

EDITH HORN FAMILY PAPERS, 1938-2000
2015.573.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Edith Horn family papers

Dates: 1938-2000

Accession number: 2015.573.1

Creator: Horn, Edith.

Extent: 1 box (0.5 linear foot)

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

Abstract: Correspondence regarding the attempt by various members of the Horn family to obtain restitution from the German government, primarily for property seized from them during the Holocaust. Correspondence is between representatives of the West German government, and attorneys representing the Horn family in Seattle, Los Angeles, and Germany, between 1949 and 1981. Also included is family correspondence from a relative in Kibbutz Givat Hayim Ichud, in Israel, 1955-1968. The collection also contains transcripts of oral history interviews conducted with Edith Horn, and her husband, Werner Horn, in 2000.

Languages: German, English, Spanish.

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.

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Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Edith Horn family papers, (2015.573.1), (folder number), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Gift of Edith Horn, 2015.

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

Processing history: Processed and finding aid created by Brad Bauer, December 2015.

Biographical note

Karl and Max Horn were brothers, two of the sons of Benjamin and Elfriede (née Schreiber) Horn, originally of Vorst, Germany. The family was involved in agriculture, and in particular, had businesses related to cattle trading as well as a butcher shop. In addition to Karl and Max, the Horns had two other sons, Josef and Paul.

At a young age, Max Horn (born 7 February 1897) left Vorst for Cologne, where he pursued his career as a cattle trader. Max married Henriette (Hilde) Leiser, and the couple had one daughter, Edith (born 26 February 1926). Following the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 1938, Max was arrested and imprisoned at Dachau for a month, before being released on 8 December 1938. Upon his return to Cologne, the family made preparations to emigrate. Edith was initially sent by her parents to the Netherlands, where she was placed in a children's home until April 1939, when her parents joined her and the family departed Europe from the port of Antwerp, headed for Cuba. As it turned out, their ship was the last one on which Jewish refugees from Europe were allowed to land in Cuba, with the next ship that followed them being the SS St. Louis, which was turned away. The Horns stayed in Cuba until December 1939, when they were allowed to immigrate to the United States, first settling in Miami, and then New York, before eventually moving to Seattle in 1940, where they joined their cousins, Hilde and Otto Guthman. Edith enrolled at Broadway High School there, graduating in 1943, and Max resumed his career as a cattle trader, although his work was interrupted for one year following the American entry into World War II, when he was classified as an enemy alien and not permitted to travel beyond a five-mile radius of his home. Edith studied nursing at Seattle University, and eventually worked as an assistant to an ophthalmologist. She married Werner Horn, a cousin who was the son of Karl and Irene Horn, in 1952, and after a short time living in Chicago, Werner and Edith returned to Seattle, where they have lived ever since.

Following the events of Kristallnacht, Karl Horn and his wife, Irene (née Eckstein), along with their family, which included their son Werner, also made plans to emigrate. Through a customer of Karl's, who was an attorney in Düsseldorf, the family learned of an opportunity to immigrate to Ecuador, and decided to pursue this opportunity. They left Germany in July 1939, arriving in Guayaquil, Ecuador a month later. Eventually, the family settled in Ambato, where Karl established a butcher business, and when Werner finished his schooling, he left for Quito and trained to work as a baker. In 1946, Karl and Irene Horn and their two sons left Ecuador for the United States, and as they were sponsored by Max Horn, they settled in Seattle, where Karl and Werner found work, in the restaurant and bakery industries, respectively.

The Horns' parents, Benjamin and Elfriede, remained in Vorst. Benjamin Horn died on 16 April 1941, presumably in Vorst, Elfriede was deported to Riga in 1942, and presumed to have perished there. Of the remaining siblings, Josef Horn immigrated to New Zealand in 1939, and Paul Horn, his wife Ella, and their daughter Lore, who remained in Germany, were deported to the Riga ghetto in 1942. Both Paul

and Ella perished during the Holocaust, but Lore, who survived, rejoined her relatives in Seattle after the war.

Scope and content of collection

The Edith Horn family papers consist of correspondence regarding the attempt by various members of the Horn family to obtain restitution from the German government, primarily for property seized from them during the Holocaust. Correspondence is between representatives of the West German government, and attorneys representing the Horn family in Seattle, Los Angeles, and Germany, between 1949 and 1981. Also included is family correspondence from a relative in Kibbutz Givat Hayim Ichud, in Israel, 1955-1968. The collection also contains transcripts of oral history interviews conducted with Edith Horn, and her husband, Werner Horn, in 2000.

The Biographical series of this collection contains immigration documents used by Edith Horn's parents, Max and Hilde Horn, as they emigrated from Germany in 1938, as well as transcripts of oral history interviews conducted with Edith and her husband Werner, as part of an oral history project in Seattle in 2000.

