family's home, must have been a real challenge for Rebecca Treitel, especially since she had two small sons. Clearly, educating youth and service to the community was very important to her.



## **Laupheim**

In March 1895, the Treitel family moved to Laupheim to seek new purpose in life. Dr. Leopold Treitel had been elected Laupheim's new rabbi. Contemporaries reported that the Treitel family was ceremoniously collected via carriage at the train station in Laupheim. Their third son, Erich Josef, was born two years after their arrival in Laupheim. By now Leopold and Rebecca Treitel were central figures in the very lively Jewish community. In addition to his commitments at the synagogue, Dr. Treitel also presided over the Chevra Kadisha and the parish council, and taught religion classes.

In Laupheim he finally found time to continue working on his scholarly life's work: Theology and Philosophy of the ancient Philosopher Philo of Alexandria. This fundamental topic is a recurrent theme in his academic research. Furthermore, he published dozens of articles on Jewish theological and historical issues in the *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, which supported a line of historically critical reforms in Germany. Over and above that, he wrote for the *Israelitischen Gemeindeblatt für Württemberg* about some of pressing questions of the time. Early on Leopold Treitel was worried and alarmed by the growing anti-Semitism in Germany.



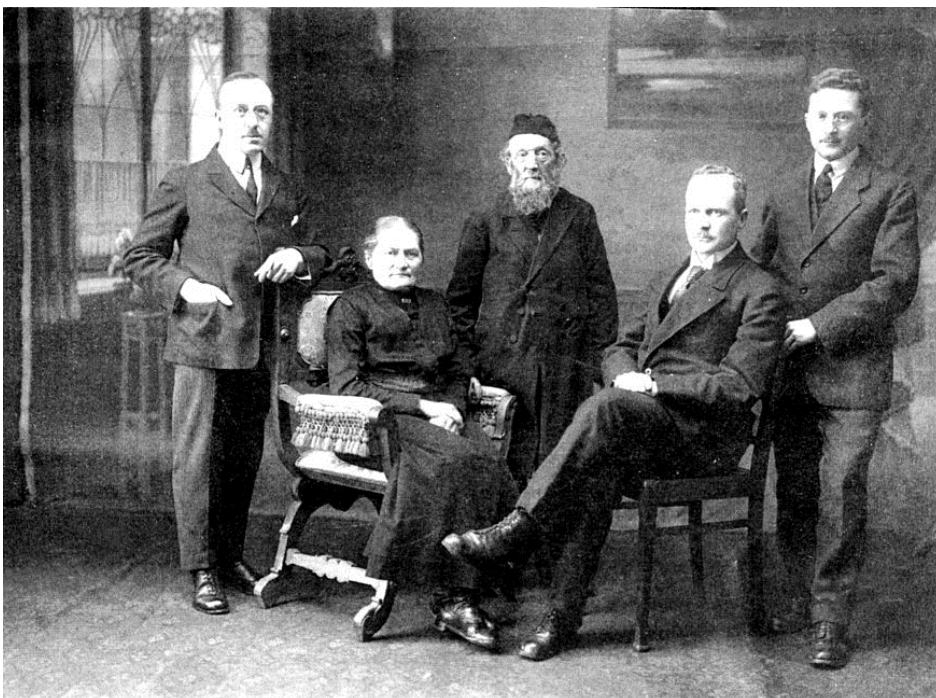
*Emil, Erich and Otto Treitel (from the left)*

The habits of this scholar were often described in newspaper articles, such as his penchant for walking through town with a long coat and a hat. The Rabbi did not take himself too seriously though and was able to laugh heartily when his appearance was imitated accurately and realistically, for instance at local festivals such as Purim.

In Addition to Rebecca Treitel's duties of raising and educating their sons and running the household of the rabinnate on her own, she also took care of many other tasks. For decades, she was chair of the charitable Jewish women's association, took care of the book club's library and established a Sunday school for girls. Beyond the Jewish community, Mrs. Rabbi, as she was called in Laupheim, was also very active, especially at the local German Red Cross. The imperial Verdienstmedaille that she received in honor of her service at the beginning of 1914 documents this.

A photograph from the First World War taken in 1916, shows the 60-year-old amongst wounded soldiers in front of a temporary military hospital of the local German Red Cross. She was awarded the Königlich-Wuerttembergische Charlottenkreuz for her outstanding commitment in 1916.

