

MENDEL GROSSMAN PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, 1919-CIRCA 1970S

2005.214.2

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

Title: Mendel Grossman photograph collection

Dates: 1919-circa 1970s

Accession number: 2005.214.2

Creator: Grossman, Mendel (Łódź :Poland)

Extent: 0.5 linear feet (1 box)

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

Abstract: The collection contains photographs primarily taken by Mendel Grossman in Łódź, Poland prior to and during the war. The prewar photographs document the Grossman family, including Mendel's sister Rozka, and his parents Shmuel and Chana. His wartime photographs document daily life in the Łódź ghetto, and including street scenes, deportations, and activities of the Zionist youth group No'ar ha-Tsiyoni. Many of his wartime photographs feature his extended family, including his nephew Jankush Freitag. Postwar photographs document Rozka Grossman and her husband Moshe Zilbersztajn's (Zilbar) family in Israel.

Languages: Hebrew, Yiddish

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), Mendel Grossman photograph collection (2005.214.2), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The Mendel Grossman photograph collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Moshe Zilbar in 2005 and by Shmuel Zilbar in 2013. The accession formally catalogued as 2013.535.1 has been incorporated into this collection.

Related archival materials: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has two collections with photographs by Mendel Grossman: Arie Ben Menachem photograph collection, 2005.163.1; and Pinchas Shaar photographs, 2005.456.1. There are also related collections of Mendel Grossman's photographs at Yad Vashem and the Ghetto Fighters' House 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: Adam Fielding, May 2016

Biographical note

Mendel Grossman (1913-1945) was born in Staszów, Poland to Shmuel Dawid (1882-1942) and Chana Ruchla (1887-1942) Grossman. He grew up in Łódź, Poland with three sisters, Rut, Rozka (b. 1918), and Feiga (b. 1910); and one brother, Jakub. His sister Rut immigrated to the United States in 1919, and his brother Jakub died of appendicitis before the war. Prior to the war, Mendel was a prolific artist and photographer. In 1939, Mendel and his family were sent to the Łódź ghetto. He got a job working for the Statistics Department taking photographs for identity cards. His position allowed him to secretly photograph and document the daily lives of ghetto inhabitants, including starving families, deportations, Zionist youth movements, executions, and the overall worsening conditions of the camp. He printed and distributed as many prints as he could. Shortly before the ghetto was liquidated in 1944, Mendel and his friends Nachman Zonabend and Arie Ben-Menachem hid approximately 10,000 negatives and some prints in several locations. Mendel was then sent to the Sachsenhausen work camp in Berlin. He perished in 1945 on the forced march after the Nazis evacuated the camp. After the war, Nachman, Arie, and Mendel's sister Rozka were able to recover the negatives and prints. Rozka and her husband Moshe Zylbersztajn brought the negatives and prints with them when they immigrated to Israel in 1948, and have been instrumental in honoring Mendel's work.

Moshe Boruch Zylbersztajn (Later Moshe Zilbar, 1923-2013) was born in Łódź to Abram (b. 1894) and Estera Ita Zylbersztajn (née Lasocka, b. 1904). Moshe had three sisters, Franka Frajdl (b. 1924), Gucia Gitl (b. 1926), and Malka (b. 1927). His family owned a house shoe store. Prior to the war, Moshe worked as an electrician and was involved with the Zionist youth organization No'ar ha-Tsiyoni. In 1940, his family moved to the Łódź ghetto. Moshe worked in a sewing workshop, but continued to be involved with youth organizations. He also knew Mendel Grossman and Arie Ben-Menachem, and spent time with them and Mendel's sister Rozka. In 1942, Moshe's mother was deported to the Chełmno extermination camp during the Gheisperre Aktion where she perished. His sister, Malka died in the ghetto in 1943. In 1944, the ghetto was liquidated and Moshe, Franka, Gucia, and his father were sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in August. Moshe and Abram volunteered for metalwork, and were then sent to the Görlitz subcamp of Gross-Rosen concentration camp. Moshe and his father were liberated from the camp on May 6, 1945. His sisters Franka and Gitl were transferred from Auschwitz-Birkenau to the Stutthof concentration camp in 1944. Gitl perished on the forced-march, but Franka survived. In May, 1945 Moshe and his father returned to Łódź. Moshe was reunited with Rozka, and they became a couple. They immigrated to Israel in 1948, where Moshe worked as a civilian in the Israel Defense Force.

Sources consulted:

Ben-Menachem, Arie, Getto. *Terra Incognita: The Struggling Art of Arie Ben Menachem and Mendel Grossman*. Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 2009.

Grossman, Mendel. *With a Camera in the Ghetto; edited by Zvi Szner and Alexander Sened; with text from the Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto, edited by Lucjan Dobroszycki and Danuta Dombrowska*. New York: Schocken Books, 1977.

Scope and content of collection

The collection contains photographs primarily taken by Mendel Grossman in Łódź, Poland prior to and during the war. The prewar photographs document the Grossman family, including Mendel's sister Rozka, and his parents Shmuel and Chana. His wartime photographs document daily life in the Łódź ghetto, and including street scenes, deportations, and activities of the Zionist youth group No'ar ha-Tsiyoni. Many of his wartime photographs feature his extended family, including his nephew Jankush Freitag. Postwar photographs document Rozka Grossman and her husband Moshe Zilbersztajn's (Zilbar) family in Israel.

System of arrangement

The collection has been arranged alphabetically as one series.

Indexing terms

Person: Grossman, Mendel, 1913-1945

Corporate:

No'ar ha-Tsiyoni (Organization : Poland)

Topical Subject:

Ethnic neighborhoods--Poland--Łódź--1940-1950.

City & town life--Poland--Łódź--1940-1950.

Bread & soup lines--Poland--Łódź--1940-1950.

Workshops--Poland--Łódź--1940-1950.

Child labor--Poland--Łódź--1940-1950.

Youth organizations--Poland--Łódź--1940-1950.

Starvation--Poland--Łódź--1940-1950.

World War, 1939-1945--Deportations from Poland.

Jewish families--Poland--Łódź.

Jewish ghettos--Poland--Łódź.

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Poland--Łódź.

Geography:

Łódź (Poland)

Genre/Form:

Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Folder	Title
1	Grossman, Chana, circa 1930s-circa 1942
	Grossman family:
2	1919-1939 <i>One negative of a family portrait has been moved to cold storage</i>
3	circa 1939-circa 1944
4	Grossman, Mendel, circa 1930s-circa 1944
5	Grossman, Rozka, 1932-circa 1944
6	Grossman, Shmuel, circa 1920s-circa 1942
7-8	Łódź ghetto, 1939-1944 (2 folders)
9	No'ar ha-Tsiyoni youth organization, circa 1939-circa 1944
10	Zilbersztajn family, 1951-circa 1970s