

**ALICE AND JOHN FINK PAPERS, circa 1926-2003
1990.247.13**

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

Title: Alice and John Fink papers

Dates: circa 1926-2003

Catalog number: 1990.247.13 (RG-09.078)

Creator: Fink, Alice, 1920-

Additional creator: Fink, John, 1920-2000

Extent: 2.0 linear foot (2 boxes, 2 oversize boxes, 4 oversize folders)

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

Abstract: The Alice and John Fink papers include biographical materials, photographs, printed materials, and subject files documenting Alice and John, their families in Germany, Alice's nursing education and work in England, John's survival in concentration camps during the Holocaust, and the couple's work at the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp after the war.

Languages: English, German, Hebrew, Yiddish, and French

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), Alice and John Fink papers (1990.247.13), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Alice and John Fink donated the Alice and John Fink papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1990, 2000, 2003, 2005, and 2018. Accessions formerly cataloged as 1990.247, 2000.285, 2000.478.1, 2000.501, 2003.363, 2005.579, and 2018.610 have been incorporated into this collection. Accessions 1990.247, 2000.501, 2003.363, and 2005.579 had been previously united.

Separated materials: Alice and John Fink also donated medical supplies, patches, badges, pins, name tags, trunks, wall hanging, box, wedding dress, tablespoon, a photocopy of *Mitgliederverzeichnis der Jüdischen Gemeinde zu Berlin*, and audiovisual materials (1994.75.1, 2000.285.2, 2000.390.1, 2000.501.2, 2005.579.2-31, and RG-50.104.0001 and RG-50.104.0002) to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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, November 2019

Biographical note

Alice Fink was born Alice Redlich on August 12, 1920 in Berlin to Georg and Ella (Messer) Redlich. Georg, born on August 8, 1884, was a salesman and World War I veteran from Schlabendorf, Germany. Ella was born on April 9, 1893, in Berlin. Alice's younger brother, Heinz Alfred, was born on June 9, 1923. The Redlich family celebrated high holidays but did not keep a kosher house, and the children attended public schools. After completing high school, Alice took a training course to become an infant nurse. With the assistance of a cousin living in England, she was accepted into the nursing program at Miller General Hospital, a private hospital in Southeast London. On November 11, 1938, Alice left Germany from Bremerhaven on a refugee ship and arrived in London on November 14. She did not know it at the time, but her father was briefly arrested during the Kristallnacht pogrom on November 9 and 10. At the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, Britain considered all Germans over the age of 16 enemy aliens. Alice was called before a special tribunal, recognized as a refugee, and allowed to continue her studies. Alice corresponded with her family via a relative in Sweden. She was evacuated to the countryside during the Blitz and helped care for the German children evacuated during Operation Pied Piper. She tried to bring her family to England, but no one could help. In November 1942, Alice became a registered state nurse and worked various staff jobs. She volunteered with the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad and, in September 1946, as part of the Team 110 Jewish Relief Unit, she left for Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp in Germany. Alice cared for the children and young women and taught basic hygiene and health skills. She met fellow relief worker Hans Finke and became engaged to him in 1947. She returned to England to become a British national and then married Hans at Bergen-Belsen on June 20, 1948 wearing a wedding dress made by his sister Ursula. Alice became pregnant, and the couple did not want their child to be born on German soil. They immigrated by plane to the United States, arriving in Chicago on September 1, 1949; their daughter was born soon after. In America, Alice learned that her family had perished at Auschwitz. On October 26, 1942, her father was arrested and deported to Auschwitz. Her mother performed forced labor for the Siemens electrical and engineering company until she was arrested at the factory and deported to Auschwitz on March 8, 1943. Alice's brother was studying at the Neuendorf hachshara when his group was instructed to prepare for deportation, taken to Berlin on April 9, 1943, and then deported to Auschwitz on April 19, 1943. Alice's grandmother, Emma Messer, perished at Theresienstadt.

John Fink (1920-2000) was born Hans Finke in Berlin on August 12, 1920. His father, Julius Finke (1882-1943), was a merchant from Pietrzykowice, Poland, and owned a dry goods store outside of Berlin. Hans' mother died when he was an infant, and his father married Ella in 1922. His half-sister Ursula was born on June 30, 1923. They were not a strictly observant Jewish family though they attended a liberal synagogue and participated in the Jewish community. Hans apprenticed as an electrician with a Jewish contractor. In 1938, his parents were forced into factory work and his sister worked as a seamstress. Hans began working for the Alfred Skaruppe Co., a private contracting firm owned by non-Nazis, and he worked for the Air Ministry from 1938-1941. The Finkes remained in Berlin after the Nazi takeover and through much of the war. Hans was a forced laborer for Siemens, and in February 1943, he was hospitalized with appendicitis. At the end of February, his parents were deported to Auschwitz and murdered. On March 8, the Gestapo raided the hospital where Hans was being treated, and arrested staff and patients. Hans was deported to Auschwitz, where he was put to work at the Buna factory in Monowitz. He spent almost two years there before the camp was evacuated in January 1945 and he was transferred to Sachsenhausen. The following month he was moved to Flossenberg and from there to Bergen-Belsen. He was liberated by the British on April 15 and weighed only eighty pounds. Hans helped the British restore power to Bergen-Belsen, now a displaced persons camp, and in October he returned to Berlin to find his sister. Ursula had gone underground in 1943 to evade deportation and survived. When a Jewish collaborator working for the Gestapo recognized her in a Berlin railway station, Ursula threw herself in front of an on-coming train to escape arrest. She survived the ordeal, but her leg was severed. She was arrested by the Gestapo, confined to the Jewish hospital in Berlin, and shackled to a bed until the end of the war. Hans returned to Bergen-Belsen and worked for the British Army as an electrician until 1947, and then for the American Jewish Distribution Committee, in the Warburg-Children's Home in Blankenese. He met Alice Redlich, a German Jewish nurse, who had come from England to work for the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad. They married in Bergen-Belsen on June 20, 1948. After Alice became pregnant with their first child, the couple immigrated to the United States on August 26, 1949. They settled in Chicago where Hans had relatives. Soon after, the first of their four children was born, and Hans changed his name to John. They changed their surname to Fink, became citizens in 1955, and had three more children. John became known in the local Jewish community as a tireless crusader for Holocaust related concerns. Both he and Alice were dedicated to educating future generations and talked and wrote about their own experiences.

