

## The Last Part of Lasker's Legacy

In his colorful report of our visit to Saint Louis (<http://www.kwabc.org/index.php/17-latest-news-and-reports/172-sinquefield-cup-2014>), and especially of the Sinquefield Cup Tournament Michael Negele announced a separate note from my pen on our activities in the World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF).

To be honest, I have to start with a confession: we didn't come at all to Saint Louis with the aim to attend the tournament. The tournament was so to speak a side effect, our goal was to go through the last remaining part of Emanuel Lasker's legacy that until recently was inaccessible for researchers. Actually I would better say: the *remainder* of that last remaining part, and it is only this remainder that shortly before had been bought for the World Chess Hall of Fame. This requires an explanation.

### The history of Lasker's legacy

After Martha Lasker's death in 1942 Emanuel Lasker's rather extensive legacy, consisting of letters, photos, scrapbooks, manuscripts, typescripts, books, magazines and memorabilia, came 'on the market' during the next decades. Most of his and Martha's heirs, all relatives of Martha (Martha and Emanuel had no children, but Martha and Emil Cohn had a daughter, Lotte Hirschberg), sold their parts of the legacy or donated them to public institutions, like the J.G. White Collection of the Cleveland Public Library. [[Cleveland Finds I](#) / [... Finds II](#) / [... Finds III](#)] As far as I know the chess antiquarians Albrecht Buschke and J.G. Kramer played an important role as intermediaries. Those who have the opportunity to look into David DeLucia's *In memoriam* (that splendid description of his library) will get an idea where important parts of the Lasker legacy ended up. For instance: the 1000 letters Lasker wrote to his wife in his lifetime are now part of DeLucia's library. The letters have been sorted in chronological order and the most important ones have been provided with short synopses. This work was perfectly done by Kramer in his *The letters (1890-1940) of Emanuel Lasker (1868-1941)* (Whitehall, PA, s.d.), a very labor-intensive effort, I may say. This material is of course indispensable for a future Lasker biographer, but it remains inaccessible for researchers. For that reason I hope David DeLucia will eventually decide to publish these letters in another book with treasures of his library.

### The remaining part

However, one of the heirs of Martha Lasker preferred to keep his part of the legacy, and deposited it at Löwenherz/Lion Heart, a New York antiquarian specialized in autographs, waiting for a buyer who was willing to pay \$650,000 for the collection, as was spread at that time. The Emanuel Lasker Gesellschaft, founded in 2001 in Berlin, was very ambitious in the first years of its existence, and in 2006 showed interest in the content of the collection, but not in its price, even when a taxation of its current worth came to a substantially lower price. At that time however two versions of a rather well specified inventory of this collection appeared, probably prepared by Lowenherz (who writes his German name without Umlaut) himself. That inventory was of course necessary to convince potential buyers of the value of the collection.

### A bridge goldmine

After the General Meeting of the KWA in Cleveland in 2011 I made an intermediate stop in New York on my way back to Europe. It was my main concern to visit Lion Heart Autographs <http://www.lionheartautographs.com/>, not because I wanted to

spend the remaining cash of my Cleveland sojourn, but in the hope that I would be allowed to have a look at the collection. I had been motivated by the voluminous monograph *Emanuel Lasker, Denker, Weltenbürger, Schachweltmeister* published two years before. Having contributed to this monograph the chapter *Nicht nur Schach; Emanuel Lasker als Bridgespieler* (Not only chess; Emanuel Lasker as a bridge player), that inventory was mouth-watering for me: in at least 9 of the 22 box files of the collection bridge material or bridge related material was indexed! **[Foto boxes]** As my original contribution to the Lasker monograph contained substantially more material than I could use in the final version of my chapter, I had at that time the intention to write a book on Lasker as a bridge player. What's more I could easily combine this theme with 'Lasker in Holland' during the period 1920-1934, which for a considerable part corresponds with his main bridge activities. Here in the remaining portion of Lasker's legacy I had seemingly found a true goldmine that would make it possible to draw a more complete picture, especially of the ten non-chess years of his life (1925-1934). But of course I had to assess the content of those boxes with my own eyes to be sure that the material was as valuable as it promised to be.

### **For the time being the history ends in Saint Louis**

The only obstacle to overcome was to be permitted to look into those boxes and to take photos of the most interesting pieces. But when I arrived at Mr. Lowenherz' office he had just left for the Frankfurter Buchmesse! The subsequent correspondence had no positive result as the former owner was only interested in selling the collection, and moreover he had formally declared that the inventory list had been disseminated without his permission and any published or unpublished references to it hadn't been and would not be authorized!