The difficult years of the First World War caused great suffering for the Jewish community of Laupheim. Rabbi Treitel had to console many a family of fallen soldiers. On Jewish holidays he would regularly write letters of encouragement to his community members who were soldiers on the front. It is very striking that his letters were not written in the typical military style common for this era. The worries of the Treitel family remained hidden, despite the fact that all three of their sons were fighting on the front line of the war.



*Emil, Rebecca, Rabbi  
Dr. Leopold, Otto and  
Erich Treitel.*

Rebecca Treitel's brother, the rabbi and historian Professor Marcus Brann, passed away in Breslau in 1920. This was a drastic loss for Rebecca and Leopold Treitel, both of whom had had lively personal and academic correspondence with him, especially regarding Dr. Treitel's publications. At that time Leopold Treitel was occupied with writing his concluding monograph *"Gesamte Theologie und Philosophie Philos von Alexandria"*. In 1923 thanks to the expert help of his energetic wife, his works were published. Seventy-eight year old Leopold Treitel the last rabbi of Laupheim retired in the same year of his publication, but continued to reside at the rabbinate.

Soon the times began to change. In the former federal state of Wuerttemberg there had already been anti-Semitic attacks in the mid-1920s. In 1924 the Jewish community had already held an information meeting against the local Nazi propaganda. Thanks to rabbi Treitel's good connections to the two churches and the local priests, it was possible to have the meeting in the Catholic community hall. It is noteworthy that the Nazis did not have a high resonance in Laupheim until 1933.



*Rebecca Treitel next to the memorial of the fallen soldiers at the Jewish cemetery on Totensonntag in 1932. For the last time on this day, the fallen Jewish soldiers (1914-1918) from Laupheim were honored by the Laupheim choirs and city officials at a memorial service.*

Rebecca Treitel published religious books for young adults; she wrote about Jewish life in German and Swiss magazines concerning basic everyday topics for many years. Her texts insightfully described events and ambitions of both the young and old in local synagogue communities. The bible school for girls, which she ran in the rabbinate until a few weeks before her death, was clearly popular. Esther Chafri told me many years later, "We discussed many biblical topics but thanks to her I also learned to appreciate Schiller and Heine." The Jewish book club's large library was quite helpful.

Mrs. Rabbi also put her strong educational talent to good use by giving free tutoring classes preferably in English, French and Latin. Next to her love for literature she had a soft spot for flowers. She could not resist a flowerpot in return for her tutoring.

Even though the grandparents became frail as they aged their grandchildren still visited them during their school breaks. Rebecca's grandchildren described her as an especially interesting playmate.

Rabbi Treitel died two months after his 86th birthday. His sons and their wives arrived just in time to say the last Jewish prayer for him. With the attendance of many mourners, several rabbis, and the local Christian priests Dr. Leopold Treitel was carried to his grave on March 5, 1931. At that time Rebecca Treitel was on bed rest due to a fever. After her husband's death, she spent another five years being a central figure in the lives of her sons, grandchildren and Laupheim's Jewish community. Working with young adults was still very important to her. The growing discrimination against Jews even in Laupheim after 1933 alarmed her, which brought about conversations and poems in which she sought answers to the causes and reasons. She passed away just before her 80th birthday, still in full mental health. She had thoughtfully said her goodbyes to her family in her last will, and in letters written to her family.

Rebecca Treitel had wished for a family tomb with her husband, which was not only beyond common Jewish tradition but was also a novelty at the Jewish cemetery.

## Dr. Otto Treitel

Born in Karlsruhe on May 16, 1887, Otto was the eldest son of the rabbi Treitel. He attended the Jewish primary school and then the local Latin school in Laupheim. He graduated from high school in Ulm and afterwards studied mathematics and physics in Munich. He received his doctorate just before the First World War.

Due to his outstanding qualifications he was commissioned to locate enemy artillery positions for which the measurement and calculation of sound waves played an important role. It is quite intriguing that his nephew Dr. Sven Treitel later worked as a geophysicist using similar methods of measurement.

After the war, Otto Treitel went on to study Botany and received his doctorate in this discipline as well. After his time as a teaching assistant at the Hochschule, it became evident that already during the Weimar Republic it was nearly impossible for a Jew to become a professor. Instead Otto Treitel found a position as a teacher at a secondary school for girls in Berlin; far below his qualification level.

On July 29, 1934 he married his hometown sweetheart Elsbeth Einstein, the youngest sister of Herta Nathorff. It turned out to be the last wedding of Laupheim's Jewish community.



