

PETŐ FAMILY PAPERS, 1855-1977
1989.250.120

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
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Descriptive summary

Title: Pető family papers

Dates: 1855-1977

Accession number: 1989.250.120

Creator: Pető family

Extent: 0.9 linear foot (1 box, 4 oversize folders)

Repository: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW,
Washington, DC 20024-2126

Abstract: The Pető family papers consist of biographical materials, correspondence, a personal narrative, photographs, property records, a newspaper, and a ticket documenting Judith Pető Leiber's father, grandfather, and great grandfather, her early career in handbag design, her uncle's experiences as a refugee in Nice, her family's survival in Budapest, the confiscation or loss of her relatives' property, and efforts to recover it.

Languages: Hungarian, German, French, Italian, Hebrew

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open for use, but is stored offsite. Please contact the Reference Desk more than seven days prior to visit in order to request access.

Reproduction and use: Collection is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Pető family papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Judith Pető Leiber donated the Pető family papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1989 and 2004. Eva Ecker added materials in 1989 and 2005. Accessions previously cataloged as 1989.255.1, 2004.383.1 and 2005.284.1 have been incorporated into this collection.

Accruals: Accruals may have been received since this collection was first processed, see archives catalog at collections.ushmm.org for further information.

Processing history: Julie Schweitzer, June 2014

Biographical note

Judith Pető Leiber was born in 1921 in Budapest to jeweler and vineyard owner Emil Pető and his wife Helene. She had begun her education in chemistry in England, with the intention of eventually making cosmetics, but she was trapped in Europe while home on holiday when World War II began. She decided to design handbags and was the first woman ever accepted into the handbag guild in Hungary. Judith, her parents, and her sister Eva survived the war in Budapest using false papers. After the end of the war she met and married Gus (Gerson) Leiber, an American radio operator with the US Control Corps. She sailed with him to America in 1946 and became a famous handbag designer. Meanwhile, her father's brother Zsigmond Schönberger, had been working for Sandor Wolf in Vienna but chose not to join Wolf when he fled to Palestine. He and his wife, Charlotte (Lola), fled to Nice and were ultimately interned at Drancy and deported to Auschwitz. Emil and Helene Pető moved to Israel after the war.

Scope and content of collection

The Pető family papers consist of biographical materials, correspondence, a personal narrative, photographs, property records, a newspaper, and a ticket documenting Judith Pető Leiber and her family, her early career in handbag design, her uncle's experiences as a refugee in Nice, her family's survival in Budapest, the confiscation or loss of her relatives' property, and efforts to recuperate it.

Biographical materials include birth and marriage certificates; education and employments records; and identification papers documenting Judith Pető Leiber and her parents, sister, grandparents, and great grandparents. They also include permits and certificates documenting Emil Pető's status during the German occupation of Hungary.

Correspondence primarily documents efforts by the Pető family and by Sandor Wolf to help Judith's uncle Zsigmond Schönberger who had fled to Nice with his wife. Correspondence from Nice includes letters and postcards from Schönberger as well as from friends and contacts he had there. Some of the correspondence from Nice also documents Judith Pető Leiber's early career in handbag design.

The personal narrative is a 1956 account by Emil Pető of his role on the Budapest Jewish Council, providing information to neutral countries about deportations, going into hiding in late 1944, and moving to Brazil in 1954.

Photographs depict Judith Pető Leiber, her sister, their parents, their grandparents, their great grandparents, their uncle Zsigmond Schönberger, his wife Lola, and the family's Spitzer and Bogysky relatives.

Property records document the confiscation, loss, and efforts to recover property belonging to the Pető, Schönberger, and Bogyansky families, including Emil Pető's jewelry business and vineyard, the Bogyansky hat business, personal property, and financial assets.

The collection also includes a 1944 issue of *A Magyar Zsidok Lapja* issuing restrictions on Jewish activities in Budapest and a ticket for the coronation of Emperor Karl IV in 1916.

System of arrangement

The Pető family papers are arranged as seven series:

- Series 1: Biographical materials, 1855-1977
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1938-1946
- Series 3: Personal narrative, 1956
- Series 4: Photographs, approximately 1900-1940
- Series 5: Property records, 1938-1965
- Series 6: Newspaper, *A Magyar Zsidok Lapja*, 1944
- Series 7: Ticket, 1915

Indexing terms

Leiber, Judith.

Jews--Hungary--Budapest.

Jews--Austria--Vienna.

Jewish refugees--France--Nice.

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Personal narratives.

Jewish property--Hungary--Budapest.

Jewelers--Hungary--Budapest.

Handbags--Design.

Budapest (Hungary)

Nice (France)

Vienna (Austria)

Photographs

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Biographical materials, 1855-1977

Folder	Title
1	Perl, Jozsef, 1918, 1927, 1938, 1977
2	Perl, Katharine, 1927
3	Pető, Emil, 1922, 1944, 1950, 1977
4	Pető, Emil and Helene, 1950
5	Pető, Eva, 1944

6	Pető, Judith, 1939, 1944
7	Schönberger, Samuel, 1855, 1899 (see also oversize folder 1)
8	Schönberger, Zsigmond, 1878, 1915, 1921, 1938-1939

Series 2: Correspondence, 1938-1946

Folder	Title
9	Fischer, Marie, 1943-1946
10	Pető, Emil, 1942-1944
11	Schönberger, Zsigmond, and friends in Nice, 1938-1944
12	Spitzer, Hugo, 1944
13	Wolf, Sandor, 1942-1945
14	Miscellaneous, 1942-1944

Series 3: Personal narrative, 1956

Folder	Title
15	Emil Pető's personal narrative, 1956

Series 4: Photographs, approximately 1900-1940

Folder	Title
16	Bogyansky family, 1937
17	Leiber, Judith Pető, approximately 1925-1930
18	Perl, Joseph, approximately 1900 (see oversize folder 2)
19	Pető, Eva, approximately 1930s
20	Pető family
21	Schönberger, Zsigmond and Lola, approximately 1910-1940
22	Spitzer family, approximately 1900-1940 (see also oversize folder 3)

Series 5: Property records, 1938-1965

Folder	Title
23	Bogyansky property, 1951, 1963
24	Pető property, 1942-1947, 1958, 1961-1965 (see also oversize folder 4)
25	Schönberger property, 1938-1942, 1947

Series 6: Newspaper, *A Magyar Zsidok Lapja*, 1944

Folder	Title
26	A Magyar Zsidok Lapja, 1944 March 23

Series 7: Ticket, 1916

Folder	Title
27	Ticket to coronation of Emperor Karl IV, 1916

Oversize materials

Oversize folder	Title
1	Schönberger, Samuel, 1855, 1899 (biographical materials)
2	Perl, Joseph, approximately 1900 (photograph)
3	Spitzer family, approximately 1900-1940 (photograph)
4	Pető property, 1944 (property records)