

**KAHAN FAMILY PAPERS, 1937-1985 (bulk, 1946-1956)
2016.356.1**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Kahan family papers

Dates: 1937-1945 (bulk, 1937-1956)

Accession number: 2016.356.1

Creator: Kahan family

Extent: 0.6 linear foot (1 box, 1 oversize box)

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

Abstract: Correspondence, documents, certificates, and related materials, concerning the immigration of the family of Eugene (Jenö) Kahan, originally of Munkacs, Hungary (Mukachevo, Ukraine), and his wife, Gizella, and their daughters, to the United States via Paraguay, after World War II. Documents include identification and marriage documents issued in Hungary following the war, documents issued by the consulate of Paraguay in Czechoslovakia, and correspondence between American agencies, including the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the office of U.S. Senator Theodore Green of Rhode Island, who sought to help the family stay legally in the United States through legislation he introduced on their behalf in Congress.

Languages: English, Hungarian, Spanish, Russian, Czech, German

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), Kahan family papers (2016.356.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Gift of Kathlin Feuerstein, 2016.

Related archival materials: Originals of some documents relating to the wartime experiences of the Kahan family are at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

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 by Brad Bauer, May 2016.

Biographical note

Kathlin Feuerstein was born Katalin Kahan, in Budapest, Hungary, on 3 February 1943, the daughter of Jenő (also known as Eugene, born 1908?) and Gizella (née Berkowicz, nee 1908) Kahan. Her father was originally from Munkacs, and owned a wholesale cutlery business in Budapest, and her mother and grandmother, Hannah Berkowicz, owned a factory that produced paper goods, but which was taken over during the war and forced to produce paper cones for gunpowder instead. At the time when she was born, her father had been sent to a forced labor camp, after having hidden in Budapest. Although the family had received safe-conduct passes from Raoul Wallenberg's office, they chose not to resettle in one of the "Jewish" houses, but lived in a number of different places around Budapest. During her infancy, Katalin was taken to the countryside, to live with one of the family's housekeepers, and her half-sister, Mariana Racz, who was a child from her mother's first marriage, was hidden with a group of nuns. The family was reunited around December 1944, after Jenő had been able to leave the labor camp and had walked back to Budapest, and after the war, he and Gizella were able to resume their businesses. Gizella's mother survived the war in hiding in Budapest, as did Jenő's father and stepmother (Aaron and Sari Kahan). Of Gizella's siblings, her younger brother, György, was in a forced labor camp and subsequently sent to the Eastern Front, where he was killed in 1942, but her older brother had immigrated to the United States in the 1930s, where he changed his name to Leslie Berk, and settled in Cleveland, marrying a Catholic woman. Jenő's brother and two sisters also survived the war, and the brother, Miklos, immigrated to the United States in 1956, settling in Los Angeles.

By 1948, Jenő and Gizella decided that they wanted to immigrate to the United States as well, initially obtaining visas for Paraguay, where they had hoped to stay while working on obtaining American visas. They had travelled to the consulate in Prague to obtain these, since Jenő's birth city was, at one point, in Czechoslovak territory. Instead, however, they travelled to the United States, using visitor visas, which they overstayed illegally. Once that had happened, Leslie's American wife, Lillian, contacted her brother in Rhode Island, Barnett Lazarus, who was friends with the United States Senator from Rhode Island, Theodore Green, who in turn sponsored legislation in the Senate that would allow the Kahans to stay in the United States. Although they were required to file paperwork with the Immigration and Naturalization Service annually, and at one point were issued summons of arrest and threatened with deportation, they were ultimately successful in gaining legal residency, with Jenő and Gizella becoming U.S. citizens in 1960. The family, after initially living in Cleveland near Leslie's family, moved to Los Angeles in 1951, where Jenő worked as a salesman, while Gizella worked as a baker and caterer. [Source: adapted from information provided by the donor to Fred Wasserman].

Scope and content of collection

Correspondence, documents, certificates, and related materials, concerning the immigration of the family of Eugene (Jenö) Kahan, originally of Munkacs, Hungary (Mukachevo, Ukraine), and his wife, Gizella, and their daughters, to the United States via Paraguay, after World War II. Documents include identification and marriage documents issued in Hungary following the war, documents issued by the consulate of Paraguay in Czechoslovakia, and correspondence between American agencies, including the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the office of U.S. Senator Theodore Green of Rhode Island, who sought to help the family stay legally in the United States through legislation he introduced on their behalf in Congress.

Also included are copied war-time documents (the originals of which were donated to the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles in 1985), and a copy of a letter from Kathlin Feuerstein's half-sister, Marianna, describing the family's wartime experiences in Hungary. Furthermore, the file pertaining to the Sisters of Social Service in Buffalo, New York, relate to funds that the Kahan family were only able to transfer out of Hungary when they immigrated, by depositing them with an affiliate of this religious order in Hungary, since they were unable to bring this money them them.

System of arrangement

The Kahan family papers are arranged as one series, in alphabetic order by folder title. In addition, the collection contains an album of family photographs, which are housed separately.

Indexing terms

Names:

Kahan, Eugene.
Kahan, Gizella.
Racz, Marianna.
Kahan, Katalin.
Green, Theodore Francis, 1867-1966

Topical headings:

Jewish refugees--United States.
Hungary--Emigration and immigration.
United States--Emigration and immigration.
Jews--Hungary--Budapest.
Holocaust survivors--California--Los Angeles.

Geographic headings:

Budapest (Hungary)
Cleveland (Ohio)
Los Angeles (Calif.)

CONTAINER LIST

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Attorneys: Reiter, Robert, 1947-1951
1.2	Attorneys: Reynolds, Boyd, 1953-1956
1.3	Biographical documents, Kahan family, 1943-1946, and undated

1.4	Divorce decree, Gizella Racz (later Kahan), 1938
1.5	Emigration documents (receipts from U.S. consulate, and other), Budapest, 1946-1948
1.6	Green, Theodore (U.S. Senator), 1948-1954
1.7	Immigration and Naturalization Service, United States, 1948-1951
1.8	Immigration and Naturalization Service, United States, 1952-1955
1.9	Letter of reference, for Jenö Kahan, attesting to his service as rabbi, Sephardic Prayer Room, Budapest, 1948
1.10	Miscellaneous documents, unidentified, 1937
1.11	Naturalization certificates, United States, 1960
1.12	Paraguay, Consulate of (Prague), 1948
1.13	Photographs, 1943-1945, and undated
1.14	Racz. Marianna, copy of letter describing family history, undated
1.15	Simon Wiesenthal Center (Los Angeles): correspondence with and copies of documents donated by Eugene Kahan, 1985
1.16	Sisters of Social Service (Buffalo, NY), 1948
2	Photograph album of members of Kahan and Berkowicz families, circa 1930s – 1960s