Scope and content note:

The Alice and John Fink papers include biographical materials, photographs, printed materials, and subject files documenting Alice and John, their families in Germany, Alice's nursing education and work in England, John's survival in concentration camps during the Holocaust, and the couple's work at the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp after the war.

Biographical materials include identification, education, employment, displaced persons, and restitution papers documenting John and Alice Fink as well as their ketubah. John Fink materials include his Bar Mitzvah certificate, school report cards, apprentice certificate, identification and work cards, correspondence, restitution claims, and a personal narrative documenting his childhood in Berlin, forced labor in the Siemens factory during the Holocaust, and post-war work for the British Red Cross and United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Alice Fink materials include a school certificate, British passport, identification card, employment records, and registered nurse and midwife certificates documenting her childhood in Berlin, training as a nurse, prewar and wartime work in England, and postwar work at the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp.

Photographic materials include two large and two small photo albums and many loose photographs depicting Alice and John Fink, their families in prewar Berlin, and their postwar work at the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp. This series includes copy prints of liberation photographs of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Color photographs depict the Blankenese children's home after it became the Elsa Brändström Haus.

Printed materials include postwar issues of *Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt für die Nord-Rheinprovinz und Westfalen*, *Our Voice: Central Jewish Committee*, and *Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt für die Britische Zone*; photocopied clippings about the Holocaust; a 1983 issue of *AJR Information*; and 1991-1992 issues of *ORT-Deutschland Magazin*.

Subject files include clippings, correspondence, notes, printed materials, postcards, and testimony. The files document the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and its liberation, Gyuszi Szabo (a Hungarian Jew living in Rotterdam at the outbreak of World War II), Holocaust commemoration, a Holocaust art exhibition at Indiana University Bloomington, the Landwerk Neuendorf hachshara, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Blankenese children's home (Elsa Brandstrom Haus).

System of arrangement

The Alice and John Fink papers are arranged as four series:

Series 1: Biographical materials, 1933-2000

Series 2: Photographs, circa 1926-2000

Series 3: Printed materials, 1946-1992

Series 4: Subject files, circa 1985-2003

Indexing terms

Personal names

Fink, Alice, 1920-

Fink, John, 1920-2000.

Corporate Name

Bergen-Belsen (Concentration camp)

DP-Camp Bergen-Belsen.

Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad

United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

Topical terms

Jews--Germany--Berlin.

World War, 1939-1945--Concentration camps--Liberation--Germany.

Holocaust survivors--Germany.

Medical personnel--Germany--1940-1950.

Geographic terms

Berlin (Germany)

Belsen (Bergen, Celle, Germany)

Genre terms

Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Biographical materials, 1933-2000

Box/Folder	Description
1.1, OS 1	Fink, Alice, 1933-1948
1.2	Fink, Alice and John, 1948-1949
1.3, OS 2	Fink, John, 1933-1939
1.4	Fink, John, 1941-1946
1.5	Fink, John, 1947-1949
1.6	Fink, John, 1950, 1954, 1984, 2000

Series 2: Photographs, circa 1926-2000

Folder	Description
3	Photo album 1, Hans Finke prewar, wartime, and postwar album, circa 1926-1949
1.7	Photo album 1, loose photographs, circa 1926-1949
1.8	Photo album 2, Redlich family prewar album, 1938-1939
1.9	Photo album 3, Hans Fink album inscribed to Alice Redlich, 1946
4	Photo album 4, Hans and Alice Fink postwar album, 1947-1959
1.10	Photo album 4, loose photographs, 1947-1959
1.11	Finke family, 1927
1.12	Redlich family, 1927, 1933
1.13	Alice Redlich with other nurses, 1937-1938
1.14	Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, liberation, 1945
1.15-1.16, OS 3	Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp, circa 1945-1948
1.17	Warburg house, Blankenese children's home, Elsa Brändström Haus, 1946, circa 1978-1996
1.18	John Fink, 1995

Series 3: Printed materials, 1946-1992

Folder	Description
1.19	<i>AJR Information</i> , vol. XXXVIII, no. 9, September 1983
1.20	Clippings, circa 1964-1976
OS 4	<i>Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt für die Britische Zone</i> , Dusseldorf (incomplete), 1 October 1948
1.21	<i>Jüdisches Gemeindeblatt für die Nord-Rheinprovinz und Westfalen</i> , 15 April 1946
1.22	<i>ORT-Deutschland Magazin</i> , No. 5, Spring 1992
1.23	<i>ORT-Deutschland Magazin</i> , No. 7, Winter 1991-1992
1.24	<i>Our Voice: Central Jewish Committee, British Zone</i> , 12 July 1947

Series 4: Subject files, circa 1985-2003

Folder	Description
1.25-1.27	Bergen-Belsen, circa 1985-1998 (3 folders)
2.1	Gyuozi Szabo, 2003
2.2	"In the April Days" by David Rosenthal
2.3	Indiana University Bloomington, 1999
2.4	Landwerk Neuendorf, 1990
2.5	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1998
2.6-2.7	Warburg house, Blankenese children's home, Elsa Brändström Haus, 1979-1996 (2 folders)