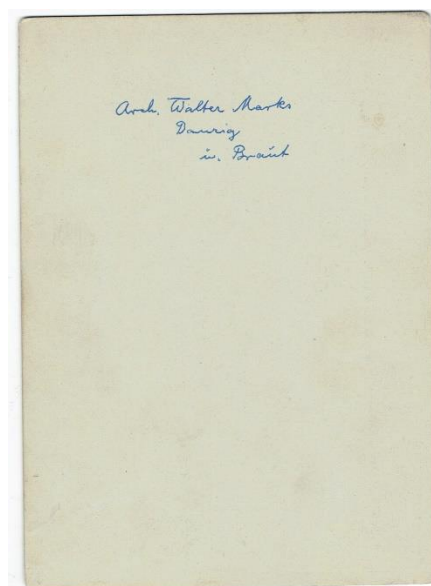


Walter & Gertrude Marks



I came across this happy couple on German eBay. Luckily it was labelled: I'm pleased to introduce architect **Walter Marks** and his bride from Danzig (Gdansk in today's Poland)!



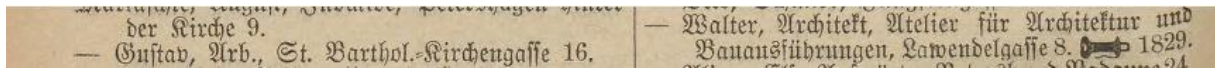
The original photo is very faded but with my limited photoshop skills I think I could bring it back to life.

I had a name and the profession of the groom and a location – that's what I consider a pretty good starting point for finding out more about this happy couple. And voilà! I found the marriage record from October 9th, 1902, of one architect Robert Max Walter Marks and his bride Gertrude Charlotte Zeitzmann from Danzig. Which means that we can date this photo to 1902!



Source: Ancestry

Robert Max Walter Marks was 28 years old at the time of his wedding. He was born October 4th, 1874, in Hannover, to parents August Robert Marks and Laura Dorothea née Gröning. In 1909, he and his wife Gertrude live in Danzig and he works as an architect in the Atelier für Architektur und Bauausführungen in Lawendelgasse 8 in Danzig.

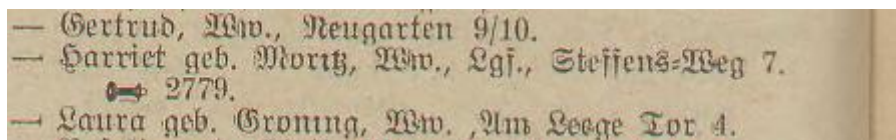


Source: GenWiki

Walter's wife **Gertrude Charlotte Zeitzmann** was born in 1879 to parents Friedrich Zeitzmann and Emma Laura née Neumann. I cannot say for sure in which regional folk dress she is dressed in her wedding photo, so if anyone can point me in the right direction, I'd be very grateful.

And now I come to the sad part of their story. Walter passed away in April 1918 at the age of just 43 years. His death certificate from Danzig does not list the cause of his death.

Gertrude stayed in Danzig until 1941. She was listed as a widow in the Danzig address books up until then. The last Danzig address book available online is from 1942 and I couldn't find her in it anymore.

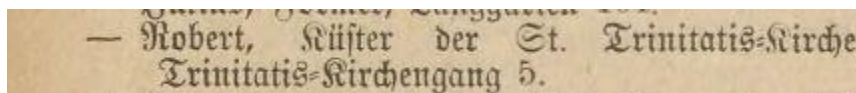


Danzig used to have a large German community. In 1923, 95% of the population were Germans. As violent political turmoil unfolded in Danzig during WWII which traumatised the local Jewish and Polish communities, the war left the city heavily devastated. In the years following the WWII, the German community was expelled from the region permanently.

But where had Gertrude disappeared? She did not leave any trace of her behind in the paper trail, but she has also not been listed as a casualty of war. Unfortunately, it is also not known to me if Walter and Gertrude had any children as those are typically not listed in the address books with their parents.

But I did find out quite a lot about Walter and Gertrude's families.

Walter's father August Robert Marks was born on April 20th, 1843, in Thorn (Torún in today's Poland), to parents Johann Marks and Barbara née Nowack. August was a sergeant of the infantry regiment no. 74 in Danzig in 1879. Perhaps this is when the family moved from Hannover to Danzig. Later in his life, August worked as a sexton in the Sankt Trinitatis Church in Danzig.



Source: GenWiki

The Church still stands today and is one of the symbols of the city.



August passed away in 1904, at the age of 61 and just 2 years after his son Walter celebrated his matrimony. He had been married to Walter's mother Laura for 31 years (they had been married on November 24th, 1873 in Hannover). Laura was 54 years old when she became a widow. She was born on September 15th, 1850, to parents Carl Heinrich Gröning and Dorothea née Olschneski.

To my knowledge, Walter had at least two sisters:

Laura Wilhelmine Louise Marks was born in 1877 but unfortunately passed away at 7 years of age in 1884.

Elisabeth Nanny Marks was born on June 27th, 1879 in Hannover. But there is no record of her after that.

Gertrude's father Friedrich Zeitzmann passed away around 1920. Her mother Emma Laura née Neumann, youngest daughter of the royal forester Eduard Neumann, continued to live in Danzig in the 1920s.

A lead in the paper trail of Gertrud's family revealed to me that Gertrud's younger brother Willy Georg Zeitzmann and his wife Edith lived in Danzig in 1926 but emigrated to the US in 1928, where they settled down in Clark, Union City, New Jersey. Willy had been born on May 17th, 1895. Edith was born on March 28th, 1899 in Archangelsk, Russia, to parents Oskar and Emilie Balkwitz. Willy and Edith had been married on November 3rd, 1921 in Zoppot, not far from Danzig. In 1926 Willy is listed in the Danzig address book as a businessman. After they became US citizens in 1938, they made a trip to Germany in the same year to probably visit their families for the first time since their departure. Willy, who became William in America, worked as an accountant. In 1942 he was mobilised into US Army, but I cannot find any evidence that he actually served. By the time, he was already 47 years old.

Willy passed away on May 13th, 1951, at the age of 56 years. In his obituary, which I've borrowed from www.newspapers.com, there is mention of his membership in the local German Club. While his new life across the pond brought new opportunities for him and his Russian-born wife Edith (and maybe saved his life), he continued to embrace his heritage until his life's end. Edith passed away 40 years later, in January 1991, at almost 100 years of age.

William G. Zeitzmann

Clark—Funeral services for William G. Zeitzmann, 56, of 176 Raritan Rd. will be held tomorrow at 10 a. m. in the Lehrer Funeral Home, Rahway. Cremation will take place in the Rosehill Crematory, Linden.

Mr. Zeitzmann, an accountant, died in his home Sunday, May 13, 1951). He was a member of the Rahway Deutscher Club. Before moving here 12 years ago, Mr. Zeitzmann resided in Union City.

He is survived by his widow, Edith Balkwitz Zeitzmann, a brother and two sisters in Germany.

Source: www.newspapers.com

The obituary also reveals that besides his widow, he was survived by a brother and two sisters in Germany. This gives me hope that perhaps Gertrude was among them.

Photos Without Families, originally shared on www.photoswithoutfamilies.blog