

KANN FAMILY PAPERS, approximately 1920-1980 2013.478.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Kann family papers

Dates: approximately 1920-1980

Accession number: 2013.478.1

Creator: Kann (Family: Saarbrücken, Germany)

Extent: 0.4 linear feet (12 folders)

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

Abstract: The Kann family papers include biographical material, correspondence, subject files, and photographs relating to Edmond, Friederike, Renée, and Edith Kann's pre-war, wartime, and post-war experiences in Saarbrücken, Germany, Gurs concentration camp, and France. The collection includes documents and photographs relating to their imprisonment in Gurs, false identity cards, and postcards sent to Renée and Edith while they were in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. The collection also includes a memoir written by Edmond Kann documenting his family's experiences.

Languages: German, French, English

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), Kann family papers (2013.478.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Renée Kann Silver donated this collection to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2013.

Related Material: Renée Kann Silver also donated a camera and camera case (2013.478.3a-b), a medal (2013.478.4) and an oral testimony of Edmond Kann (2013.478.2) in 2013. The Museum's Library holds a copy of Renée Kann Silver's memoir, *And yet, I still loved France: memoir of a European childhood* (Call Number: DS135.F9 S58 2012).

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

Processing history: Morgan Voth, July 2018

Biographical note

Edmond Kann (1894-1979) was born in Bad Windsheim, Germany to Frederique Blum Kann and her husband. Edmond served in the German Army during the First World War and was seriously injured and partially paralyzed on his left side. In 1930, Edmond married Friederike (later Friedel or Frieda) Klaber (1904-1984) and had two daughters, Renée "Ruth" (b. 1931 in Saarbrücken, Germany) and Edith (1933-2008).

Following the reunification of Saarland with Germany in 1935, Edmund decided the family needed to leave. He sold his business and they moved across the border into France. After Kristallnacht Edmond's niece Lucie Kann, nephew Leon Kann, and his mother, Frederique, joined them in France. In 1939, around the time Germany invaded Poland, Edmond and his family moved further from the German border and settled in Longeville-en-Barrois, France where they pretended to be Christians by enrolling Renée and Edith at Catholic schools and attending daily mass. In spring 1940, Edmund, a German war veteran, was arrested as a possible threat. He produced a medical certificate that confirmed he was disabled, thus not a threat, and was released.

After Germany invaded France in 1940 the Kann family was arrested as enemy aliens. They were jailed in the nearby town of Bar-le-Duc and then transferred to Gurs in France. In June, they were given the choice to be repatriated to Germany, but refused and were later released from Gurs in August and travelled to Toulouse, France. Frederique, Lucie, and Leon escaped to the United States while the rest of the family went to Lyon where Edmond had a friend, Ramon Levy, who helped them find an apartment in nearby Villeurbanne. Renée and Edith enrolled at a local school. In 1942, the directress at Renée's school announced that she would have won a particular prize, but that it was given to another child because Renée was Jewish. This announcement prompted Friedel to send Renée and Edith into hiding. She took them to a woman named Madame Dreyfus, who arranged for the sisters to be taken to Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, while Edmond and Friedel went into hiding in Villeurbanne.

In late September 1942, Edmond and Friedel felt the situation was getting worse, and decided to flee. After receiving false identification papers, the family reunited and reached the Swiss border where they crossed by foot with the help of a guide. Since the girls had contracted hepatitis, the family was not sent to an internment camp, but the girls were hospitalized in Basel and Edmond and Friedel were allowed to visit if they reported to the police station every week. At the end of the war, they returned to Sarreguemines where the girls attended school and Edmond and Friedel prepared for their immigration to the United States. They arrived in New York in July 1947. After the war they learned that most of their extended family members had been deported to concentration camps, including Theresienstadt and Dachau, and many died in September 1942 during a forced march to Treblinka.

Scope and content of collection

The Kann family papers include biographical material, correspondence, subject files, and photographs relating to Edmond, Friederike, Renée, and Edith Kann's pre-war, wartime, and post-war experiences in Saarbrücken, Germany, Gurs concentration camp, and France. The collection includes documents and photographs relating to their imprisonment in Gurs, false identity cards, and postcards sent to Renée and Edith while they were in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. The collection also includes a memoir written by Edmond Kann documenting his family's experiences.

Biographical material includes a Reisepass (German passport), false identity documents, and a United States passport for Edmond and Friederike Kann as well as post-war French travel visas for Edmond, Friederike, and Edith. The series also includes naturalization papers and marriage confirmation for Edmond and Friederike's, a copy of Edmond's birth certificate, and a family history book.

Edmond's memoir, entitled, "Ein Hitler Schicksal" consists of three notebooks recollecting the family's experiences from 1935-1947 including fleeing to France, their imprisonment in Gurs, going into hiding, and immigrating to the United States. Also included in this series is an English translation provided by Renée Kann.

Subject files include release papers from Gurs, a tax notice, a poem, a transcript of Edmond Kann's oral testimony, and a letter which accompanied the Marshal Petain medal Renée received while in school. This series also includes correspondence sent to Renée and Edith while they were in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon.

Photographs (original and photocopies) and negatives depict the Kann family in Windesheim, Germany before the war and in Gurs. Five negatives have been removed from the collection and placed in cold storage. Prints of the negative are included in this series.

System of arrangement

The Kann family papers are arranged as four series.

Series 1: Biographical material, 1920-1980

Series 2: Memoir, 1935-1998

Series 3: Subject files, 1940-1979

Series 4: Photographs, 1930s-1940s

The documents are arranged chronologically.

Indexing terms

Kann, Edmond.

Kann, Friederike.

Kann, Edith.

Kann, Renée.

Gurs (Concentration camp)

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)

Jewish refugee--Switzerland.

Hidden children (Holocaust)--France--Le Chambon-sur-Lignon.

Switzerland.
Le Chambon-sur-Lignon (France)
Villeurbanne (France)
United States--Emigration and immigration--History.

Correspondence.
Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Biographical material, 1920-1980

Folder	Title
1-2 of 12	Kann, Edmond, 1920-1980 (2 folders)
3-4 of 12	Kann, Friederike, 1933-1963 (2 folders)
5 of 12	Kann, Edith and Renée, 1946-1947

Series 2: Memoir, 1935-1998

Folder	Title
6 of 12	Memoir, 1935-1947
7 of 12	Memoir translation, 1998

Series 3: Subject files, approximately 1940-1979

Folder	Title
8 of 12	Correspondence, approximately 1940-1942
9 of 12	Gurs concentration camp, 1940-1942
10 of 12	Transcription of Edmond Kann's testimony, 1979

Series 4: Photographs, approximately 1930s-1940s

Folder	Title
11 of 12	Windesheim, approximately 1930s
12 of 12	Gurs concentration camp, 1940s