The Correspondence series consists of a postcard that Max Horn sent to his family during his imprisonment at Dachau in 1938, a copy of a letter from Joseph Horn describing his experiences in Germany prior to emigration, as well as post-war correspondence from the family of Walter Eckstein, who was originally of Duelken, Germany, and who was related to Werner Horn's mother, Irene. The collection also includes a letter from a friend or distant relative in Argentina, following a visit of Karl and Irene Horn in 1968.

The bulk of the collection consists of the Restitution series, which documents the efforts of Karl Horn (initially), his wife, Irene, and subsequently, Max and Henriette (Hilde) Horn, to obtain restitution for losses and damages incurred by the persecution of Jews in Germany during the Holocaust, and their forced emigration. Initially Karl, acting on behalf of his surviving brothers, Max and Joseph, as well as Lore, the daughter of his deceased brother and sister-in-law, Paul and Ella, filed claims in his hometown of Vorst, seeking compensation for lands and properties that were either seized from the family, or which they were forced to sell under duress. Some of the defendants in these actions claimed that the Horn family sold the properties to them under normal terms, and the papers in this collection show how Karl Horn, acting through attorneys and others in Germany who represented him, sought to refute those assertions and to pursue either compensation for lost lands, or the sale of those properties in the post war era. Most of these documents date from approximately 1949 to 1955.

Interfiled with documents from the cases that Karl Horn was pursuing are papers relating to similar, but separate, claims filed by Irene Horn, in regard to property lost by her family, the Ecksteins, in the nearby village of Duelken. Most of this correspondence and paperwork was created at the same time as Karl's claims, and some of the paperwork and case work was handled by the same attorneys, and copies of the paperwork from these cases were sometimes sent to the Horns in Seattle at the same time. For this reason, these materials were kept together and filed in chronological order.

Additional restitution files relate to the efforts of Max Horn to claim compensation in the late 1950s for physical trauma he had suffered as a result of his imprisonment at Dachau in 1938, as well as a claim for payment from the Winterthur life insurance company. A related file of correspondence, dating from 1957, contains contracts and correspondence related to the sale of property owned by the Leiser family,

the birth family of Hilde Horn, near Euskirchen. No documents are extant that show whether or not the Leiser family also filed restitution claims in order to recover this land prior to its sale.

Remaining restitution files consist of correspondence and related documents about pension claims filed by Irene Horn (1968) and Max and Hilde Horn (1981) with the West German pension agency, the Bundesversicherungsanstalt für Angestellte, relating to pension payments.

Also included is a Miscellaneous series containing a playbill from an Argentinean theatre, from 1924, announcing the showing of a film ("La Puerta Cerrada"), and a booklet and copied pages from commemorative publications about the Jewish communities in Viersen (including the nearby village of Duerken) and Sinzenich.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged in the following series, with folders arranged within each series in alphabetical order by folder title, or in the case of restitution files, in chronological order: I. Biographical, II. Correspondence, III. Restitution files, IV. Miscellaneous

Indexing terms

Personal names

Horn, Karl.
Horn, Irene.
Horn, Max.
Horn, Henriette.
Horn, Edith.
Horn, Werner.

Topical headings

Jews--Germany--Cologne.
Jews--Germany--North Rhine-Westphalia.
Jews--Persecutions--Germany.
Cattle trade--Germany--North Rhine-Westphalia.
Germany--Emigration and immigration.
Jewish refugees--Seattle.
Jewish refugees--Ecuador.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Reparations.

CONTAINER LIST

I. Biographical

- 1 Immigration documents: Max and Hilde Horn, 1938
Oral history transcripts, 2000
- 2 Edith Horn
- 3 Werner Horn

II. Correspondence

- 4 Eckstein, Walter, and family, 1955-1968
- 5 Horn, Joseph: Photocopy of addressed to a former colleague, 1939, describing his experiences

prior to leaving Germany

- 6 Horn, Max: Postcard sent from Dachau, 1938
- 7 Letter from Pius family, Argentina, 1968

III. Restitution files

Karl and Irene Horn, as plaintiffs

- 8 1949
- 9 1950
- 10 1951
- 11 1952
- 12 1953
- 13 1954
- 14 1968

Max and Hilde (Henriette) Horn, as plaintiffs

- 15 Max, 1955-1957
- 16 Hilde, 1957
- 17 Werner and Edith Horn: Retirement pension, 1981

IV. Miscellaneous

- 18 Announcement of showing of film "La Puerta Cerrada," Argentina, 1924
- 19 Information about Jewish communities in Viersen and Sinzenich, Germany, 1998 and undated