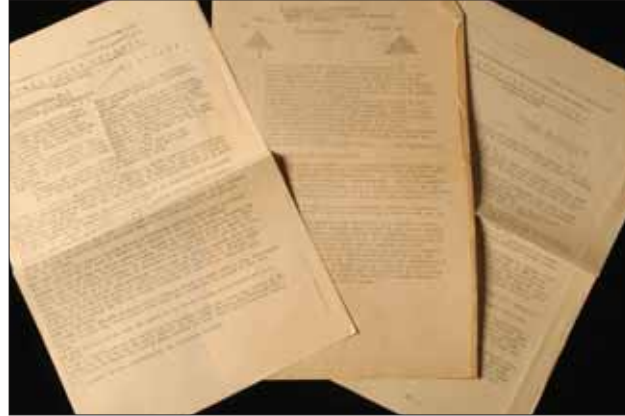


NEW [acquisitions]



photo: Jane Carter NMA



The Lesnikowski Collection

On 1 December 1949, the Anna Salen departed Naples with 1500 passengers on board, almost all of them 'displaced persons' leaving Europe for a new life in Australia. Two of the passengers, Henry and Ursula Piernikasz, published a daily newsletter called the Anna Salen Express in three languages — English, Polish and German. When the Anna Salen broke down and all passengers were transferred to the Skaugum at Aden, the newsletter became the Skaugum Observer. Originally bound for Sydney, the ship finally docked at Fremantle and its passengers were forced to disembark.

Sam Lesnikowski, a young Polish man, was migrating to Australia with his mother and recorded:

Mother and I were basically penniless with whatever we had, gone. I decided to emigrate. I wasn't quite certain at first where. It was a question of either Canada, United States — Australia didn't come into my mind at first because nobody even thought of Australia. Quite frankly not many people knew where it is but the appearance of the Australian immigration mission, in 1947 I think it was, and promising, not easy, but early visa and transport and work, was marvellous.

A self-confessed hoarder, Sam saved one copy of each of the 35 newsletters printed and, in April 2001, offered to donate them to the Museum.



Zdzislaw (Sam) Lesnikowski and his mother Kazimiera on route to Australia, Dec 1949
Photographer unknown

The newsletters provide a unique insight into shipboard life. 'Housekeeping' messages ask passengers to return cutlery and crockery to the kitchen, or to refrain from throwing rubbish overboard. There are reports of passengers bartering with merchants on the docks at Aden, and the shipboard Christmas festivities. Reference is also made to English lessons for the passengers, and various official procedures required as part of the immigration process.

Following his arrival in Fremantle, Sam was offered work in Adelaide. He was employed first in a timber mill, then in the factory at General Motors Holden, before finding clerical work in the city. According to Sam, 'life was again going back to normal, which is, you know, very important'.

Joanne Bach and the Content Development team
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