*Front row, from the left: Heinz Neudorff, Dr. Herta Nathorff, born Einstein, Rebecca Treitel, the boy in the middle: Werner Treitel, Arthur Emil Einstein and Mathilde Einstein (parents of the bride).*

*Back row, from the left: Dr. Emil Treitel, Grete Treitel (his wife), the bride and groom Elisabeth, born Einstein, and Dr. Otto Treitel, two unknown women, in front Eva Treitel (12 years), Sofie Pauson, born Einstein, and her husband Martin Pauson, rightmost: Hans Treitel.*



Kommandantur  
des Staatl. Konzentrationslagers  
Sachsenhausen

Oranienburg, den 21. XII. 1938 19..

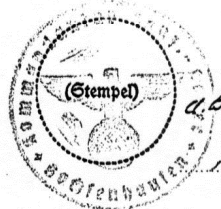
## Entlassungsschein

Der Jude Otto Treitel geb. am 16.5.87  
in Karlsruhe war in der Zeit  
vom 10.11.38 bis 21. XII. 1938 in einem Konzentrationslager untergebracht.  
Die Entlassung erfolgte am: 21. XII. 1938  
Seine Führung war: -.-

Auflage:

Sie haben sich hierauf zu verpflichten, dass Sie  
keine Propaganda in Deutschland und sofort  
bei der Stapoleitst. Zimmer 215  
zu melden.

Druck: Möller, Oranienburg



Der Lagerkommandant:

*[Signature]*  
u. Adjutant  
*[Signature]*

After the Reichskristallnacht, Otto Treitel was deported to the concentration camp Sachsenhausen. His cruel "treatment" ended on December 21, 1938. After several months of delay, the childless couple managed to immigrate to the United States in 1939. The film studio pioneer, Carl Laemmle had drawn up the affidavit already in 1938, which had made it possible for them to enter the country. Luckily, no one at the consulate realized that Carl Laemmle had already died on September 24, 1939.

In the United States, Otto Treitel received numerous opportunities to research botany. In the end he worked as a research professor at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, where he specialized in the elasticity of plant substances.

Translated excerpt from the magazine Aufbau, New York in October 1949:

"Professor Dr. Otto Treitel died October 8th in Philadelphia, PA. Initially a mathematician, he later turned toward sciences. After his expulsion from Berlin he worked as a teaching assistant and researcher at the State Universities of Michigan and Pennsylvania. His numerous scientifically and medically important works, on the topic of elasticity, received much accolade from his fellow researchers. The general public knew him through the excursions he led through nature."

## Dr. Emil Treitel

Emil was born August 8, 1889 in Karlsruhe, Baden. After his family moved to Laupheim, he attended the Jewish primary school and the Latin school. He graduated in Ulm and afterwards studied Medicine and Dentistry in Munich where he received his doctorate in July 1914.

As a volunteer during the First World War, 1914-1918, he was a field doctor and then Oberstabsarzt; he received three medals of bravery including the EK I. Following 1919, he opened a thriving practice for orthodontics and dentistry in Berlin-Wilmersdorf. Around 1920, he married Margarete Cohn from Berlin-Koepenick. The couple had three children: Eva (1922), Hans later called Henry (1924), and Werner (1928).

After 1935, the medical treatment of "Aryans" was made more difficult for all Jewish doctors and finally fully prohibited. Emil had hoped to be spared further persecution by the Nazis due to his medals of bravery from the First World War; but after the Kristallnacht he was taken to the concentration camp Sachsenhausen. When he referred to his medals they were torn off of him. After two weeks of agonizing uncertainty his wife Grete wrote a pleading letter to the Gestapo asking for her husband's release. Yet, he would still endure this wretched "treatment" for another four weeks.

After his release from the concentration camp, he left Germany once and for all. In early December 1939, days before his departure to Rotterdam, he visited his parent's grave in Laupheim one last time. He later wrote in a letter:

*"Just how many connections are there already between this little cemetery in Laupheim and America? Who would have thought that we would end up there as well. I can take nothing but the most essential appliances, linens and clothes. Nothing else."*

With an affidavit already issued by Carl Laemmle in 1938, the family was able to enter the USA. In his letter Laemmle expressed his high esteem for the parents Dr. Leopold Treitel and his wife Rebecca.

From 1944 onwards Dr. Emil Treitel worked as a doctor in Maspeth, NY. This was only possible because he had taken his USMLI (US doctoral exams) in the meantime. He died on November 23, 1963 in Maspeth. In his obituary in the Aufbau it states that he busied himself a great deal with Jewish issues and was active in the reform oriented, Abraham-Geiger-Loge.