But in the end, after lowering his asking price considerably (as it was rumored), the owner of the collection found a buyer, or better, a couple of buyers. It seems that David DeLucia bought the collection together with Rex Sinquefield providing that he (DeLucia) could make the first selection, and that the remainder of the remaining part of Lasker's legacy would be acquired by Sinquefield for the World Chess Hall of Fame. And so 5 large moving boxes, containing the original 22 box files, hadn't arrived in Saint Louis so long ago, but of course these original boxes were considerably emptier than they must have been in New York ... As we had been told, the price paid for them should have come up to about \$60.000. But anyway, for the first time the last part of Lasker's legacy, that is to say only a rather small part of it, is now at least accessible to research, and that is the reason why Michael Negele and I went to Saint Louis.

### **Super bonus**

And we came at the right moment, but of course not completely unplanned, although at the time we had to make decisions about bookings the dates of the tournament were not yet settled. The Sinquefield Cup was more or less a bonus; however that we would attend one of the most remarkable events in the history of chess was entirely unforeseen. So we got a super bonus! For Michael this meant that he had to take several tasks as chess journalist on his proven shoulders: those of a reporter of the tournament, of a photographer of the whole event and last but not least of an interviewer of the man who had made it possible to create the new chess center of the United States in Saint Louis (and let us not forget that he also bought the last remains of Lasker's legacy!). On top of that Michael wanted to play some chess, but that proved to be too much. I promised however not to speak about it, so I keep mum.

Nevertheless Michael provided his terrible game against Akobian:

[Event "Simul 19 boards St. Louis CC&SC"]

[Date "2014.08.30"]

[White "Akobian, Varuzhan"]

[Black "Negele, Michael"]

[Result "1-0"]

[ECO "A80"]

1. Nf3 f5 2. d4 Nf6 3. Nc3 e6 4. Bg5 Bb4 5. Qd3 b6 6. O-O-O h6 ?! (6... O-O) 7. Bxf6 Qxf6 8. Nb5 Bd6 9. e4 fxe4 10. Qxe4 Qf4+ 11. Qxf4 Bxf4+ 12. Kb1 a6 (12... O-O! 13. g3 Bb7 14. Bg2 a6 15. Nc3 Bxg3 =) 13. Nc3 Bb7 ?! (13... d5) 14. d5 ! exd5 (14... Bxd5 15. Nxd5 exd5 16. Rxd5 O-O 17. Bc4 Kh7) 15. Nxd5 Bd6 ? (15... O-O 16. Bc4 Kh7 17. Rhe1 Nc6 18. Bd3+ Kg8) 16. Nxb6! cxb6 17. Rxd6 Bxf3 18. gxf3 b5 19. Rg1 g5 20. Bh3 Ra7 21. f4 Ke7 22. Rd4 Nc6 23. Re4+ Kf6 ? (23... Kd8) 24. Rd1 Rh7 25. Rd6+ 1-0

### **A new edition of the Lasker monograph**

Why were we so eager to examine the collection rather soon after it arrived at the WCHOF? This eagerness is closely connected with Michael Negele's decision to prepare a re-edition of the German-language Lasker-monograph from 2009 that was sold out in an astonishingly short time in spite of its more than 1100 pages and its accordingly high price. The intention is to publish a three-volume edition in English, its first volume should be completed in the 'Lasker year' 2018, the year of Lasker's 150th birthday. Michael's decision had been initiated by the news that at least a part of the remainder of Lasker's legacy had become available for research, so this possibility will enable the editors to write a new edition in order to incorporate hitherto unknown facts and unpublished material. That would really make the project worthwhile! For me as the designated editor of the second volume that will concentrate on Lasker as the player and on the games he studied and played, it was of course essential to know about the remains of the New York collection with its very promising inventory. I hoped to find for instance typescripts of his unpublished bridge books and the latest text of his – as well unpublished – *The psychology of the player*, whereas Michael expected to find for instance the German manuscripts or typescripts of Martha Lasker's unpublished memories and of Lasker's text of his mathematical study, made in Moscow in 1936/1937, but until now untraceable, and furthermore new photo material and important letters.

### **At work**

When we combed systematically through the 22 box files, it became soon pretty clear that the prior selection from the New York collection had reduced the content quantitatively, and, which is more important, also qualitatively. Knowing the recent history of the collection, this was of course not completely a surprise for us. So disappointments were more or less taken into account. Not a disappointment at all was the most friendly welcome by the members of the staff of the WCHOF, especially Emily Allred, the Assistant Curator, and Maggie Abbott, the Registrar, who were both very helpful to us. Maggie even offered her free Labor Day when even the WCHOF is closed, to give us access to the archive of the institution and to provide

assistance with our work! As we had only three days at our disposal we confined ourselves to sort out the completely disorganized content of the box files and to reorganize roughly the hundreds of documents, drafts, fragments, manuscripts and typescripts according to the main subjects such as mathematics, games, documents of Martha, documents related to e.g. *The community of the future*, and so on. Therefore we had to read countless papers, but could mainly do that by just skimming through them, because carefully reading each paper would have required at least four times as much of the time available. Having done this we selected the documents we considered at least potentially important for us and started to take photos of them for further studies back home. In the course of our activities we naturally also made many photocopies for immediate use. Eventually we prepared for the WCHOF (i.e. of course for Maggie) a new but still provisional inventory, which was much appreciated. Anyway, many texts demand knowledge of the German language and/or of Lasker's life and activities to be able to put them in the proper place. But compiling a professional index of the collection's content requires obviously much more time than available.

## Results

As expected our research yielded mixed results. Completely preserved is the typescript of Martha Lasker's memories in the English version (*Dr. Emanuel Lasker; A biographical mosaic*) and her correspondence with Lasker's biographer Hannak with regard to the quarrel about the use Hannak would have liked to make of her memories in his projected biography. Her memories remained unpublished in the end, but are still interesting because they give a view in which light Martha saw her husband – she seemed to have had an independent mind, and which tells us also indirectly more about Lasker's personality than the hagiographical description by Hannak. [Images: [A Biographical Mosaic - title](#) / [Preface](#)] A number of photos of her family also belong to Martha's part of the collection, but no photographs of Lasker himself were found.

Moreover a manuscript of the paper Lasker prepared in 1936 or 1937 for the Academy of Science in the USSR in Moscow is existent in the WCHOF. I think, a possible explanation for the fact that this paper hasn't been discovered in the USSR until now can be found on its front page: the paper bears a warmly expressed dedication to N.W. Krylenko, the great promoter of soviet chess as well as Lasker's patron, but at the same time also people's commissioner for justice responsible for many executions. He fell in disgrace and was executed in 1938. The publishing house of the tournament books of Moscow 1935 and 1936 was forced to tear out the forewords of Krylenko together with his photo in the 1936 volume (between pp. 16 and 17). Certainly the members of the Academy were afraid to get their fingers burnt by this Lasker paper, that is why they burned it (whether metaphorically or not).

[Images: [Mathematics page I](#) / [page II](#) – a lot has been cancelled]

Furthermore, among a lot of drafts, notes, manuscripts and typescripts with psychological content we found the complete typescript of *The psychology of the player*, dated Chicago, December 1937, which is probably the latest version of the book he started to write already in the early 1930s (but in German). We have still to compare this version with that from Jurgen Stigter's archive (a PDF file which has to be retyped into a text file). [Image: [Psychology sample page](#), there was no title]

As I had hoped, we came across the typescript for Lasker's unpublished book on bridge with 5 suits (the 5th suit is called Eagles), dated March 28th, 1938, that is

probably an earlier date than that of Culbertson's *Outline* (1938) of the same variation of contract bridge. [Images: **Contract bridge** - [title](#) / [Preface](#)] However, among the many documents concerning bridge and other games we didn't find a complete copy of versions of other bridge books Lasker had prepared for publication in the 1930s. Of course the WCHOF collection contains much, much more material, but a lot is incomplete or fragmentary or consists of versions inferior to those already existing in other collections. Careful study of the complete content of the WCHOF collection, of the inventories and of the photographs taken of documents is necessary to know exactly what had been taken from the collection before it arrived in the WCHOF, but we may assume for sure that the extracted items make up an important part of the remaining Lasker legacy as it was once taken into Lion Heart's custody. Nevertheless we consider our finds as very useful for the new edition of the Lasker monograph, and from now on the World Chess Hall of Fame may also be called an important center of Lasker research!

Amsterdam, October 2014  
Bob van de Velde