# Erich Treitel

Erich was the youngest son of Rabbi Treitel born on January 21, 1897 in Laupheim. There, he attended the Jewish Volksschule and the Lateinschule. He graduated from high school in Ulm.

Between 1914 and 1916 he studied Electrical Engineering at the Polytechnic, Nuremberg. After his state examination, the young engineer volunteered to join the Bavarian army. Due to his skilled expertise, he was assigned a position at the telegraph department of the army in Alsace, France.

After the war, he worked for several companies in southern Germany, for instance at the Zeppelin factory in Friedrichshafen. Due to his war experiences he became an active pacifist and socialist. He joined the zionistic youth group Blau-Weiss, which he also promoted in Laupheim. At a Blau-Weiss excursion Erich Treitel met his future wife Rosa Bloch from Gailingen. They got married in August 1926 and their son Sven was born in March 1929.

Erich ran an electric store in Freiburg until the Nazis seized power in 1933. Thanks to an acute political awareness, the young family swiftly decided to give up the shop and turn their backs to Germany. At first Erich Treitel traveled by himself through Spain and Portugal until the family finally settled down in Palma de Mallorca and opened an electric store. However in July 1936, the Spanish Civil War broke out. The leftwing oriented Erich Treitel was accused of spying by the fascists, being sentenced to death, but was miraculously freed with the help of the German consulate. Apparently there were some decent people among the diplomats.

## A F F I D A V I T

STATE OF NEW YORK:SS  
CITY OF NEW YORK:SS

New York City, N. Y.

Carl Laemmle, age 71, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

That he is a resident of the State of California, residing at 1051 Benedict Canyon Drive, Borough of Beverly Hills:

That there are no dependents on him for support:

That he is a citizen of the United States, having become naturalized on June 28, 1889, in Cook County, Chicago, Illinois:

That he has retired as President of the Universal Pictures Corporation where he was a producer of motion pictures:

That he is worth in excess of one million dollars, consisting mostly of government bond securities and real estate:

That he is and always has been a law-abiding inhabitant and has not at any time been convicted of any crime or misdemeanor; that he does not belong to nor is he in any wise connected with any group or organization whose principles are contrary to organized government:

That no relationship exists to the immigrants whose names are Dr. Emil Treitel, his wife Grete Treitel and their three minor children, Eva Treitel, Hans Treitel and Werner Treitel:

That he is prepared and willing to furnish living quarters for Dr. Treitel and his family upon their arrival in New York City; that he will supply them with the necessary money so they can buy food and other necessities; that he will continue to take care of them until such time as Dr. Treitel is able to support himself and his family; that he will make every effort to help Dr. Treitel continue his profession as soon after his arrival in America as is possible:

That he is happy to accept this responsibility because he was a dear friend of the late parents of Dr. Treitel's. They were from his birthplace and he knew them well ever since his childhood:

That said immigrants who desire to come to America to join him and the rest of the family and whom he is most anxious to bring over, are now residing at Hohenzollerndamm 197, Berlin-Wilmersdorf Germany:

That he does hereby guarantee, promise and agree that he will properly receive and take care of them; that he will at no time allow any of them to become a public charge to any community or municipality; and he does further promise and agree that those immigrants who are under sixteen years of age will be sent to the public schools and will not be permitted to work until they reach that age:

That this petition and affidavit is made by him for the purpose of inducing the United States representative abroad to issue a visa to Emil Treitel, his wife Grete Treitel and their three minor children, Eva Treitel, Hans Treitel and Werner Treitel:

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 30th day of August, 1938.

Erich Treitel, born Jan. 21, 1897  
in Laupheim, Germany, now in N.Y.C.  
Emigration Application No. 1000

To get away from the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War, they traveled over Italy and headed for Argentina. Due to the fact that no visas were available, the young family had to live in various places in England, e.g. in London, for 15 months. After almost two years of moving from one place to another they finally arrived in Argentina. In Buenos Aires they had to build up a new life. The electrical engineer worked for General Electric; he later opened his own engineering office and became self-employed. As easy as this may sound, the emigration must have been immensely difficult for the whole family.



Erich Treitel died August 28, 1982 in Buenos Aires. Starting in the mid-1960s, he often visited his hometown Laupheim. During these occasions he met with his old school friends. His parent's gravestone also dates back to this time. Letters of gratitude from the mayor show that Erich Treitel donated more than once to charitable causes for the city of Laupheim.